

ABSTRACT

John Calvin on Providence: The *Locus Classicus* in Context

Recent scholarship on Calvin on divine providence has largely ignored the significance of the final location of *Inst.* 1.16-18 (Calvin's *locus classicus* on divine providence) in the 1559 *Institutes*.

This study seeks not only to redress that shortcoming but also to demonstrate that scholarly criticism directed at the concept of God in Calvin's treatment of divine providence is due primarily to a neglect of this significance. To achieve this, careful consideration is given (1) to Calvin's other providence-related writings and their relationship to and influence upon the final location of the *locus classicus* in the 1559 *Institutes*; (2) to the context within which the *locus classicus* is finally located; (3) and to the relationship between divine providence and inter-related themes, not least Calvin's concept of God the Creator, found within that context.

It will be evident that Calvin was clearly keen not only to eschew any affinity between his God-concept and that of the philosophers, but also those who claim a monotheism similar to that of the Christian Scriptures. In response to the former, Calvin insists upon the Scriptural concept of God as both infinite (*contra* "imaginative" idolatry) and spiritual (*contra* "concrete" idolatry) in nature. In response to the latter, though there may be similarities between their concepts of providence and the God of providence, ultimately, they are different because they are not Christocentric nor Trinitarian in essence.

This study concludes with an examination of an example of a misreading of Calvin's God-concept in this respect. It will be evident that Karl Barth, like so many others, misread Calvin's God-concept largely because he did not give careful consideration to the final location of providence within Calvin's *schema* in Book 1 of the 1559 *Institutes*.