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Patterns of Religious Practice: Nontheological Features

We students of the Reformation generally still form our judgements concerning this movement's shape and progress by relying on the published words of its leaders, and in particular their discourses upon doctrine. These ink-inscribed records are, I freely concede, indispensable as we seek to arrive at a fuller understanding of religious practice in the sixteenth century. I am persuaded that they must not be taken as the whole of the evidence. After a period of opposition beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, sociocultural and intellectual history are coming together in the common effort to elucidate, further than either could have done separately, the contrasting features of those strains of religious renewal that would become what we know as denominations, and which Ernst Troeltsch saw in their formative impulses as akin to 'sects'¹. Yet Troeltsch himself relied heavily on the formal theological treatises of the founders.

Now we are looking to a variety of indices of intention. We are redefining the verb *to articulate*, to include the ways of speaking inherent in a broad variety of evidence. We are laying greater weight upon the Reformers' personal correspondence and, if available, other more spontaneous utterances such as Luther's *Table Talk* in our search for private inclination, which do not always coincide precisely with public teaching. In their contradictions, we might say that at a formal level, the Reformers were somewhat *inarticulate*: the arguments of their formal treatises and those of behavior or of the symbols they adopted for their churches did not always coincide. Or, to use this verb, *to articulate*, in one more way, belief and practice did not always *articulate* in the manner of those jointed buses and street-cars that bend their way around corners.

In addition to theology and less formal personal sources, we are processing the ambiguous testimony of those leaders who traversed the countryside inspecting the parishes and attempting to impose the will of those who had sent them; we are looking at *practice* as well as theory. We are studying the liturgies as these evolved for what catechisms, hymn lyrics, and prayers say about the full range of topics of their day. We are interpreting the signals of architecture, décor, and ritual as elements de-

¹ *Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2 vols., trans. by Olive Wyon (New York 1960) 1: 336–49; 2: 462–65.

signed to convey to the laity where their convictions should lie and how they ought to deport themselves within a Christian society. All of these elements taken together yield to us a richer harvest of insight into the developmental patterns that made up the Reformations of early modern religion. As said, these parts are not wholly consonant with one another – we must expect this outcome at the very beginning. Also, the influences upon any given setting were varied, combining immediate and longer-term circumstances as well as social, economic, and political factors, not to mention the unique roles of powerful individuals. The passage of time itself could be akin to a tilt of the kaleidoscope, changing the arrangement of individually familiar shards of glass. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Founders' visions may have receded despite their successors' illusions of fidelity.

I. Communality and Individual

I want to take up three aspects of the Reformation that, owing to our reliance on theology, we may not have sufficiently drawn upon in the typologies that over decades we have presented to our classes. The first of these aspects is the interplay between community and individual. In preparing *The Reformation of Ritual*, I noticed that the liturgies prepared in the Southwest of the Holy Roman Empire preferred a communal setting for worship and the sacraments. I shall use the examples of baptism and the Eucharist.

Throughout the sixteenth century Lutheran baptism was permitted to go on being a private affair involving infant, godparents, and infant². To be sure, the Wittenberg Reformer looked kindly on the presence and the prayers of others when a baby was christened, but neither was required. By contrast, in the German-speaking Southwest, the heartland of communal impulses, Ulrich Zwingli, Johannes Oecolampadius, Martin Bucer, and, later, John Calvin and his followers made communal baptism obligatory. The sacrament was to occur exclusively before the gathered congregation. Members of the community were not only observers, but they were expected to express their cares and concerns for the child to God in the form of their prayers and their resolve to share in the task of rearing a godly young person into an upright citizen. These Reformers would have agreed with that African proverb, adopted by Hillary Clinton as the title of her book, „It takes a village to raise a child.“

² Most of the material on baptism is drawn from my unpublished paper, „Suffer the Little Children to Come unto Me: Baptism, the Body of Christ, and the Community, presented in German in March 1998 at the Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte, Göttingen, at a conference on the period immediately following birth; and in English in September 1998, at the Institute of Sacred Music, Yale Divinity School, Yale University, New Haven. Just published as „Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not: The Social Location of Baptism in Early Modern Germany, in: Robert J. Bast and Andrew C. Gow (eds.), Continuity and Change, the Harvest of Late-Medieval and Reformation History: Essays Presented to Heiko A. Oberman on His 70th Birthday (Leiden 2000) 359–78.

Further, the Southwest Reformers insisted that the fleshly progenitors of the baptisands, the babies' fathers, be present at their children's induction into the Christian community. Although they retained the ancient practice of godparents as those who actually held the babies and received them again after the application of water, their enforcement of the fathers' participation showed their recognition that paternal oversight, because it was the most constant and intimate, was essential to attaining the goal of the righteous Christian young person. In two important respects, then, the Southwestern Reformers acted out in the liturgy their conviction that baptism is the engraftment of the infant into the Body of Christ, which is to say, into the Christian collectivity – the familial group and the assembly of those who lived in the same parish. In Lutheran territories, only gradually and partially were fathers admitted to their offspring's baptismal ceremonies, and then not everywhere. Well past the boundaries of the Reformation era, it remained possible for midwives to hasten babies off to church for an abbreviated and private christening.

Similarly, in the Lord's Supper, the people met their Lord as a group. This was so more pronouncedly in the Southwest. I assert this despite the recognition that each person, North and South, had the duty to understand, to examine his or her conscience, to be thankful, to submit. Nevertheless, there is a collective context, even a communal emphasis in the Southwest, that warrants our notice. In the new, more disciplinary setting, the laity *must* be present at Communion. They must now sit in their serrate rows. They move in unison, they sing in unison – or in Zurich they do not sing. They are duty-bound to partake of the sacrament when it is offered; they may not demur. The implication of this pattern is that Christians encounter their Maker in communal groupings. The ebb and flux of the late medieval sanctuary is a thing of the past; the individual decision about when and to what degree to comply with one's confessor's instructions is gone. A certain worldly free will has departed with that element of human participation in decisions affecting salvation. Auricular and even congregational confession having often been eliminated, the individual is integrated into a communal mass whose differentiating feature is chiefly the status of each member in the community, a worldly determinant based on wealth, occupation, gender, age, and marital status. The individual is judged by his external conformity to the imposed norm. A degree of popular identification of the self as part of a communal whole may well have been the goal of religious leaders, but its success is beyond the scope of this study. One could hardly feel a part of a group inside the church if it did not correspond to and was not reinforced by a sense of solidarity outside the church. Whether or not this was or could be so varied infinitely with specific circumstances. One can hardly look at the structure of the Mass or any other observance and make an assertion concerning every participant's sense of identity³.

³ I am obviously referring here to *John Bossy, The Mass As a Social Institution 1200–1700*, in: *Past and Present* 100 (August 1983) 29–61, in which the author takes the Mass as signifying and consolidating community. I greatly admire this essay, which creates a clever model that

Within Lutheranism, the disciplinary norm does loom ever larger as the sixteenth century wears on. But here at least the pastor and each single parishioner meet in the confessional to become acquainted. Ideally, in this setting, each person's unique personality and familiarity with doctrine becomes better known to the spiritual advisor than might have been the case without confession. In some sense, the individual is more prominent in the northern – the Lutheran – model. Further, it appears to have been easier for the defiant and the merely lax to avoid Communion. Very often in Lutheran ritual formulae, those who desire *Abendmahl* are invited to come forward; after they partake they may be seated temporarily in the choir, if any, of the church, separated from the main body of worshippers.

It is hard to say just when and to what extent the Weberian concept of „ascetic individualism“ might be applicable in Calvinist circles⁴. Certainly it is not in those years when Reformed leaders exerted themselves to subdue and discipline every person in their care. The people were *not* ascetic; in addition to their indifference to teachings, that was precisely the problem from the clerical point of view⁵. They had not internalized the official values of their creed. This is surely why Weber began with Puritanism, which is „second-phase“ Calvinism, that is, the phase within which the faithful more generally adopted the world view of their spiritual guides.

In both North and South, principles of community and individualism engaged in a counterpoint with each other. Scholars such as Andrew Pettegree have argued that the Reformed faith was highly individualistic, placing „a premium on personal salvation and encourag[ing] a certain inward-looking quality“⁶. This exam-

appeals to reason. But whether or not Bossy's theory was borne out in practice depends on other factors bolstering or hindering the commonality. Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Post-Reformation Lutheran Mass, a Communal Experience?*, unpublished paper presented at the meetings of the Society for Reformation Research (St. Louis, Missouri October 1996).

⁴ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by Talcott Parsons (New York 1958) esp. chap. 5, *Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 155–83. For a recent critique, see Robert S. Duplessis, *Transitions to Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (New Approaches to European History 10, Cambridge/Engl., New York 1997) 134–36.

⁵ Apropos of marriage and sexuality, see Heinz Schilling, *Frühneuzeitliche Formierung und Disziplinierung von Ehe, Familie und Erziehung im Spiegel calvinistischer Kirchenratsprotokolle*, in: Paolo Prodi (ed.), *Treue und Eid: Treueformel, Glaubensbekenntnisse und Sozialdisziplinierung zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit* (Schriften des Historischen Kollegs 28, Munich 1993) 199–235; a somewhat altered version of which appears as „Reform and Supervision of Family Life in Germany and the Netherlands“, in: Raymond A. Mentzer (ed.), *Sin and the Calvinists: Morals Control and the Consistory in the Reformed Tradition* (Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies 32, Kirksville, Mo. 1994) 15–61. In the same volume, see also Michael F. Graham, *Social Discipline in Scotland, 1560–1610*, 129–57. Charles H. Parker touches on some of the same generational issues in „Two Generations of Discipline: Moral Reform in Delft before and after the Synod of Dort“, (forthcoming in *Archive for Reformation History*, probably 2001).

⁶ Andrew Pettegree, *Confessionalization in North Western Europe*, in: Joachim Bahlcke, Arno Strohmeier (eds.), *Konfessionalisierung in Ostmitteleuropa: Wirkungen des religiösen Wandels im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert in Staat, Gesellschaft und Kultur* (Forschungen zur Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Mitteleuropa 7, Stuttgart 1999) 105–120, here at 120.

ination of conscience, however, is as pronounced in Lutheranism as in denominations descended from Calvinism. In the latter instance, only the successful inculcation of guilt concerning one's misdeeds could produce such self-scrutiny. That inculcation was the intention of Reformed preaching, but we cannot say to what degree its hearers internalized the message.

Creeds did present contradictions. These may be seen especially starkly in relation to death. Calvinism, for all its stress upon Christians in the aggregate, cut off each member at the moment of death, interring her or him hastily, without ceremony, and striving to suppress all public and even all less-than-moderate private grieving. The theological precept of the invisible church made up of the living and dead faithful gives legitimacy in the sign language of practice exclusively to the living. In the meantime, even though the cemeteries, those „little beds of rest“, had been relegated to the periphery, Lutherans ceremonially accompanied their loved ones off to the sleep of those who awaited the Last Judgment. The dead were inaccessible but not eliminated from the personal discourse of their living relatives. In his writings Luther placed greater emphasis than Calvin did upon the duty to love and serve one's neighbor. It would be of interest to know whether the Wittenberg Reformer's personal inclination bore fruit within those areas that owed him nominal allegiance and whether in this sense, too, Lutheranism expressed its own kind of attraction toward community. Nevertheless, Reformed parishes are equally famous for the institutions of social relief that they established. Perhaps I am quibbling here about the qualities of mercy – whose motive was more compassion and whose more communal duty – than about the results, which were practically the same.

II. Emotion

Emotion strikes some of us as the topic of the hour, and yet nearly a century ago Weber perceived the emotional differences between Calvinism and Lutheranism⁷. Emotion, however, is not all of one kind or degree; and to claim for the Reformed faith an indifference to or the total suppression of emotion, as Weber did, is highly inaccurate⁸. We can begin to sort out the differences of type if we include the „signs“ as well as official precepts.

It is initially true that the entire spectrum of European Protestantism ended affective piety as an ideal⁹. At the intellectual level, much of the theologians' discussion focuses on Catholic ritual artefacts as idolatrous, as fostering the belief that in their own right they possess divine potency of which even ordinary wor-

⁷ Weber, *Protestant Ethic* 112–14, 123, 138–40.

⁸ Ibid. 123.

⁹ On this subject, see my recent essay, which looks chiefly at Lutheranism, „Gedanken, Herz und Sinn: Die Unterdrückung der religiösen Emotionen, in: Bernhard Jussen, Craig M. Koslofsky (eds.), *Kulturelle Reformation* (Göttingen 1999) 65–90.

shippers can avail themselves. There are other, possibly subliminal, messages. I shall not dwell here on the significance of removing virtually all images of women, in stereotype more inclined to emotion than men, from the sanctuary. We must note them in passing nonetheless. Overall, the changes in decoration signal calm, order, and the undelegated supremacy of the Deity.

Unable to build new churches that might have conveyed in their shape precisely what the Reformers desired, Zwingli and then, more thoroughly, Calvin re-oriented their sanctuaries. Unaware of architectural semiotics as represented today by A. J. Greimas and his school, they followed conviction and instinct¹⁰. Spectacularly absent were the moving portrayals of the Man of Sorrows and the grisly agonies of the myriad saints. Not only did these Reformers remove every image and concrete symbol of divinity, but they whitewashed the interiors. Industrial psychologists today can tell us just what monochromatic design means and which hues are likely to rouse and which to pacify. There were no objects to catch the attention other than the deliberately intruding, visually unavoidable pulpit. Occasionally a word-painting, usually of the Ten Commandments, was allowed in a Reformed sanctuary¹¹. These arrangements appealed to thought rather than feeling. In addition, the removal of the altar to one side wall of the sacral space and the blocking off of the old altar's stead, not only sought to eliminate „superstitious“ attention to the previously powerful site of the Mass, but it enjoined parishioners to reflect on nothing other than the meaning of the atonement. The German word *Andacht*, which is usually translated as *devotion* in English, in Calvinist churches was sent back to its roots: *thinking about* or *reflecting upon*. There were no longer various types of devotion from among which a Christian could choose.

Luther, too, formally taught that the Catholic Mass was an abomination (*greuel*) filled with idolatrous and superstitious elements. Lutheran sanctuaries were cleansed of most saints' icons with all their power to arouse. Crucifixes may have remained but were gradually transformed until they conformed, many of

¹⁰ By A. J. Greimas, among others, *Sémantique structurale* (Paris 1966, 1986), trans. as *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method*, trans. by D. McDowell, R. Schleiffer, A. Velie (Lincoln, Neb. 1983); M. Hammad, *Espaces didactiques: analyse et conception*, in: *Actes Sémiotiques*. Le Bulletin 2, 7 (1979) 30–32; *L'espace comme sémiotique synchrétique*, in: *Actes Sémiotiques*. Le Bulletin 6, 27 (1983) 26–30; *Rituels sacrés/rituels profanes. Usages signifiants de l'espace*, in: *Espace. Construction et signification. Sémiotique de l'architecture* (Paris 1984) 215–40; by Gerrard Lukken, *Semiotische analyse van de nuwelijksluiting in het post-tridentijnse Rituele Romanum*, in: *Jaarboek voor Liturgie-onderzoek* 5 (1989) 275–99; *Die architektonischen Dimensionen des Rituals*, in: *Liturgisches Jahrbuch* 39 (1989) 19–36; *Les transformations du rôle du peuple: la contribution de la sémiotique à l'histoire de la liturgie*, in: C. Caspers and M. Schneiders (eds.), *Omnes Circumadstantes. Contributions towards a History of the Role of the People in the Liturgy* (Kampen 1990) 15–30; *idem* with Mark Searle, *Semiotics and Church Architecture: Applying the Semiotics of A. J. Greimas and the Paris School to the Analysis of Church Buildings* (Kampen, The Netherlands 1993).

¹¹ Joseph Koerner has shown that these sometimes appeared in Lutheran churches as well: „Quotes in Images and Images in Quotes: Pictures for Luther's Reformation“, paper presented at the first international conference of Frühe Neuzeit Interdisziplinär, Duke University, April 22, 1995.

them, with the model provided by Lucas Cranach in the predella in the Wittenberg City Church. Here Christ no longer manifests His torment or bleeds profusely. His body hangs limp, for He is dead, and His task of atonement is accomplished. Luther is depicted as pointing this out to the calm ranks of citizens, separated by gender. They listen, they comprehend, but they do not outwardly react. *Andacht* is not in any respect perceptible but is internalized. It is an attitude characterized by thankfulness and peace. These may be seen as emotions, but they are calm ones.

Nevertheless, as I have pointed out in my book, Luther and his followers allowed other, contrasting signals to remain in place. Most rousing of all was, of course, the Real Presence of the Son of God that coexisted with the bread and the wine in the eucharistic meal. Even without transubstantiation, ingesting the true body and blood of Christ is a moving experience for the devout, little different from that of the Catholic laity. If the priest did not effect a miracle, one occurred somewhere in proximity to the old and potent altar nonetheless. In addition, approved images of all kinds remained, organs and choirboys accompanied the people and added, in the course of the century, ever more complicated *figuralmusik* to the divine service. Clerical vestments underwent an initial simplification, but in some Lutheran parishes, more decorative ones were retained, brought out again in the baroque-tending later sixteenth century, and were even replaced as they wore out. All of these lent the possibility of arousal of the senses to the act of worship, in distinct continuity with Catholic practice.

One of the places in which we can view differences in approaches to religious emotions is in sermons on the Passion of Christ. Although all groups that we label as Protestant officially eradicated the late medieval model of affective piety, every preacher took a somewhat different tack in his own sermons. We can identify tendencies associated with the categories that are familiar to us. Within Counter-Reformation Catholicism, continuity is an overwhelming feature, and yet there are alterations – which, however, cannot be the subject of today's presentation¹². Lutheran and Calvinist preachers were indignant about the content of Catholic oratory. One feature to which they objected was the effort of Catholic homiletics to cause profound feeling in their listeners. In a volume of Passion sermons by Urbanus Rhegius, Johann Kymeus, Johannes Bugenhagen, and Martin Luther, published in Wittenberg in 1539 and 1540, Kymeus observed disparagingly:

It was the final goal of those who preached the Passion [to consider] how one could move the people to crying, to howling, and to lamenting over the unkind Jews and hard-hearted people who took the life of Christ, God's Son. But the recognition of sin and faith, which one ought chiefly by means of the Passion to bring about, this remained behind.

(„Vnd ist also der endlich scopus gewesen, wenn man vns die Passion gepredigt hat, wie man das volck bewegen möchte, zu weinen, zu heulen, vnd zu klagen vber die vngütigen Jüden, vnd hartselige völker, so Christum, Gottes Son erwürget haben, Das erkenntnis aber, der sün-

¹² See the excellent article by Donna Spivey Ellington, *Impassioned Mother or Passive Icon: The Virgin's Role in Late Medieval and Early Modern Passion Sermons*, in: *Renaissance Quarterly* 48, 2 (summer 1995) 227–61.

den, vnd glaube, die man fürnemlich mit der Passion zu wegen bringen solt, sind da hinden geblieben.“)¹³

The man judged to be the best preacher was he who could moved his hearers to the greatest weeping and crying¹⁴. Kymeus went on contrasting former and evangelical propriety in his remarks about behavior toward crucifixes:

Up until now we have held the wooden cross of Christ in great honor. We have had it rendered in silver and gold, bent the knee before it, [and] greeted it as the one comfort, as the song, „O crux aue, etc.“ demonstrates. But from now on we must look to the proper cross of Christ, which is all the adversity and hardship that God lays upon each human being in his estate and calling. In this cross is our salvation and our comfort.... Why should we not only disregard this proper cross but trample it underfoot and practice idolatry with a [piece of] wood...?

(„Wir haben bis anher, das höltzern Creutz Christi, inn grossen ehren gehalten, habbens jnn silber vnd gold verfasset, die knye dafur gebeuget, vnd solchs fur den einigen trost gegrüset, wie der gesang O crux aue etc. ausweist. Wir müssen vns aber hie nach dem rechten Creutz Christi vmsehen, welchs ist alle widerwertigkeit vnd mühseligkeit so Gott einem jglichen menschen jnn seinem stand vnd beruff auffleget. An diesem Creutz ist heil vnd trost.... Warum solten wir denn das recht Creutz Christi, so gar nicht achten, ja mit füssen treten, vnd mit einem holtz, Abgötterey treiben...?“)¹⁵

Luther suspended the Catholic practice of preaching long and loudly during Lent and especially Holy Week on the minutiae of Christ's suffering. Nonetheless, some Lutheran preachers were occasionally tempted to fall back into the older ways – possibly because of rhetorical standards that urged them to appeal to the affect of their hearers. For devout men at their task of conveying this painful part of Christ's life to ordinary folk, this was in any case hard to resist. Johannes Brenz waxes detailed and lyrical in describing Jesus's despair as he cries out, „My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?“ We may believe that Brenz suffers with his Lord¹⁶. Still, he manages repeatedly to call attention back to the underlying significance of Christ's torment:

... We should ever wish, and continually cry out in our hearts, that His blood – that is, the merit of the blood of Christ – may come down upon us and our children.

(„...Wir sollen vns wünschen, vnnd stetigs von hertzen schreyen, das sein blut, das ist der verdienst des bluts Christi, komme vber vns vnnd vnser kinder.“)¹⁷

Later in the century, Martin Chemnitz, Superintendent in Braunschweig, finds it even more difficult to restrain his impulse to depict and analyze every aspect of Christ's ordeal. In his immense book of Passion sermons, of course he recognizes the fundamental reason for the Savior's death, and repeatedly calls attention to it:

¹³ *Passional Buch. Vom Leiden vnd Aufferstehung vnsers Herrn Jhesu Christi...* (Wittenberg 1540) fol. x.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* fol. xxiii.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* fol. xxv.

¹⁶ *Johann Brentz* [sic], *Passio Vnsers Herren Jesu Christi leyden vnd sterben, nach Hystorischer beschreybung der vier Euangelisten...* (Nuremberg 1551) Ddv.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* fol. Ccv.

... The story of the Passion is so assiduously described by the Holy Spirit, and God has the same [story] preached and presented by his servants, so that as a result such devotion [*Andacht*] may be ignited in us that from this account we learn to recognize the seriousness of God concerning sin and flee from it [sin]; and in addition that we learn to observe and acknowledge God's unspeakable love for us poor humans.

(„... Die Historia der Passion vom heiligen Geist so fleissig beschrieben ist, vnd dieselbe vns *Gott* durch seine diener lest predigen vnd fürtragen, das daraus solche andacht in vns müge angezündet werden, wir aus dieser historien den ernst Gottes wieder die sünde, lernen erkennen, vnd die sünde fliehen, auch daneben hiebey die vnaussprechliche liebe Gottes gegen vns arme Menschen lernen betrachten vnd erkennen.“)¹⁸

At the same time, Chemnitz does not spare his audiences the version of Judas's suicide that has the traitor's intestines spill out upon the ground, a particularly dishonorable occurrence¹⁹. In this respect, then, Chemnitz has reverted to the late medieval style of reciting every shift and nuance of Christ's torment, enhancing its interest by incorporating popular prejudices.

The tone and the content of John Calvin's own Passion sermons are remarkably different. Amazingly, the preacher speaks hardly at all about the suffering Christ. He alludes to every phase of the well-known events in order to impress upon the individual Christian his or her profound sinfulness. Whereas Catholic and Lutheran homiletics had always sought to accomplish this, they proceeded indirectly. They drew attention to the Savior's agony in each of its parts and then attempted to persuade their audiences of their personal responsibility for it. Calvin very nearly dispenses with the first step and concentrates on the second. In varied and colorful language, he recites humankind's utter worthlessness. Human affections are such that no one can raise a finger without provoking God's anger. God pronounces that people are totally perverse and from the cradle on, all that they are able to accomplish is vanity. Little children, too, are serpents, full of venom, malice, and disdain²⁰. He uses the episodes about Judas's betrayal of Christ and Peter's cutting off the servant's ear to point out that „all of us are not only disfigured by our sins but full of infection and abominable“. If we are not called to grace, then there is no hope for us²¹.

It would be incorrect to see in Calvin's treatment no effort to arouse feeling. Clearly he desires all those within his spiritual care to be filled with a sense of their contamination, their worthlessness, and the displeasure, even the anger, that they continually cause their heavenly Father. He wishes Christians to come to deep regret, acknowledging all their faults. This form of emotion is turned in against the self. It is also highly individual. The irony of the Reformed pattern is that it places Christians in a collective ritual setting but isolates them before God. Here once

¹⁸ *Martin Chemnitz*, *Historia Der Passion vnsers lieben HERRN vnd Heylands Jesu Christi...*, comp. Melchior Newkirchen (1591) 212.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* part 4, p. 8.

²⁰ In preparing these remarks, I have used *Jean Calvin*, *Plusieurs Sermons de Iejan Calvin touchant la Diuinite, humanite, et natiuite de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christi...* (1558). Pp. 28–267 are Calvin's sermons on the Passion; here at 47–48.

²¹ *Ibid.* 119.

again, a study of the sign language of liturgy and architecture cannot fully expose the paradox of Calvinist clerical persuasion: it is at once aggregative and individuating; it suppresses outward expressions of affect but strives to concentrate self-condemnation in each single Christian – and such deprecation is based in emotion. Luther and his followers, in contrast, by leaving in place the possibility of the observer's establishing sympathy with Christ in his suffering, tacitly allow the devout to draw upon a mitigating bond with their Savior²². To feel along with Christ is already to start on the path to forgiveness. Christ may truly then serve the individual as an ally. Within Calvinism the fundamental opposition between God and man cannot be bridged.

III. The Location of the Divine

We may look upon the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as an age in which reform-minded Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists all campaigned against „superstition“. Yet what Counter-Reformation ecclesiastics meant by the term was in one central respect different from what Protestant leaders meant by it. Although nearly all religious authorities tended to concentrate divine power in the Godhead, Catholicism left in place a more diffuse divinity – that is, a God content to distribute his power, and especially *access* to it, to an array of men (the clergy), objects, and places, even those available to the laity. God remained fundamentally present and approachable in the world, even if in delegated form. Catholic authorities did unquestionably try to wrest away from laypeople their earlier self-perceived capacity to manipulate the Deity by means of substances and formulae²³. Clerical approval had to be sought more and more often and was probably less frequently forthcoming. The mediative role of those who were ordained underwent reinforcement and became more exclusive than earlier.

Luther and Calvin would surely have agreed that doctrinally they returned God to his proper place as sole Lord and Master of the universe. As they saw the cosmos, God did not confer His power upon mortals. Not only was the age of miracles past, but no mortal of whatever station could, through deeds or even

²² We need to know a great deal more about Calvin's followers as preachers than we presently do. I had thought that my difficulty in finding Calvinist Passion sermons was simply the result of my searching mainly in northern Germany. Professor Bernard Roussel has communicated to me personally that in fact, in the Huguenot world, sermons were seldom published. This stands in the starkest contrast with germanophone regions, where, during the second half of the sixteenth century the printed sermon emerged as a dominant devotional and literary form. I would tentatively ask, then, whether the Calvinist abhorrence of idolatry did not extend even to the nonbiblical, nontheological book. The answer to this question will become clearer as Andrew Petegree publishes his catalogues of French religious books of the sixteenth century.

²³ See *Robert Bireley, The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450–1700* (Washington, D. C. 1999) 19.

states of mind, extract concessions from the Divinity. God did not negotiate; God did not compromise. As a consequence, every strand of belief that God might be influenced by human endeavor or imprecation ipso facto constituted superstition in that it usurped His exclusive might in shaping and deciding. Not even God's own instruments, the clergy, possessed superhuman authority; they remained fully men, vulnerable to sin, bearing no indelible mark upon their souls.

Despite these Reformers' theological resemblance to one another, and despite the very similar campaigns of their agents, consistories, and visitation committees, to impose their view that God alone was powerful and did not lend His might, the semiotic evidence suggests differences in their conceptions of God's accessibility. Luther's desire to spare weak consciences by leaving in place, and by permitting others to retain at will, whatever did not contradict his fundamental precepts, meant that the common worshipper could find much continuity in the local sanctuary. The church interior was as distinct from most people's everyday environment as it had been under Catholicism. Some paintings and statues (regardless that their content now had to be biblically attested), colored glass, high altars, wall hangings, candles, vestments, crucifixes, Latin, and, finally, the Real Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper all conveyed to the laity that God was among them. He was not remote. In the specially crafted Host He was still tangible, edible. Thus, he was not exclusively spiritual. Small wonder that people still sneaked bits of the Host or baptismal water out of the church! All the signs indicated to them that these, like other accoutrements of the divine service, continued to wield apotropaic power. God still dwelled among men and lent His strength to their causes.

The Calvinist sanctuary bespoke a revolution. The physical shape of this revolution is well known to all of us. I would concentrate for the present purpose upon what the decorative cleansing represented to parishioners. One cannot be certain of their interpretations, to be sure, but the sign language bore no continuous relation to that which had preceded it. Every traditional emblem of the sacred was gone, including the Communion wafer, which was replaced with plain table bread. Who would attribute curative powers to that too, too familiar victual?

What did remain in nearly every parish was the late-Gothic church, which could not simply be razed and replaced. Blocking up the old altarstead was an effort to relegate every idolatrous supposition that this site itself held out the divine to believers. Lee Palmer Wandel has suggested that in the unavoidable interplay of light through the old, if now uniformly colorless, windows, Calvin and those who came after him detected God's presence. She finds that „light is ... at the center for Calvin in his formulation of the nature and functioning of God's self-revelation: natural light is that most pervasive representation of God's glory; human understanding is *illuminated* by God's revelation“²⁴. To her mind, light as an aspect of nature is able to convey God's physical presence. I am inclined to regard light as a

²⁴ Lee Palmer Wandel, *Setting the Eucharist: The Articulation of 'Presence' in Lutheran and Reformed Churches*, presented at the meetings of the Sixteenth Century Studies Conference (October 1996) ms. p. 9.

metaphor of greater significance to men familiar with Neoplatonism than to ordinary people for whom prior practice and accumulated world view probably drew them to regard light alone as proof of God's physical *absence*. In case daylight conveyed God's presence to some simple parishioners, it also rendered Him spiritual and intangible. God was now ethereal, soaring above and about the scene of worship but beyond human manipulation. God gave signs by means of light: the star of Bethlehem, comets. People took heed in moods of wonderment or anxiety; light acted upon them, but they could not reach out and grasp it, much less control it. Within the Reformed creed, God was a Spirit, and they that worshipped Him had to worship Him in spirit. The intellectually informed and the mystically inclined could come to terms with a wholly spiritual Deity; the popular culture of the day strongly hints that most people could not. They required crutches, and these neither Calvin nor his disciples and successors were willing to concede to them.

The Genevan consistory records, now being published, indicate that intense supervision and discipline were principal means by which the Reformed church bolstered its abstraction of the divine²⁵. It is not illogical that a creed should have arisen in this period of emerging absolutism that separated God ever more completely from those who believed in Him – a creed that required worship, self-deprecation, and obedience and within which God could and did withhold salvation according to his inscrutable will. *Worship* as an activity and state of mind depends upon those underlings who carry it out and the Deity to whom it is directed; the word connotes a chasm in status between the two parties. Within Lutheranism, by contrast, mortals interact with their heavenly father in a mundane context. Despite His potential for wrath, God is an approachable counselor, even a loving Father. In addition, the relations between God and His children evolve in a humanly comprehensible manner, as when any two well-acquainted parties speak to one another regularly. God may be supreme, but He is willing to stoop down to the level of His earth-bound progeny and look them in the eye; He regards them *individually*. Calvin's God is over all the world; Luther's is still within it.

IV. Conclusions

These perorations hardly delineate, in the end, radically new patterns of religious practice, and certainly none that are not partly reflected in theological discourse. Looking at other kinds of evidence, however, lends us greater authority with which to sustain our categorizations; and it may reveal inner contradictions not otherwise visible. Especially Calvinism sends out mixed signals concerning the location of the individual before God. He or she is both inscribed within an em-

²⁵ Only the first volume, covering the years 1542–1544, has so far appeared: *Thomas A. Lambert, Isabelle M. Watt, Robert M. Kingdon, Jeffrey R. Watt* (eds.), *Registres du Consistoire de Genève au temps de Calvin* (Travaux d'humanisme et Renaissance 305, Geneva 1996).

phatically communal setting and starkly alone before God, standing on the brink of that abyss that William Bouwsma has made more evident to us²⁶. Simultaneously, using additional sources, we may see a greater stress within Lutheranism upon the living out of the collective Christian life with God's ongoing assistance, and at the same time a more institutionalized scrutiny of every person's soul in the confessional. Discipline is surely the byword of the day, but it is not all of one stripe and flavor. What each of these major creeds contributes, in the end, to the rise of Western individualism requires more study²⁷. It is surely premature to conclude that Calvin fostered sterner examination of conscience and Luther showed the way to Pietist mysticism. If we add practice to theology, we see that each of these emerging denominations offered its adherents an array of signals and thereby various choices. What may ultimately result from any founder's precepts the historian cannot foresee.

²⁶ *William J. Bouwsma*, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (New York, Oxford 1988) esp. 131–88.

²⁷ I find it curious that *Richard van Dülmen* does not take up Calvinism in his „Die Entdeckung des Individuums“ 1500–1800 (Frankfurt a.M. 1997).