

Narrative in Calvin's Hermeneutic  
by  
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I. Introduction

An important issue today for Christian communities in the Reformed tradition is the widespread confusion concerning the authority of the Bible and its role in Christian life. That confusion manifests itself in various quarters of the church. On the one hand, many Reformed theologians, along with theologians from most other denominations, are no longer certain what is meant by the claim that the Bible is "the rule of faith and life." And when contemporary theologians do make proposals concerning the sense in which the Bible is and is not authoritative, it is often not clear that these proposals are congruent with Reformed theology in any of its familiar forms, including everything from the first chapter of the Westminster Confession to the first volume of Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics.

A second and in some ways more serious manifestation of this crisis concerning the Bible is its role in the life of the church. There is mounting evidence that the title of the book James Smart published some sixteen years ago was neither inaccurate nor unnecessarily alarmist. "The strange silence of the Bible in the church" manifests itself in the pervasive reality of biblical illiteracy in the church and in the misuse and abuse of the Bible in many papers approved by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).<sup>1</sup> The "people of the book" no longer know what is in the book, and the result is that many Presbyterians do not understand why they live and worship in Reformed communities.

Smart and some other commentators on the life of the church have suggested that this important and complex situation concerning the Bible is due in part to the most important discoveries of modern biblical scholarship. Most Reformed seminaries have been committed for some time to the use of various forms of historical-criticism. But according to Smart, the unforeseen and unintended result of that commitment has been that seminaries have convinced their graduates that the Bible is indeed an incredibly complex text and that for several reasons--some having to do with sloth and others with justified fear--it is probably better that the pastor not tell those in the pew what he or she learned in seminary about the content of the Bible and how to read the Bible.

The painful irony, of course, is that the Presbyterian church is increasingly divided between those in the pew who know less and less about the Bible and its significance for their lives and those "priests" who possess what Everett Hughes once described as "guilty knowledge," who recognize the danger of<sup>2</sup> what they know, and who hide it or try as best they can to forget it.

This remarkable development in the life of the church is one--and only one--of many reasons why some theologians and biblical scholars during the past few years have called for a reassessment of the role of

the different forms of historical-criticism in the study and interpretation of the Bible. Not everyone has been equally enthusiastic about this reassessment. Some theologians and biblical scholars view this development as an attempt to turn back the clock and undo the accomplishments of biblical scholarship during the past two hundred years. At the other end of the spectrum are those who insist that historical-criticism is bankrupt and that the church should turn to different interpretative tools.<sup>3</sup> In between these two extremes are a large number of quite different positions on the role of historical-criticism. For example, some people wonder whether historical-criticism has enabled Christians to hear and perceive the gospel with any greater clarity than it was heard and perceived by so-called "pre-critical" theologians in the sixteenth century. Although unequipped with the tools of historical-criticism, Martin Luther and John Calvin seem to have been remarkably able to discover and communicate the gospel. To put the issue as simply as possible, what did Luther and Calvin know that we do not? Or, what do we know and wish we did not in order that we might know what they did?

An unfortunate consequence of an exclusive use of historical-critical tools is that the reader misses the larger unity and therein the message of the biblical text, a unity of which Luther and Calvin seem to be keenly aware. This sense of the larger unity of the Bible is one reason why some theologians and biblical scholars recently have turned to different forms of "canonical-criticism."<sup>4</sup> Other interpreters have focused not on the canon as such but on what they believe to be the central genre of the Bible--namely, narrative--and its possible role in constructive theology. Were the Reformers, especially Luther and Calvin, peculiarly blessed by their pre-critical approach to the Bible and thereby enabled to perceive the gospel in the narrative and figural unity of the biblical text? In what sense, if any, were Luther and Calvin "narrative theologians"?

It is these questions I propose to explore in a modest and limited form. Since one article has appeared recently on "Luther as Narrative Exegete," I shall confine my attention to Calvin.<sup>5</sup> But before we turn to the heart of the matter, I must make several disclaimers.

In the first place, we must never cease reminding ourselves of the difficulty of asking Calvin to address an issue in contemporary theology. The dangers appear to be especially severe because our topic--the role of narrative in Calvin's theology--has obvious implications for the issue of the authority of the Bible. Understandably, many Calvin scholars in this century have been preoccupied with the question of authority in general and the authority of the Bible in particular. But only slowly and painfully have we learned the difficulty of getting answers from Calvin to questions he never asked, or at least never asked in the same way as do contemporary theologians. Guessing what Calvin might have said in response to current theological and hermeneutical questions is risky business indeed.

In the second place, a review of the literature on Calvin's use of the Bible leaves one with the impression that until recently more

attention has been given to what Calvin said about the Bible than to how Calvin actually interpreted it.<sup>6</sup> As Calvin scholarship has clarified his indebtedness to the humanist circles of his day, we have gained a clearer understanding of Calvin as biblical exegete. It might be the case that we would learn more about Calvin's hermeneutical theory if we set aside that topic and concentrated our attention on his exegetical work. Calvin is often described as a "pre-critical" interpreter of the text, but in what sense, if any, was he "pre-critical"?

## II. Calvin as "Pre-critical" Theologian

When Hans Frei published The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative in 1974, he used Luther and Calvin as examples of "pre-critical interpretation of biblical narrative."<sup>7</sup> By the term "pre-critical," Frei does not mean merely that Luther and Calvin lived in a period prior to the development of historical-criticism. Frei intends something far more significant by the term "pre-critical." Frei is fully aware that Calvin recognized the distinction between texts which are descriptions of historical events and those which are not. Calvin understood the power of metaphor and the importance of reading a text in its context. "Pre-critical" here does not mean naivete about the difference between history and other forms of literature. Frei's point is far more profound. What he believes to be distinctive and important about Calvin's pre-critical reading of the Bible is that Calvin was convinced that the grammatical, literal sense of the text was indeed the true sense, and that Calvin recognized the "natural coherence between literal and figural reading, and the need of each for supplementation by the other."<sup>8</sup>

Frei borrows the term "figural" from Eric Auerbach, who describes figural interpretation as a method which "establishes a connection between two events or persons in such a way that the first signifies not only itself<sup>9</sup> but also the second, while the second involves or fulfills the first."

When Frei describes Calvin as a "pre-critical" theologian, therefore, he apparently means two things. In the first place, Calvin does not participate in the "modern" or post-Enlightenment assumption that there is no necessary coherence between the meaning or explicative sense of the text and its "truth" or real reference. The text means what it says, and its truth is the reality rendered by the text, not some referent external to the text found in history or in the intention of the writer or editor of the text.

Secondly, when Frei describes Calvin as "pre-critical," he means that for Calvin the grammatical sense of the text and its figurative sense constitute one narrative reality. As Frei interprets him, Calvin understands that the literal and figurative interpretations of a text are not enemies but companions, dependent upon one another. According to Frei,

. . . [Calvin's] sense of figural interpretation remained firmly rooted in the order of temporal sequence and the depiction of temporal occurrences, the links between which can be established

only by narration and under the conviction of the primacy of the literal, grammatical sense. As a result, his application of figural interpretation never lost its connection with literal reading of individual texts, and he was never tempted into allegorizing. The family resemblance between the literal and figural interpretations, as well as their mutual supplementation, allowed him to view the two testaments as one canon, the unitary subject of which was the story of man's fall and the salvation wrought by Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup>

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Frei points to Calvin's treatment of the unity of the two testaments in the second book of the Institutes as an example of how Calvin's figural interpretation is reflected in his theology.

In the final paragraph of his section on Calvin, Frei concludes with a clear summary of what he considers the major themes in Calvin's hermeneutics.

The unity of literal and figural reading depended, in the first place, on the coherence of literal or grammatical sense with historical reference. Secondly, it depended on the conviction that the narrative renders temporal reality in such a way that interpretative thought can and need only comprehend the meaning that is, or emerges from, the cumulative sequence and its teleological pattern, because the interpreter himself is part of that real sequence. When the identity of literal sense and historical reference is severed,<sup>11</sup> literal and figural reading likewise no longer belong together.

And of course that is precisely what happened in post-Enlightenment theology. For various and complex reasons, the literal sense was severed from historical reference with the twofold result (1) the truth of the narrative was understood to reside somewhere other than in the reality rendered by the text, and (2) the reader no longer understood himself or herself to be a part of the reality narrated by the text.

Frei's understanding of the coherence of literal sense and historical reference is indebted to Eric Auerbach's Mimesis and Auerbach's category of "realistic narrative." Auerbach argues that both the Abraham and Isaac story in Genesis 22 and Peter's denial of Jesus in Mark 14 are instances of realistic narrative. In both texts, Auerbach sees the following characteristics. First, the narrative leaves much in the background, obscured and hidden from us;

. . . the decisive points of the narrative alone are emphasized, what lies between is nonexistent; time and place are undefined and call for interpretation; thoughts and feeling remain unexpressed, are only suggested by the silence and the fragmentary speeches; the whole permeated with the most unrelieved suspense and directed toward a single goal (and to that extent far more of a unity), remains mysterious and "fraught with background."<sup>12</sup>

Second, biblical narrative makes a tyrannical, imperialistic claim for truth. As Auerbach puts it,

Far from seeking, like Homer, merely to make us forget our own reality for a few hours, it seeks to overcome our reality: we are to fit our own life into its world, feel ourselves to be elements in its structure of universal history.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, there is a mingling of styles in these biblical narratives, a mingling of the tragic and the sublime which Auerbach believes is prompted not by artistic purpose but by the reality which is at the heart of the story--the Incarnation. The result is a narrative in which the reader is caught up in the world of the text and transformed by it. "And the story speaks to everybody; everybody is urged and indeed required to take sides for or against it."<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, when Frei claims that Calvin is a "pre-critical" interpreter of scripture, he means that the literal sense coheres for Calvin with the historical referent in such a fashion that the text functions "realistically." It narrates a world which is the figural reality of our own, and in that sense the only true world.

### III. Calvin's Reading of Genesis 22 and Mark 14

But does Calvin read scripture in the manner that Frei claims he does? A compelling answer to that question would demand a careful, thorough study of Calvin's commentaries and his sermons. Since we cannot do that in this context, I will concentrate on those texts which Auerbach and Frei point to as examples of "realistic narrative"--the Abraham and Isaac story in Genesis 22 and Peter's denial of Jesus in Mark 14.<sup>15</sup>

Calvin describes Moses' narrative about Abraham and Isaac as "memorable" and wonderful in its simplicity.<sup>16</sup> And in one sense of the word, Calvin does read the text "pre-critically" in that he makes no attempt to move beyond the final form of the text to inquire about the text's prior history or its redactional setting. What von Rad refers to as the "loose connection" between this text and the stories that precede it and which he takes to be evidence "that it existed a long time independently before it found its place in the Elohist's great narrative work" is either unknown or of no interest to Calvin.<sup>17</sup> Calvin's attention is focused firmly on what we now refer to as "the final form" of the text.

There is, however, an important sense in which Calvin does not read the text "realistically," at least in Auerbach's technical sense of that term. Calvin seems to be unable or unwilling to honor what Auerbach describes as the "shadows" in the text, and this refusal has devastating consequences for Calvin's theology. Where the text is silent about Abraham's and Isaac's state of mind, Calvin insists on speculating, on filling in the blanks. Repeatedly Calvin speculates about Abraham's hopes, fears, and anxiety. In considerable detail, Calvin describes what the biblical text does not--Abraham's psychological turmoil

as he journeys to the mountain. Calvin describes Abraham's "bitterness of grief" and his "violent agitation."<sup>18</sup> Commenting on verse four-- "Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place"--Calvin writes, "Moses doubtless signifies that he [Abraham] had been very anxious during the whole of the three days."<sup>19</sup> Von Rad, on the other hand, despite the blinders of critical methodology, recognizes that "the narrator refrains from giving us insight into Abraham's inner self . . . He reports only how Abraham acted in accordance with the command which he apparently received during the night."<sup>20</sup> Calvin, however, refuses to be content with what the text says. Repeatedly, he attempts to illumine the shadows, to explain to the reader what Abraham was thinking and feeling as he made his long, lonely journey to the mountain.

Why does Calvin do this? Why does he insist on laying bare Abraham's anxiety and inner turmoil in a way the text does not? Nowhere in Genesis 22 are we told anything about what Abraham thought and felt. As Walter Brueggemann points out in his commentary on Genesis, Abraham simply obeyed in response to God's word.<sup>21</sup> Calvin wants the text to say more than it does. And when the text refuses to do so, Calvin provides the missing material. One reason Calvin does this may be that if Auerbach is correct there is a sense in which the text invites such a move. The hiddenness of the text may have something to do with its power to entice the reader into the world of the text. Precisely because the text is "fraught with background," it invites the reader to engage in interpretation. But there are always limits to interpretation, and to illumine what is obscure, to fill in the blanks, may violate those limits.

An important point emerges here which may have significance for our theological assessment of Calvin. As we have seen, it appears that Calvin says more about Abraham than the biblical text does. And perhaps that is what theologians by the nature of their task must do. That is at least an arguable point. But I doubt that was Calvin's intention. Why does Calvin say more than the text does? Two possible reasons come to mind. On the one hand, we have already noted that Calvin's "excess" may be due to the text and the care with which Calvin read it. Calvin succumbed to the power of the text and fell captive to its realism. In that sense, Calvin read the text properly, but he was also victimized by it. The second reason Calvin said more than he should have may be that Calvin allowed himself to be caught up in the text, but he insisted on carrying certain theological convictions into the world of the text, convictions which distorted the text's depiction of reality.

Calvin makes it clear that he, along with most other Christian commentators, understands this text to be about the testing that God sends upon people of faith. The trip to the mountain is the means by which God tests Abraham's faith. As the text says, "God tested Abraham" (Gen. 22:1). The test is a contradiction between what God has promised and what God commands. As Calvin puts it, "His [Abraham's] mind, however, must have been severely crushed, and violently agitated, when the command and the promise of God were conflicting within him."<sup>22</sup> The problem, of course, is that this command from God poses serious problems not only for Abraham's faith but for Calvin's theology as well. Why did

God command such a thing? The Bible does not tell us, but Calvin does.

The Lord, indeed, is so indulgent to our infirmity, that he does not thus severely and sharply try our faith: yet he intended, in the father of all the faithful, to propose an example by which he might call us to a general trial of faith. For the faith, which is more precious than gold and silver, ought not to lie idle, without trial; and experience teaches that each will be tried by God, according to the measure of his faith. At the same time, also, we may observe that God tempts his servants, not only when he subdues the affections of the flesh, but when he reduces all their senses to nothing,<sup>23</sup> that he may lead them to a complete renunciation of themselves.

God tests Abraham in order that we might have an example for the tests God will send our way according to the measure of our faith. Calvin explains why God tests Abraham, but which is worse--the silence of the text or Calvin's explanation?

One possible issue that this text and Calvin's interpretation raise for us is whether Calvin's theology is least compelling precisely at those points where his theology leads him to say more than the text does.

Clearly, Calvin understands Abraham to be an example for us. And he understands Peter in the same way. In A Harmony of the Gospels, Calvin depicts Peter not only as an example but as one in whom all of us are to see ourselves. In response to Matthew's account of Peter's denial of Jesus, Calvin writes,

This story of Peter's fall is a clear image of our own weakness, and his repentance is given us as an unforgettable example of the goodness and mercy of God. This one man's story contains a teaching which is extremely useful for the whole church. It instructs those who stand faithful to watch and fear that they may not fall; and it lifts up those who have fallen with the hope of forgiveness.<sup>24</sup>

In Calvin's exegesis, Peter even more so than Abraham is interpreted in realistic terms. Abraham is an example to us, and in that sense someone by whom we should be instructed, but a figure we are to appropriate in our world. Peter, on the other hand, is not merely an example to us. Calvin does say he is an example of God's goodness and mercy, but of equal or greater significance, he is also an image of our weakness. Or as A. W. Morrison translates the text, Peter "brilliantly mirrors our own infirmity."<sup>25</sup> Hence, Peter is not only an example to us of God's mercy, but we discern in him the truth about ourselves. He is a mirror in which we see the true image of human weakness, especially the weakness of human faith.

Again, just as he did with Abraham, Calvin tells us more about Peter's psychological condition than the text does. Calvin describes

Peter as overcome by fear and panic. According to Calvin, Peter denied Jesus,

. . . not because he was being dragged before the tribunal of the high priest, or because his enemies were upon him to kill him with violent hands, but because he was terrified by the voice of a woman.<sup>26</sup>

Now, it is certainly plausible that Peter was as frightened and as panic stricken as Calvin thinks he was, but the biblical text does not say that. The text does not tell us what prompted Peter to deny Jesus. The text only tells us that when the cock crowed, Peter "broke down and wept."

We should note that Calvin's interpretation of Peter's denial of Jesus in the Harmony is based primarily on the text in Matthew 26:69-75. Auerbach's interpretation, of course, was based on Mark 14:41-46. Does the fact that Calvin uses Matthew while Auerbach appeals to Mark make a difference in their interpretations? Not as far as Calvin is concerned. In the introduction to the Harmony, Calvin admits that it is not possible to comment on one of the synoptic Gospels without comparing it to the other two. He recognizes that this has led many commentators to attempt to reconcile the three accounts by means of a synthesis. But Calvin finds a synthesis unsatisfactory, and prefers instead to line up the three accounts and let the reader make the comparisons. In Calvin's words,

. . . as limited minds find the comparison hard to grasp, continually having to turn up this place and that, I thought it would be a welcome and useful short cut to treat the three narratives together in a continuous line, on one form so to speak, where readers could see at a glance the points of likeness and difference. So I shall omit nothing which is found written in one of the three, and shall put the material of two or three into one context. Whether or not this will have the value I anticipate will be judged by the use readers make of it.<sup>27</sup>

Both in the Harmony and in his sermons on the passion of Christ, Calvin takes Matthew as his text. Where the other Gospels include something not found in Matthew, Calvin usually notices it and comments upon it. One of the most interesting examples of this procedure is Luke's account of Peter's denial (Luke 22:55-62) in which Luke has Jesus turn and look at Peter after the cock crows. Calvin interprets this to mean that when a person sins, he or she cannot repent "unless the Lord look at him."<sup>28</sup>

Of even greater significance is the fact that although Calvin does not write a synthesis of the Gospels but a harmony of them, he clearly believes that the three Gospels tell one story. Furthermore, Calvin readily acknowledges that there are differences between the three Gospels and states his opinion that Mark and Luke did not have access to Matthew when they wrote their accounts. Nonetheless, Calvin believes that there is, as he puts it, "a wonderful unity in their diverse



patterns of writing" which Calvin attributes to the work of the Holy Spirit. Calvin might have had no problems with what we have come to know as "the synoptic problem" in modern biblical scholarship. Indeed, he probably would have been eager to learn about it. But I also suspect that Calvin would have been deeply puzzled, saddened, and perhaps angered by the inability of many contemporary theologians and biblical scholars to discern the one gospel in the Bible.

What, then, can we say about Calvin's treatment of Genesis 22 and Mark 14 (as interpreted through Matthew 26)? There is considerable evidence to support Frel's argument that Calvin reads the Bible pre-critically and realistically. For the most part, Calvin does not separate the literal sense of the text from its historical referent. The question of the historicity of Genesis 22 and Mark 14 is not an issue for Calvin. Nor does he feel compelled to discuss the earlier forms and possible functions of the biblical narratives in the early church. His attention is riveted on the biblical text.

Given this approach to the text, it is hardly surprising that Calvin does not use the reader's world as the basis for the interpretation and assessment of the claims made in the biblical text. Calvin certainly appeals to human reality and the reader's experience, but more often than not the world of the reader is an illustration and reflection of the reality of the text rather than vice versa. I suspect that Calvin would strongly agree with Auerbach's claim that the biblical text makes a tyrannical claim to truth and that truth is to be found within the reality narrated by the text and not within the reader's experience and self-understanding.

For the most part, I think Frel is correct when he describes Calvin as a pre-critical interpreter of the Bible. What I have tried to suggest, however, is that Frel's case is not as clear cut as he thinks it is. Calvin does things with the text which a consistent "pre-critical" interpreter should not. Occasionally, Calvin does make the text say more than it does say. Calvin often appears to know more about the thinking and feeling of figures in biblical narrative than the text allows him to.

I have suggested two reasons why I think Calvin may from time to time fall prey to this tendency. On the one hand, it may be because the text does what it is supposed to. Calvin allows himself to be caught up in the text, but when he does so is unwilling to accept the shadows in the text, the text's silence on some matters, and even its ambiguity. Calvin is not content with the shadows, the ambiguity, because, in the second place, he is unwilling to allow the text to be silent on theological matters that are of overriding significance for him. Calvin resolves the text's silence and ambiguity by speaking for it. He explains what the text refuses to explain. However, when Calvin does so he impoverishes both his theology and the biblical text he seeks to interpret.

There is one other matter we have not discussed--namely, the extent to which Calvin not only maintains the coherence between the

literal and the historical but also reads the text figurally. If we were to go back and take another look at Genesis 22 and the texts on the Passion, we would discover that Calvin does interpret them canonically. He invokes the first chapter of James, the first chapter of second Corinthians, and the eleventh chapter of Hebrews in his interpretation of Genesis 22. And Calvin not only interprets texts canonically, but he also reads them figurally, as is evident in his preface to Olivetan's translation of the New Testament.

He [Christ] is Isaac, the beloved Son of the Father who was offered as a sacrifice, but nevertheless did not succumb to the power of death. He is Jacob the watchful shepherd, who has such great care for the sheep which he guards. He is the good and compassionate brother Joseph, who in his glory was not ashamed to acknowledge his brothers, however lowly and abject their condition. He is the great sacrificer and bishop Melchizedek, who has offered an eternal sacrifice once for all. He is the sovereign lawgiver Moses, writing the law on the tables of our hearts by his Spirit. He is the faithful captain and guide Joshua, to lead us to the Promised Land. He is the magnificent and triumphant king Solomon, governing his kingdom in peace and prosperity. He is the strong and powerful Samson, who by his death has overwhelmed all his enemies.<sup>29</sup>

#### IV. Concluding Reflections

At the beginning of this essay, we asked to what extent Calvin could and should be described as a "narrative theologian." As a first step in answering that question, we have attempted to clarify whether Calvin fits Frei's description of him as a "pre-critical" narrative theologian. The extent to which Calvin is or is not a narrative theologian cannot be answered only by studying his commentaries or by determining how often Calvin uses narrative texts in his theology. The more important issue is the extent to which Calvin's theology is decisively shaped by the reality narrated in the Bible and the extent to which biblical narrative plays a role in Calvin's interpretation of the realities of faith.

We began by pointing to the confusion in many Christian, especially Protestant, communities concerning the Bible. Does Calvin offer us any help with this problem? Calvin does show us how the Bible was read at one time, and, if Frei is correct, perhaps how it should be read at all times. If the Bible has fallen silent or lost its voice in the life of the church, that may be because we have choked it to death on little pieces of audience criticism and structural exegesis. Perhaps we suffer from a severe form of farsightedness in which we can see only the minutiae of the text and no longer the larger reality within the text. In any case, there appear to be fewer and fewer of us who are able to discern any relation between the figures of Isaac and Jesus or between Peter and ourselves.

The answer to our dilemma is not for us to turn our backs on historical-criticism. Bultmann was correct when he wrote that "de-

mythologizing is the radical application of the doctrine of justification by faith to the sphere of thought and knowledge."<sup>50</sup> The issue is not whether we shall do away with historical-criticism, but whether we can recover the capacity to read the Bible as narrative history, even as our narrative history. While we may not be able to read the Bible the same way that Calvin did, which is simply to say we dare not pretend that we inhabit the same world that Calvin did, we can be reminded by him of the one who is the central but hidden character in biblical narrative and who still attempts to speak to us in it.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>James D. Smart, The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970).

<sup>2</sup>Everett C. Hughes, "The Study of Occupations" in Sociology Today, Robert K. Merton et al (New York: Basic Books, 1959), quoted in James D. Glasse, "The Protestant Minister and the Professions" in Profession: Minister (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), pp. 50-51.

<sup>3</sup>For example, see Walter Wink, The Bible in Human Transformation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Widely recognized practitioners are Brevard Childs, James Sanders, Gerald Sheppard, and Walter Brueggemann.

<sup>5</sup>Mark Ellingsen, "Luther as Narrative Exegete" in The Journal of Religion, Vol 63, No. 4 (October 1983), 384-413.

<sup>6</sup>That is, there appears to have been more work done on what Calvin said about the authority of scripture and, recently, more work done on the principles of Calvin's hermeneutics than studies of what Calvin does in his commentaries and sermons. Still, recent Calvin scholarship has benefited from important work done on Calvin's exegetical methods and skills.

<sup>7</sup>Hans Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>9</sup>Eric Auerbach, Mimesis, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 73.

<sup>10</sup>Frei, The Eclipse, p. 31.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>12</sup>Auerbach, Mimesis, pp. 11-12.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>15</sup>Corpus Reformatorum: Joannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia, Guilielmus Baum, Eduardus Cunitz and Eduardus Reuss, eds. (Brunsvigae: C. A. Schwetschke et Filium, 1863-1897), Vol. XXIII, Col. 309-320 and Vol. XLV, Col. 740-745. References to this work are hereafter cited by CR, followed by volume and column numbers.

<sup>16</sup>See the translation by John King in The Geneva Series of Commentaries, John Calvin, Genesis (Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1975), pp. 557-574. Hereafter cited as Genesis.

<sup>17</sup>Gerhard von Rad, Genesis, trans. John Marks. "The Old Testament Library" (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), p. 233.

<sup>18</sup>CR, XXIII, 313; Genesis, p. 563.

<sup>19</sup>CR, XXIII, 315; Genesis, p. 567.

<sup>20</sup>Von Rad, Genesis, p. 235.

<sup>21</sup>Walter Brueggemann, Genesis. "Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching" (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), pp. 187-8.

<sup>22</sup>CR, XXIII, 313; Genesis, p. 563.

<sup>23</sup>CR, XXIII, 314; Genesis, p. 564.

<sup>24</sup>CR, XLV, 741. The translation is by Joseph Haroutunian in Calvin: Commentaries, The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. XXIII (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968, p. 321. Hereafter cited as Commentaries.

<sup>25</sup>A Harmony of the Gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke. In "Calvin's New Testament Commentaries," trans. A. W. Morrison. Eds. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), Vol. 3, p. 169. Hereafter cited as Harmony.

<sup>26</sup>CF, XLV, 742; Commentaries, p. 322.

<sup>27</sup>CR, XLV, 4; Harmony, pp. xiii-xiv.

<sup>28</sup>CR, XLV, 745; Commentaries, p. 324.

<sup>29</sup>Commentaries, p. 69.

<sup>30</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1958), p. 84.