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The ministry of the Word – the concept of *doctrina* as used by Calvin in his first *Institutes* (1536)

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Abstract

The ministry of the Word – the concept of *doctrina* as used by Calvin in his first *Institutes* (1536)

*Among other important theological concepts (e.g. **religio** or **iustificatio**, etc.) the concept of **doctrina** and its usage concern the heart of Reformational theology – especially in the theology of John Calvin. In spite of some important investigations that have already been undertaken in this regard, there is still a deficiency in respect of a comprehensive theological investigation of this theme. The fact that some well-known contemporary scholars nevertheless do not pay attention to the respective and different cardinal usages of **doctrina** by Calvin, underlines the need for further research. It is of considerable importance to analyse the way Calvin used the concept of **doctrina**, not only in a dogmatic and dogmen-historical sense but also with regard to homiletics, catechetics and pastoral care.*

*In this article the focus is on the 1536 edition of the **Institutes** of Calvin. Using an adequate method to analyse Calvin's usage, the results of such an analysis are presented in order to emphasise the importance of a careful dealing with concepts in general and in dealing with Calvin's usage of **doctrina** in particular.*

*This investigation shows that Calvin used **doctrina** in such an active and dynamic way that one often has to translate it with a verb, a verbalised noun or even with a verbal phrase. It is of utmost importance to distinguish between Calvin's lexical usage and his discourse-analytical usage of the concept. Calvin's bond to Scripture and his stressing of **doctrina** as proclamation accentuate his "Word-of-God-theology".*

1. Introduction

Through the ages the ministry of the Word of God has always been a theme which regarded the *doctrina*, i.e. an issue concerning the matter or contents of proclamation and belief. How does the ministry have to be undertaken; what is the scope of it; which implications does the calling of a *Verbi Divini minister* have? In this respect Van 't Spijker (1977:263) remarks that “the church, as long as it preaches, has to reflect on the ‘pura doctrina’, the pure doctrine”.¹ Hence the ministry of the Word by Calvin is related very closely to *doctrina* and specifically to his view on the concept of *doctrina*.

2. Actuality

As is the case of other profound theological terms like *religio*, *iustificatio*, *verbum*, *gratia* and *fides*, one would also expect some significant insight into the theology of Calvin from the analysis of the use of the concept of *doctrina*. Both the semantic range and depth as well as the theological consequences of such a key concept have important implications, not only on a dogmatical level but also particularly for an appraisal on Calvin as minister of the Word, e.g. for his views on preaching and catechetics.

Especially with regard to *doctrina*, many researchers of the twentieth century have mentioned the key role this concept plays in the writings of Calvin.² Nevertheless there still are some researchers who do not take notice of Calvin's particular use of this concept or who do not give at least any proof whether they have noticed it (e.g. Jones, 1995:32-34; 199, 200). This again can lead to biased theological judgments of Calvin, like in the case of Bouwsma, to mention only one outstanding example. In his well-known work, *John Calvin – A Sixteenth-Century Portrait*, he interprets Calvin's use of the term *doctrina* simply as an equivalent term for the English term “doctrine” as it is used in the twentieth century. Consequently, he thus can come to a conclusion like “such sentiments point to a tendency in Calvin to understand faith less as trust in God's promises than as intellectual assent to a body of propositions” (Bouwsma, 1989:99).

1 “Zo lang de kerk predikt heeft zij zich te besinnen op de pura doctrina, de zuivere leer” (Van 't Spijker, 1977:263).

2 Cf. i.a. Brunner, 1925:106-111; Kolffhaus, 1941:162; Schroten, 1948:354 ff.; Büsser, 1950:107-114; Krusche, 1957:218; Weerda, 1960:144-171; Reuter, 1963:78-87; Van Genderen, 1965:15 ff.; Hedtke, 1969:40-51; Plomp, 1969:96-99; Van 't Spijker, 1978; De Boer, 1984:78-81; Böttger, 1990:140-142; Lange van Ravenswaay, 1990:124-127; Millet, 1992:557-562; Neuser, 1994:54 ff.; Opitz, 1994:104-108.

Although the studies mentioned in footnote 2 refer to the importance of the concept of *doctrina* and some of them indeed present significant insights concerning its usage by Calvin, no comprehensive systematical analysis of its theological substance and the subsequent implications has been published yet. Principally the need exists to study this issue, treating not only the respective writings of Calvin as a whole (in other words a study refraining from using singular citations from different writings in an eclectic way), but also taking the respective historical context of these writings into account. In this light this article attempts to make a contribution by investigating one major work of Calvin.

3. Demarcation and purpose of the article

This article is restricted to the 1536 edition of Calvin's *Institutes* (cf. Calvin, 1926). On the basis of an investigation of all the cases where *doctrina* is used in this first edition of the *Institutes*, a few examples are highlighted to illustrate Calvin's use of the concept. In addition the results of the investigation of the complete *Institutes* are presented to give an insight into the relation between theology and the ministry of the Word from Calvin's point of view.

4. *Doctrina* as a general concept

When one takes a look at the use of the term *doctrina* by the young Calvin in the first edition of his *Opus Magnum*, one has to take the following into account:

- In Calvin's time *doctrina* was a term which was used frequently and in general without being ambivalent at all regarding the semantics or theological implications of it. Calvin himself did not see any need to define or explain the term in his *Institutes*.
- One has to consider the fact that *doctrina* is used by Calvin in a wide range with respective semantic implications. This *per se* does not contradict his outspoken aim, namely to write simple and understandable (cf. OS I,185,ln. 37 ff.). On the contrary, it actually shows that his usage of the term *doctrina* emanates in a natural way from his use of Bible texts in their context.

5. The concept of *doctrina* in the *Christianae Religionis Institutio* (1536)

5.1 Introductory remarks

In many ways the use of *doctrina* in the 1536 edition of the *Institutes* is remarkable, even surprising. On a pure statistic level, for example, one immediately notices that *doctrina* is used more often in the respective last three chapters (chapters 4, 5 and 6) than in the first three chapters together; furthermore, the usage increases from chapter 4 to chapter 6. In fact, in the last three chapters, the concept of *doctrina* is used almost four times as frequently as in the first three chapters.³

5.2 Analysis of the usage of *doctrina* in the first three chapters of the *Institutes* of 1536

Subsequently two cases of *doctrina* in the first chapter of the *Institutes* are analysed in more detail to illustrate Calvin's usage of it.⁴

5.2.1 Two cases of *doctrina* in Chapter 1

- Sed tum etiam respondebimus: non hanc esse *docendi* populi Dei rationem, quem longe alia *doctrina* [= *i*] quam istis naeniis *institui* voluit Dominus (OS I,44,ln. 23-25).

But then we shall also answer that this is not the method of teaching [*ratio docendi*] the people of God whom the Lord wills to be instructed with a far different *doctrina* than this trash (cf. Calvin, 1989:21).

- *Verbi sui praedicationem, communem omnibus doctrinam* [= *ii*] proposuit (OS I,44,ln. 25 ff.).

3 The statistics in regard of the usage of the term *doctrina* in the *Institutes* of 1536 is the following:

In the letter to King Francis I.: 13x;
 ch. 1: 10x;
 ch. 2: 1x;
 ch. 3: 3x;
 ch. 4: 15x;
 ch. 5: 16x;
 ch. 6: 25x.
 Total: 70 + 13 = 83x.

4 Although the rest of the 70 cases in the *Institutes* (as well as the 13 cases in the letter to King Francis I) have also been examined, only the results are presented in this article.

He has set forth the preaching of his Word as a common *doctrina* for all (cf. Calvin, 1989:21).

Against the background of Calvin's explanation of the Second Commandment⁵ the close relation of these two cases (*i* and *ii*) is the following: Calvin rejects the so-called adoration of images (iconolatry), because it is idolatry. In a passage directly before both of these *doctrina* cases he has elucidated on the argumentation of the opponents of the Reformation. They would first of all insist that images are not called their "gods" by them.⁶ Secondly, they would say that images are "books of the uneducated".⁷

At first glance it seems as if the distinction between *doctrina* on the one hand, and the terms (*ratio*) *docendi*, *institui* as well as *praedicatio* on the other hand is not so clear. And indeed, with regard to their subtle, exact meanings these terms can not be separated in an absolute way. But Calvin himself continues his reasoning with another key term, namely *theodidactos*.⁸ Thus Calvin presupposes that it is God himself who educates (*instituire*). God is the subject of the *praedicatio* and the *doctrina*. God is the One who teaches.

The sentence of the second *doctrina* (= *ii*) in this example is remarkable: "*Verbi sui praedicationem, communem omnibus doctrinam proposuit*". On its own there are at least three possibilities to interpret and translate it in an appropriate way, although even the translations can be sometimes ambivalent:

1. "communem ... doctrinam" is seen as a double accusative next to *praedicatio*. Its translation could be the following: "[The Lord] has set forth for all the *preaching* of his Word as well as a common teaching".
2. "communem ... doctrinam" is used adverbially with regard to the main sentence "*Verbi sui praedicationem ... proposuit*", i.e. "Verbi

5 OS I,42,ln. 32 – 45,ln. 8.

"MANDATUM II. Non facies tibi sculptile, neque similitudinem aliquam eorum quae sunt in coelo sursum, vel in terra deorsum, vel in aquis quae sub terra sunt, non adorabis ea neque coles" (OS I,42,ln. 32-37).

6 "Non vocamus, inquit, nostros deos" OS I,44,ln. 4.

7 OS I,44,ln. 11: "libros idiotarum".
Cf. the Heidelberg Catechism, Question 98.

8 OS I,44,ln. 34. Cf. John 6:45.

sui praedicatio” is determined by the Lord as “a common way of teaching”.⁹

3. “communem ... doctrinam” is understood as an apposition to the rest of the sentence and serves so to speak as a more precise explanation of *praedicatio*.¹⁰

On the basis of Calvin’s own interpretation in the later editions of the *Institutes*, where the subject of *proponere* has been specified more precisely, the third possibility is preferred.¹¹ Whereas in the 1536-edition *Dominus* is still the direct subject of *proposuit*, the pastors (*pastores*) – i.e. the preachers during the worship – are presupposed in the later editions of the *Institutes*; first of all as object of *iussit* and therefore as the (not mentioned) subject of an *accusative-and-infinitive-construction* with *proponui*. The implicit subject still is *Dominus*. Hence the “common *doctrina*” refers to the transmission by way of the sermon as well as by the contents of the sermon.

According to Calvin the sermon and explicitly the preaching of the Word of God is (with regard to the sacraments) the most important – though not without certain premises. One of these premises is the manner of preaching, i.e. the method and way of proclaiming the Gospel. To use images as way of teaching or preaching – as defended by the opponents of the Reformation – is not only false, but also, with regard to the Second Commandment, idolatry. After all, says Calvin, the Second Commandment teaches how God should be served and honoured.¹² Instead of “books of the uneducated”, which is called “trash” by him (*naeniae*, cf. the Battles translation), Calvin categorically puts the Word of God and especially the preaching of it in the centre.

- Consequently in this context *doctrina* is distinguished from *praedicatio* as *terminus technicus*; on the other hand though, *doctrina* is

9 Cf. the translation of Van 't Spijker (Calvin, 1992:39): “De prediking van zijn Woord heeft Hij bestemd tot een algemene wijze van onderricht”.

10 Cf. Gildersleeve & Lodge (1984 [1895]:204, § 324): “*Apposition to a sentence*. Sometimes an Accusative stands in apposition to a whole preceding sentence; either explaining the contents of the sentence or giving the end of the aim of the action involved in the sentence”.

11 Cf. OS III,95,18f. (*Inst.* 1,11,7): “In verbi sui praedicatione et sacris mysteriis communem illic omnibus doctrinam proponi iussit: ...”. (Regarding *sacrae mysteriae*, cf. i.a. OS V,260,2 ff.; *Inst.* 4,14,2 and OS V,20,39 ff.; *Inst.* 4,1,16.)

12 Cf. OS I,43,ln. 8 ff.: “Istud qualis ipse ille sit, docet, et quo cultus genere honorandus, ...”

connected to *praedicatio* with regard to the *ratio* (i.e. the method) as well as the subject of the act (i.e. God). Since the opponents do not want to preach the *doctrina* but (only) want to teach it by using images, the concepts of *praedicatio* and *doctrina* are used next to each other. The “preaching of the Word of God” in this case has a comprehensive meaning – it is the Word of God in its totality. Deliberately the *praedicatio* as an institution of God is put as an antipode against the *libros idiotarum* as creation of man.

- Furthermore, the preaching of the Word and also the [*communis*] *doctrina* is demanded by God. This command to preach presupposes that the preaching presents a common *doctrina* (= *ii*) for all.¹³ For the Lord wills that the people of God should be instructed with another (kind of) *doctrina* than with this nonsense. The *doctrina* which God demands indicates a certain aspect of the Law, since the Second Commandment gives the concept *doctrina* (*i*) a kerygmatic dimension. That implies that the Second Commandment has a kerygmatic nature. The question which concerns Calvin is which type and method of proclaiming the Gospel is wanted, in fact is demanded by God. In his treatment of this question he uses the concept of *doctrina*: In the first place Calvin uses *doctrina* to refer to the (correct) kerygmatic contents and method of proclamation or preaching. Secondly, with his usage of the concept *doctrina* Calvin emphasises the aspect of the Law, for God is the One who demands and teaches.¹⁴
- The *general, comprehensive* and *universal* character of the preaching is complemented by the use of the adjective *communis* as well as the fact that it is a *doctrina* that is intended for all (*omnibus*). Since the *doctrina* implies preaching, it is meant for the whole congregation. It is not a *singularis (propria) doctrina* – e.g. (only) for theologians – but a *communis doctrina*. Therefore the people, who are called *idiotes* (laymen) by the Roman Church, are not to be excluded from the *praedicatio Verbi Dei*. After all, it is a *communis doctrina* “for all”.
- Moreover, it should be mentioned that *doctrina* is used in this context with regard to *ratio docendi* as a concept with a similar semantic range and scope, especially concerning the acting aspect. Hence the concept here is used in an active, dynamic sense, which has the implication that it would be wrong to translate it with the English term “doctrine” in the sense of a settled belief or statement with an

13 OS I,44,ln. 25 ff.

14 Cf. the usage of the term *theodidactos*, OS I,44,ln. 34.

ecclesiastical authoritative tenor. “Proclamation” or “method of preaching” would rather be an appropriate translation in this case. Concerning the second *doctrina* (ii) the term “proclamation” should preferably be the most suitable with regard to the chain of thought in this context.

5.2.2 Preliminary result

From the closer examination of the respective contexts in which the concept of *doctrina* has been used in the first three chapters of the *Institutes*, the conclusion can be drawn that the diversity of uses which Calvin utilises, the term *doctrina* is found within quite a broad range of distinctive applications, lexical (meaning) as well as discourse-analytical (reference).¹⁵ One could say that all the practices of the church (the congregation) are expressed with *doctrina* in different kinds or ways. Therefore it must be acknowledged that *doctrina* should not always be seen as a type of generic term (although sometimes it is one). The surprising find about the use of *doctrina*, however, is the broad range of reference which has been revealed. And although a one-dimensional “list” of the variety of uses of *doctrina* inevitably does not give a full picture of its diversity, the most significant uses are presented here:

Within the range of usages, *doctrina* has the central and principal meaning of “teaching”. “Preaching”, “sermon” and “proclamation” also form part of this concept of “teaching” (which in this case is a kind of generic term).

Seen from this central “teaching” perspective, both the source and authority of the *doctrina* are accentuated with the use of the term *doctrina*. On the other hand, *doctrina* is sometimes also used for the written record of the “teaching”. These two respective points can be explained with the following examples:

- The term *doctrina* is used in some cases as a reference to Holy Scripture or the Word of God. Likewise, the following references are also recorded in the first three chapters of the *Institutes*: The “sum”/“scope” (of Holy Scripture), the “content of faith”, “interpretation” (of Scripture), “proclamation of salvation”, “sermon”, “catechetical teaching”, “pastoral care”.

15 Cf. Louw and Nida (1988:xvi) for the distinction between meaning and reference.

- In addition *doctrina* is used as a reference to or with the meaning of “confession”, “doctrine”, “dogma”, “doctrinal system” or even as referring to (Calvin’s) *Institutes*.

5.3 The use of *doctrina* in the last three chapters of the *Institutes* of 1536

Whereas in the first three chapters of the *Institutes* the concept of *doctrina* can be classified essentially in two main categories, namely the “teaching” as act and the “content of the teaching”, an examination of the last three chapters discloses some additional, in a certain way perhaps surprising, aspects of the use of *doctrina*. One of them is presented here in a brief, condensed way; subsequently some other are mentioned.

5.3.1 The authority of the *doctrina*

In chapter 4 the cases of *doctrina* connected either with Christ or with the apostles (*doctrina Christi*,¹⁶ *apostolica doctrina*,¹⁷ *doctrina Apostolorum*,¹⁸ *sacra Dei doctrina*,¹⁹) occur increasingly. They all have one thing in common: the origin and source of the *doctrina* is situated with God or with the apostles who received it from God; both (with God or with the apostles) which are in fact analogous in respect of the significance and effect of it.²⁰

In this way Calvin asserts in his reasoning against the adoration of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper as *execrabile idolum*²¹ (“hateful idol”) i.a. that those who have devised the adoration of the Sacrament cannot call upon Scripture for their evidence, since the Holy Spirit is the *optimus magister* by whom and in whose *schola* – i.e. in the Holy Scripture – the holy *doctrina* is taught:

Therefore, those who have devised the adoration of the Sacrament have dreamed it by themselves apart from Scripture in which no mention of this adoration can be shown – something that obviously

16 OS I,152,ln. 23

17 OS I,144,ln. 6.

18 OS I,144,ln. 19.

19 OS I,145,ln. 2.

20 Cf. CO 48,57 (Commentary to Acts 2:42): “... Nec quamlibet doctrinam nominat, sed apostolorum, hoc est, quam per ipsorum manus filius Dei tradiderat”.

21 OS I,144,ln. 44.

would not have been overlooked if it had been acceptable to God. And they who less forbid anything to be added to Scripture than be taken away from it [Deut. 12:32; 13:1] have in this despised God. While they fashioned themselves a god after the decision of their lust, they have forsaken the living God. Indeed they have worship[p]ed the gifts instead of the Giver. In this there is a double transgression: for both the hono[u]r taken from God has been transferred to the creature, and he himself also has been dishono[u]red in the defilement and profanation of his gift, when his holy Sacrament is made a hateful idol. But let us, on the other hand, to avoid falling into the same pit, fix our ears, eyes, hearts, minds, and tongues completely upon God's sacred *doctrina*. For that is the school of that best schoolmaster, the Holy Spirit, in which we so advance that nothing need be acquired from elsewhere, but that we ought willingly to be ignorant of what is not taught [*docetur*] in it.²²

Calvin imposes the *sacra Dei doctrina* deliberately in his discussion of the *sacramenti adoratio* as antithesis to the *execrabile idolum*. The adoration of the Sacrament is not only devised by man, it not only lacks any evidence from Scripture, it also contravenes the prohibition of God to add anything to or to take anything from Scripture. With the argument that the opponents of the Reformation could find *nulla ... mentio* for their reasoning in Scripture, Calvin continues the accusation he mentioned a few lines before, that they cannot claim any syllable (*syllaba una ... non*) for their *argumentationes* from the Word of God.²³

On the one hand Calvin evidently speaks about the Roman Catholic "host" (in the Eucharist): "they have fashioned themselves a god". They have bestowed the honour, which the Giver God should have received, upon the creation (the "host"). On the other hand, however, the

22 OS I,144,ln. 33 - 145,ln. 5: "Quare qui sacramenti adorationem excogitarunt, eam a se ipsis somniarunt, citra scripturam, in qua nulla huius adorationis mentio ostendi potest; quae sane non esset praetermissa, si Deo accepta fuisset. Eoque Deum contempserunt, qui scripturae suae addere non minus vetat, quam ex ea quidquam detrahere (Deut. 12). Ac dum suae sibi libidinis arbitrio Deum fabricati sunt, dereliquerunt Deum viventem; siquidem eius dona pro datore ipso coluerunt. Ubi dupliciter peccatum est. Nam et honor Deo raptus, ad creaturam traductus est, et ipse etiam in polluto ac profanato suo beneficio inhonoratus, dum ex sancto eius sacramento factum est execrabile idolum. Nos e converso, ne in eandem incidamus foveam, aures, oculos, corda, mentes, linguas, penitus defigamus in sacra Dei *doctrina*. Est enim ea spiritus sancti, optimi *magistri, schola*, in qua sic proficitur, ut nihil sit aliunde asciscendum: ignorandum vero libenter, quidquid in ea non *docetur* (cf. Calvin, 1989:108 ff.).

23 OS I,144,ln. 8 ff.: "Qui adorant, coniecturis tantum et nescio quibus a se natis argumentationibus nituntur, syllabam unam e verbo Dei praetendere non possunt". "But those who adore the Sacrament, relying only on conjectures and some sort of arguments born of themselves, cannot claim one syllable from God's Word" (cf. Calvin, 1980:272; 1989:108).

opponents have also left the “living God” by worshipping the “gifts instead of the Giver”. By doing that they have dishonoured him in the defilement and profanation of his “deed of salvation” (*beneficium*). By connecting all the events of salvation (i.e. all the *salvific facts*) and the accomplishment of Jesus Christ with his benefit, his gift (*beneficium*) is included here by Calvin in his reasoning.

Against the *adoratio* of the Sacrament Calvin presents the *beneficium*, which is, according to the Reformed understanding, not to be separated from the sermon, the official proclamation during the service. This *beneficium* is related directly to the “living God”. The “hateful idol” however, i.e. that which was made from his holy Sacrament, is put by Calvin as antipode to the *Deus vivens*. An *idolum*, exactly because it is made by man, is lifeless, without any sign of life. With the expression *Deus vivens* Calvin aims at the *doctrina*, which is taught (*docetur*) by the *Deus vivens* (who is after all the *Deus loquens*)²⁴ as *optimus Magister* in his *schola*.²⁵

With his reasoning Calvin repudiates the accusations of the opponents, namely that the Protestants do not entirely participate in the act of the Sacrament. Against the opponents’ assertion that the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is for the Protestants only something intellectual, Calvin emphasises in his argumentation the real subject matter of the Protestants. For Calvin the Sacrament is a matter of proclamation; the Sacrament is Sacrament-proclamation; it can not be ministered without preaching the Word of God, i.e. without the *sacra Dei doctrina*. The Sacrament is not only a visual act but also a hearing act, namely of the *sacra Dei doctrina* (cf. *auris*), which stems from Scripture, from the Word of God;²⁶ not only an act of thinking (cf. *menses*), but also an act of the heart (cf. *corda*), an act of confessing and answering (cf. *linguas*) – Calvin connects the *sacra Dei doctrina* directly with all these “acts”.

Evidently the term *doctrina* as used by Calvin in this context is a reference to the Word of the living God, or, in other words, to that which has been revealed by God through his Spirit about this Sacrament. On the previous page of the preface, shortly before Calvin defines the

24 OS III,68,30; *Inst.* 1,7,4 (1559).

25 OS I,145,Z. 3-5.

26 Cf. D’Assonville (1998) regarding the concept of the Word of God by Calvin.

doctrina as the *apostolorum doctrina*,²⁷ he presents the arguments against the adoration of the Sacrament on different levels.²⁸ It is a) the *apostolorum exemplum*, b) the *apostolicae ecclesiae usus*; and c) the *apostolica doctrina* according to which (*doctrina*) Paul has taught the congregation of the Corinthians, in that he explicitly witnessed that he received from the Lord what he also passed on to them.²⁹ Regarding the example as well as the use and the *doctrina* in each case Calvin refers to Bible texts. He refers verbatim to the Word of God, Holy Scripture, as authority.³⁰

Whereas the term *doctrina* is quite often used in the first three chapters of the *Institutes* in the sense of “proclamation”, as well as with its emphasis on the act of the proclamation, the reference of quite a number of primary cases of *doctrina* in the last three chapters has shifted in the direction of the *authority* of the *doctrina* – whether the *doctrina* has a discourse-analytical character or even whether it has the denotative meaning of sermon, preaching, teaching or the contents of the proclamation.³¹

5.3.2 Other additional uses of *doctrina* in the last three chapters of the *Institutes*

In addition to the aspect of the *authority* of the *doctrina* (see above, 5.3.1) the following three uses can also be mentioned. Among the

27 OS I,144,ln. 13-20: “Videntur quidem id sibi suis syllogismus pulchre conficere; verum si eorum conscientias graviore aliquo sensu exerceri contingat, facile cum suis syllogismis percellentur, dissolventur, liquescent; ubi certo Dei verbo defici se videbunt (quo uno consistunt animae nostrae, cum ad rationem vocantur, et sine quo primo quoque momento labascunt), ubi apostolorum *doctrinam* et exempla sibi adversari, se vero solos sibi autores esse. Accedent ad tales impulsus et alii non leves stimuli”.

28 Cf. i.a. OS I,143,ln. 28 ff.: “Haec cognitio nos facile a carnali etiam adoratione abstrahet, quam perversa temeritate quidam in sacramento erexerunt, quod secum ita subducerent: si corpus est, et anima igitur et divinitas sunt una cum corpore, quae iam divelli non possunt; itaque illic adorandus Christus ...”

29 OS I,144,ln. 2 ff.: “Habent apostolorum exemplum, quos non legimus prostratos adorasse, sed, ut erant discumbentes, accepisse et manducasse; habent apostolicae ecclesiae usum, quae non in adoratione, sed in fractione panis communicasse, a Luca (Act. 2) narratur; habent apostolicam doctrinam, qua Paulus Corinthiorum ecclesiam instituit, professus se a Domino accepisse quod tradebat (1 Cor. 11)”.

30 Cf. OS I,144,ln. 8 ff.

31 Cf. OS I,149,ln. 33; 169,ln. 30; 186,ln. 23; 235,ln. 38.

additional end results which emanate from an analysis of the last three chapters of the *Institutes* they are the most substantial.

- In some cardinal places the term *doctrina* is used as reference to the correct understanding of a particular theological doctrine (e.g. the sacrament of the baptism);³² although the intention is clear – it should be corresponding with the Scriptural interpretation – it is the *understanding per se* which is emphasised.
- In certain cases the concept of *doctrina* is deliberately coloured and actively applied to encourage and console,³³ i.e. with the intention of pastoral care.
- Although *doctrina* is also occasionally used with the (denotative) meaning of “doctrine” in the first three chapters, Calvin evidently stresses the heretic aspect in chapters 4 to 6 by using the term *doctrina* as a description of a negative kind of doctrine.

5.3.3 Preliminary conclusions

By far the biggest part of the broad range of uses of the term *doctrina* in the first three chapters of the *Institutes* of 1536 (see above, 5.2.2) is also applicable to the uses in the last three chapters of the *Institutes*. A few exceptions or more differentiated nuances have been found though, namely:

- The emphasis of the authority of the *doctrina* (though implicitly present in chapters 1 to 3) in chapters 4 to 6 has been advanced into the centre. It has the implication that the *doctrina* in a particular context is seen as reliable, trustworthy and authoritative – aspects which have to be foregrounded by a translation.
- The *doctrina* as a correct understanding of a particular theological theme or issue stresses the hermeneutical and ecclesiological aspects with regard to the dispute with the Roman Catholic opponents. Therefore it is not only an issue of the passing on of the *doctrina* (e.g. the “tradition”), but rather the concept of *doctrina* sometimes refers to the (correct) kind of receiving and handling the proclaimed *doctrina*.

32 Cf. OS I,118,ln. 3-7; 129,ln. 23-28.

33 Cf. e.g. OS I,128,ln. 19-24.

- Another dimension of *doctrina* which also is not new, but shows some additional tones, is the pastoral dimension. Unambiguously this accentuates the role of the *doctrina* in the respective pastoral aspects of the congregation (e.g. the pastoral counselling). The minister and the elders, as well as other church members, have to comfort, to encourage, to edify (of course on different levels and in different ways) – and this they have to do with the *doctrina*.
- It is not extraordinary that Calvin also uses the term *doctrina* with its lexical meaning of “doctrine”. What is notable, especially in the last three chapters though, is not that he does that more frequently, but that this phenomenon is found particularly each time when Calvin refers to a doctrine of the opponents, which is of course (from his point of view) meant in a negative way, i.e. as a heretical, false doctrine.

6. Conclusion

An analysis of the *Institutes* of 1536 shows that Calvin not only knows and occasionally uses the concept *doctrina* in the classical philological way, but also that he uses it outside this perimeter, especially in an active and dynamic way. This is done to such an extent that one often has to translate it with a verb or a verbalised noun or even with a verbal phrase. In order to interpret Calvin accurately and to translate his writings adequately, it is, inter alia, indispensable to distinguish between his lexical and his discourse-analytical usage of the term. By keeping this in mind it can be avoided that the full contextual intention of the term gets lost by translating (and understanding) it simply as “doctrine”, or for that matter, as “teaching”.

One has to deal with the concept of *doctrina* on different levels as well as in various semantic fields. Although more than 400 years separate us from Calvin and his times and particularly from the terminology of those years, it is possible to uncover the perimeter which defines the fields – in a quite refined way – among which the different nuances of a term like *doctrina* are situated. Remarkable is the emphasis on the thetical and catechetical aspects of the first three chapters and, on the other hand, the emphasis on the apologetical and polemical aspects in the last three chapters. This difference, which should not be overestimated, can be explained by the difference regarding the themes as well as the historical background during the writing of the respective two parts of the *Institutes* (cf. D'Assonville, 2001:118, note 552).

Calvin's use of the concept of *doctrina* in his first *Institutes* gives important indications as to his role in the early years of his work in public

as significant leader of the Reformation, as well as in respect of the type and character of the theological discourse of that time. Furthermore it intensifies his premise, namely that Scripture should be used in the theological discourse, as well as in the ministry, as a unity and as a whole. His bond to Scripture and his stressing of the aspect of proclamation of the *doctrina* is especially accentuated – which obviously has essential implications for our whole view on the ministry of the Word with regard to Calvin.

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Key concepts:

Calvin, J.
doctrina (doctrine)
ministry (of the Word)
preaching
proclamation
teaching of the Word
theology of the Word/Word-of-God-theology

Kernbegrippe:

Calvyn, J.
doctrina (leer)
bediening (van die Woord)
prediking

verkondiging

onderrig van die Woord

Woord-teologie/teologie-van-die-Woord