

Title: *L'Ecole de Dieu: Pedagogy and Rhetoric in Calvin's Interpretation of Deuteronomy*

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ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of John Calvin's exegetical and rhetorical methodology in his sermons and commentary on Deuteronomy. The study demonstrates that Calvin's interpretation of Scripture can only be understood against the background of the patristic and medieval exegetical tradition, and in the context of sixteenth century biblical exposition and rhetorical forms. Calvin was as heavily indebted to the early modern revival of classical rhetoric as he was to the theology of Augustine or the exegesis of Nicholas of Lyra.

Part one surveys the history of scholarship on Calvin's exegesis of Scripture, and particularly of the Old Testament. Subsequently, we take up the two fundamental matters of pedagogy and rhetoric, focusing particularly on Calvin's sermons. We survey the pervasive academic motifs in Calvin's preaching; and we demonstrate that, in contrast to the conclusions of numerous studies on the subject, Calvin's sermons are thoroughly rhetorical, and that *brevitas* is not the key to understanding the whole range of Calvin's exposition of Scripture, to say nothing of his exegesis. In the Deuteronomy sermons we observe how Calvin characterizes the *scopus* of this book as a course in remedial education in the school of God, and employs academic motifs to apply this theme to specific issues in the life of the Genevan congregation. We also examine the structure of Calvin's enigmatic harmony of the latter books of Moses, and observe how his method differs in this form of exposition from that represented in his sermons.

In part two we engage in a comparative and contextual study of Calvin's exegesis of selected passages in both the sermons and the commentary. Here we demonstrate that Calvin's sermons, despite their homily form, display a high degree of rhetorical sophistication. Calvin's relationship to the traditional fourfold method of exegesis is much more positive than has previously been assumed, particularly with regard to his restrained use of allegory for teaching purposes. Calvin learns from his exegetical forebears as well as from his humanist contemporaries; his biblical interpretation owes much to the exegetical tradition, and his mode of exposition is shaped by early modern rhetoric.