Affect Before Spinoza: Reformed Faith, *Affectus*, and Experience in Jean Calvin,

*John Donne, John Milton and Baruch Spinoza*

by

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Kenneth J. Surin

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of
Literature in the Graduate School
of Duke University

2009
ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Affects are not reducible to feelings or emotions. On the contrary, *Affect Before Spinoza* investigates the extent to which affects exceed, reconfigure and reorganize bodies and subjects. Affects are constitutive of and integral to dynamic economies of activity and passivity. This dissertation traces the origins and histories of this definition of affect, from the Latin *affectus*, discovering emergent affective approaches to faith, devotional poetry and philosophy in early modernity. For early modern believers across confessions, faith was neither reducible to a dry intellectual concern nor to a personal, emotional appeal to God. Instead, faith was a transformative relation between humans and God, realized in affective terms that, in turn, reconfigured theories of human agency and activity. Beginning with John Calvin and continuing through the work of John Donne, John Milton, and Baruch Spinoza, *Affect Before Spinoza* posits *affectus* as a basis of faith in an emergent Reformed tradition as well as a term that informs disparate developments in poetry and philosophy beyond Reformed Orthodoxy. Calvin’s configuration of affect turns existing languages of the passions and of rhetorical motives towards an understanding of faith and certainty. In this sense, Calvin, Donne, Spinoza and Milton use affectus to pose questions of agency, will, tendency, inclination, and determinism.
This work is dedicated to David Aers.

I could not ask for a more thoughtful reader or mentor.
Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................iv

List of Figures ................................................................................................................................ix

Preface ........................................................................................................................................x

Introduction: Calvin with Spinoza .................................................................................................1

Jean Calvin and Intellectual History .............................................................................................7

Affective Experiments in Calvinism ...............................................................................................18

A Note on Affect ............................................................................................................................25

Affect/Affectus ...............................................................................................................................29

Affectus in Augustine and Aquinas ...............................................................................................31

Affect in Psychoanalysis ................................................................................................................41

Affect Before Psychoanalysis ........................................................................................................53

Chapter 1 — Poetic Faith: Persuasio and Affectus in the 1559 Institutio Christianae
Religionis ........................................................................................................................................62

Faith as Knowledge in the 1559 Institutio .....................................................................................69

The Division of Faith between Hearts and Minds ........................................................................77

Persuasio and Agency ....................................................................................................................79

Persuasio in Calvin’s Rhetorical Vocabulary ..................................................................................87

Calvin’s Affectus .............................................................................................................................97

Poetic Faith: Ann Lock and the Sermons of John Calvin, Upon the Songe that
Ezechias made ...............................................................................................................................109

Chapter 2 — The Pulse of the Bells: Christology, Reformed Orthodoxy and the
Reconfiguration of the Body in John Donne’s Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions ..121
De Ordine Controversiarum [the order of the controversies or heads of doctrine]: The Transformation of Orthodoxy at Dordrecht .......................................................... 126
The Devotions in Context: Christology against Predestination-Centered Theology 142
The Devotions: Sections XVI, XVII, and XVIII ......................................................... 151
Calvin’s Descensus ........................................................................................................... 169
The Affective Congregation I .......................................................................................... 202
Isaiah 38 in Calvin, Lock and the Devotions ................................................................. 207
The Affective Congregation II ......................................................................................... 223
Reformed Affect and the Body of Christ ......................................................................... 230
Chapter 3—Spinoza’s Affective Physics and Reformed Orthodoxy ................................. 243
Spinoza and Reformed Orthodoxy .................................................................................. 243
Affective Physics: Affectus in the Ethica ....................................................................... 260
Affectus is not Cartesian: Descartes’ Les Passions de l’Ame and the Latin Passiones, sive Affectus Animae ............................................................................................................. 286
The Korte Verhandeling (1660-1662) as Theology .................................................... 302
Affectus in the Korte Verhandeling ................................................................................ 317
From the Institutio Christianae Religionis to the Ethica ................................................. 324
Chapter 4: The “sense of Heav’ns desertion”: Lustratio, Affectus and God’s Special Decree in John Milton’s Samson Agonistes (1671) ......................................................... 329
Lustratio: God’s Will, Providence, and Predestination in Samson Agonistes .......... 337
De Doctrina Christiana, Predestination, and the Distinction between General and Special Decrees .......................................................................................................................... 362
Despair and Sacrifice in Samson Agonistes .................................................................... 383
Conclusion: Affectus Comprime! .................................................................................... 391
Appendix I: Calvin with and against Melanchthon: Faith in the *Loci Communes* (1521)
............................................................................................................................................395
Appendix II: The Synod of Dort (1618/9).................................................................................401
Glossary .........................................................................................................................................410
References ......................................................................................................................................414
Biography ......................................................................................................................................452
List of Figures

Figure 1: Frontispiece from Jean François Senault’s *The Use of the Passions* (1649).....40

Figure 2: Joost van den Vondel, from *Den gulden winckel der konstlievende Nederlanders, gestoffeert met veel treffelijke historische, philosophische, poetische morale ende schriuerlijke leeringen* (1613). Reproduced from *Minne- en zinnebeelden: Een bloemlezing uit de Nederlandse emblematiek*, eds. Hans Luijten and Marijke Blankman (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 34........................................160

Figure 3: Gabriel Metsu, *Het zieke kind* [The sick child] (1660). Reproduced with permission from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam..............................................................232

Figure 4: *De Doctrina Christiana*, Book I, Chapters 2-4........................................380

Figure 5: from William Perkins, *A Golden Chain* (1590/1).....................................381

Figure 6: “Affectus Comprime” from the *Emblemata Politica* (1619). Reproduced with permission from the German Emblem Books Project, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. ..............................................................392
Preface

Among Satan’s chief errors in *Paradise Lost* is his affirmation that we stand “self-begot, self-rais'd/ By our own quick'ning power,” that “Our puissance is our own,” that “our own right hand/ Shall teach us highest deeds, by proof to try/ Who is our equal.” How alienating, how lonely, this sad view of creation and development! Against satanic assumptions about pedagogy and emergence, I have found the dissertation process a joyful exercise in collaborative work and collective thinking—indeed, a conceptual and practical meditation on affect, agency, and creation. I am delighted to acknowledge the many advisors, teachers and comrades who have made this work possible. Insofar as it is my work, it is theirs.

I am very grateful for the patient and indefatigable support of my advisors and dissertation co-chairs Ranjana Khanna and Laurie Shannon. Ranji Khanna’s remarkable commitments to feminism, ethics, and philosophy are evident in everything she does, matched only by her kindness. She led me to Literature and to Women’s Studies and has encouraged careful and thorough work by her singular example. Laurie Shannon’s compelling and insightful work on friendship, ethics and humanism exceeds the printed page. Over the past few years she has been a beloved “Dutch Uncle,” asking poignant, difficult and exciting questions. She has also been a thoughtful, loyal and caring mentor, particularly in her capacity to “talk me down from the tree,” so to speak, to help me through the most trying moments of student life. I remain, joyfully, their student.
David Aers, to whom this work is dedicated, has been exceedingly generous. I feel as though I had not truly read until I took his course on Langland, where he encouraged us to “get our noses in the trough” and recognize what poetry—indeed, language—is able to do! This dissertation would not have been possible without his counsel and I very much appreciate his benevolence, prescient advice and challenging questions. When he so graciously offered me his copy of Calvin’s *Institutes* he asked, “Will you find this useful?” Insofar as this study offers a compelling reading of Calvin’s work, it bears the unmistakable traces of David Aers’ patience, rigor, care, and charity. Despite the distance between Duke and Princeton Nigel Smith has been involved throughout the entire process and has done much to shape the research and writing for the better. Much of the present work developed across successive conversations with him following “The State and Literary Production in Early Modern Europe,” his exemplary seminar at the Folger Shakespeare Library in 2006. My greatest joy in moving from Duke to Princeton is the opportunity to continue learning from him; not only is he an expert in seventeenth-century history and literature but also a true advocate of collaboration and a model of intellectual generosity and enthusiasm. I am grateful to Fredric Jameson for his many comments and suggestions, leading me to expand the scope of the work beyond early modernity and to consider enduring approaches to affect. Since my first year of graduate school, when I served as his research assistant, he has encouraged intellectual experimentation across fields and critical languages. His interest in and support of student work is singular. Ken Surin has encouraged me to attend to
concepts in philosophy and theology with rigor and clarity. I very much appreciate his
guidance and patience as he led me through the intricacies and possibilities of Spinoza
and Spinozism.

In addition to my committee, I owe Dan Thornton at the University of North
Carolina—Chapel Hill a debt of gratitude. For four consecutive semesters his Dutch
course has been a highlight of my intellectual life and I have learned as much from his
enthusiasm and teaching style as from his knowledge of the language. John Tangney,
Nathan Hensley, and Erin Fehskens all read early iterations of Chapters 1 and 2 and
offered comments that were integral to the shape of the present work. Through my
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scholars, all of whom have influenced and supported this project: Srinivas Aravamudan,
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wonderful friends from SUNY Fredonia who continue to give valuable advice and
support. I thank them as well as Adrienne McCormick, Bruce Simon, and Theodore
Steinberg for helping prepare me for graduate school and for the rigors of dissertation-
work. In addition, I am forever (and happily) indebted to John Ramsey for stoking my
interest in Milton and early modernity during my years at Fredonia.
Paul Stapleton of the Department of English and Comparative Literature at UNC-Chapel Hill guided me to appropriate passages in Bellarmine’s *Controversies*. Marten Hidma at the Universiteit van Amsterdam introduced me to Dutch and to the rich resources of the Golden Age archive. Scholars at the Duke University Libraries provided valuable advice at every stage of the project, particularly Dave Munden, Lee Sorensen, Margaret Brill, Sara Seten Berghausen and the staff at the Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library. In addition, staff members at both the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. and Bijzondere Collecties at the Universiteit van Amsterdam were hospitable and accommodating.

This project was generously supported by a departmental fellowship in the Program in Literature at Duke University (2002-2007), a Julian Price Endowed Dissertation Research Fellowship in Humanities and History (2008/9) and a Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies Dissertation Fellowship (2007/8). In addition, I was fortunate enough to receive a Graduate School Summer Research Fellowship (2007) as well as a Mellon Interdisciplinary Dissertation Work Research Grant (2007), coordinated by the John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute at Duke University. I am grateful for the institutional support I have received and want to thank Betty Jones, Linda Rutt, and Ken Davis in particular for their expertise and assistance. The staff members in Literature have been friends and advocates, particularly Karen Bell, Joan Ferguson, Rose Hodge, Maria Maschauer, Sandy Swanson, and Pam Terterian. Special thanks are due to Tiwonda Johnson-Blount, the DGS Assistant in Literature, for all of her tireless work.
Additional thanks are due to Martha Baker at the Nasher Museum of Art for making room for me on the schedule and for being flexible and accommodating as I completed this project. Additional thanks are also due to Susan Hemingway and Bernard Milliken at the East Campus Store for their enduring kindness. For the past few years, as I took occasional breaks from writing and research, it was inspiring to walk into the store in the East Union Building to be greeted by Mrs. Hemingway’s cheerful voice: “Is there a doctor in the house?” Insofar as I can now answer “Yes,” it is in part because of her friendship and encouragement.

I am especially grateful to my Mom and Dad for their unwavering love and support. Over the past few years, when I found myself overwhelmed, my dreams so often took me back to them, to the warm uncanny affects of my childhood—the pleasant sensation of Dad’s whiskers against my face, the calming timbre of Mom’s voice. As I sat between them they read aloud the names of dinosaurs. I thank them for having faith in me. Special thanks are also due to my brother Dan Leo and to my grandparents Milton Markham, Lucille Markham, Corine Leo, and Russ Leo. During my years at Duke, I have been fortunate enough to find a true friend in Alex Ruch. Not only has he offered thorough comments across several iterations of each chapter; he has been, and remains, an example of generosity, patience, curiosity, and integrity. This work is better for his assistance and friendship. Luka Arsenjuk and Michelle Koerner have taught me much about collective work and ethical life. Theirs are exemplary comportments to study, friendship, and charity. Nico Baumbach, Abe Geil, Beatriz Llenín-Figueroa, Rachel
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Britt Rusert has been supportive at every stage of the dissertation process. The present work bears the traces of her love as well as her acumen, and she is as wonderful a reader as a partner. With her enthusiasm and sharp wit working and thinking together are jubilant activities. Our Fido and Jada provide invaluable lessons in kindness and becoming-animal, despite what Deleuze and Guattari write about dogs.

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In what follows I do not modernize spelling or punctuation, reproducing original texts as much as possible. Nevertheless, I do modernize contractions for the benefit of the reader; thus a word such as “frō” appears in the text as “from.”

Charleton T. Lewis and Charles Short’s *A Latin Dictionary* is referred to in the text and notes as “Lewis and Short.”

Throughout the dissertation all Latin references to *Institutio Christianae Religionis* are taken from the 1559 edition reprinted in the *Joannis Calvini Opera Selecta*, Volumes III through V, edited by Peter Barth and William Niesel [Petrus Barth and Guilelmus Niesel]. With the exception of the *Praefatio* and the “Argument du Present Livre” I refer Latin and French quotations to the text with respect to Book, Chapter, and
Section. English translations – from Thomas Norton’s 1561 version, Ford Lewis Battles’ 1960 version, or my own – are marked accordingly. All Latin references to *Commentarius in Harmoniam Evangelicum* [*Harmonia ex tribus Evangelistis composita, Matthaeo, Marco et Luca*] are taken from the edition reprinted in the *Ioannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia, Corpus Reformatorum Volumen LXXIII* edited by Guilielmus Baum, Eduardus Cunitz, and Eduardus Reuss. This is cited in the text and notes as *Harmonia Evangelica*, followed by the volume and the page number. English translations are taken from A. W. Morrison’s translation, *A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke*. This is cited in the text and notes as *Harmony*, followed by the volume and page number.

Save for the *Tractatus Theologico-Politici*, citations to works in English translation, including the *Ethica*, the *Tractatus Politici*, and the *Epistles*, are taken from *Spinoza: Complete Works*, ed. Michael L. Morgan, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis, Indiana and Cambridge: Hackett, 2002), 280. All citations of the original Latin texts themselves follow from the three volume *Benedicti De Spinoza Opera, Quotquot Reperta Sunt*, ed. J. Van Vloten and J. P. N. Land, Editio Altera (The Hague: Martinum Nijhoff, 1895). Citations appear in the text as such: the name or abbreviation of the work, followed, in parentheses, by page references to the English translation (M) or to volume and page number in the Latin edition (O [Opera]). References to Benedicti de Spinoza, *Korte Verhandeling van God, de Mensch, en Deszelfs Welstand* appear in the text.
followed, in parentheses, by page references to the English translation (marked M) and to the Dutch (marked KV).

I use the following abbreviations throughout the text to refer to frequently cited works:

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<td>AT</td>
<td>René Descartes, <em>Les Passions de l’Ame</em>, ed. Adam and Tannery</td>
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<td>Ford Lewis Battles’ 1960 Translation of the 1559 <em>Institutio</em></td>
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<td><em>Complete Prose Works of John Milton</em>, Volume VI</td>
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<td>DC</td>
<td><em>De Doctrina Christiana</em> [Latin]</td>
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<td>KV</td>
<td><em>Korte Verhandeling</em></td>
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<td>M</td>
<td><em>Spinoza: Complete Works</em>, ed. Morgan</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>Thomas Norton’s 1561 Translation of the 1559 <em>Institutio</em></td>
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<td>O</td>
<td><em>Benedicti De Spinoza Opera</em></td>
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<td>OP</td>
<td><em>Renati Des-Cartes Opera Philosophica</em></td>
</tr>
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<td>OS</td>
<td><em>Joannis Calvini Opera Selecta</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td><em>Paradise Regained</em></td>
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<td>RS</td>
<td>René Descartes, <em>The Passions of the Soul</em>, trans. Robert Stoothoff,</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td><em>Samson Agonistes</em></td>
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For references within the *Ethica*, I follow Morgan’s abbreviations in M xxiii:

<table>
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Introduction: Calvin with Spinoza

Article XLVI of the 1714 edition of the Jesuit Journal de Trévoux—ostensibly a review of an obscure 1709 text by Huguenot philosopher Jean de la Placette (1639-1718)—is in many ways an unremarkable polemical text. ¹ De la Placette’s controversial treatise identifying “quelques difficultez qui naissent de la consideration de la liberté necessaire pour agir moralement,” was, no doubt, precisely the sort of argument that a Jesuit could expect from a Calvinist, directed against cooperative grace and freedom of the will, with roots in the debates that largely defined both sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Calvinism and its discontents. ² Article XLVI responds accordingly, revealing de la Placette as, like all “Théologiens Protestans,” confused and mistaken—particularly his “definition de l’impuissance physique ne renferme pas un autre sens, mais elle le renferme obscurement.” ³ This is standard fare for confessional polemic in early modernity.

Yet something different emerges in the review, as the Jesuit author seizes upon a unique opportunity to denounce his Calvinist opponent in less familiar (and, perhaps, more incendiary) terms. The subsequent attack on de la Placette—and, indeed, on Calvinism—attends to the publication of an “addition” to the same 1709 text: a

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³ Ibid., 169.
concluding section where the Calvinist philosopher contests “les affreuses conséquences qui suivent de la bizarre pensée de Spinoza.” This strikes the author of the review as ridiculous, as “il la renverse pas les fondements, en démontrant que ni les causes morales, ni les causes physiques ne nous déterminent pas toujours, & qu’ainsi Spinoza ne peut assigner aucun principe de la détermination absolue & continuelle, qu’il suppose gratuitement.” The Jesuit sees this as blatant hypocrisy; the Calvinist condemns certain determinations of free will in the name of piety just as he recuperates similar determinations against Spinoza and Spinozism. De la Placette’s work reveals to the Jesuit and the audience of the Journal de Trévoux what many had suspected: Spinozism’s strange and alarming proximity to Calvinism. The conceptual similarity is laid bare as the Calvinist, “dont il découvre les équivoques continuels, & l’abus étrange qu’il fait du langage ordinaire,” manipulates and invents terms in a futile attempt to distance Calvinist determinations of necessity from Spinozism.

The preceding example, certainly polemical, requires caution. As Jonathan Israel has recently illustrated, charges of Spinozism were common by the end of the seventeenth century, particularly when one party wished to cast another as mistaken, heretical, or dangerous. Many times, the charges were warranted; in just as many cases, they were merely nominal, meant to stigmatize the opponent in an international war of

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4 Ibid., 171.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., 172.
philosophical letters. Nevertheless, Article XLVI of the 1714 edition of the Jesuit
Journal de Trévoux does recognize a certain formal or conceptual consistency between
Jean Calvin (1509-1564) and Baruch [Benedictus] de Spinoza (1632-1677) which this
dissertation affirms, albeit in far less polemical terms. Spinoza’s deliberate philosophical
critique of the United Provinces under Contra-Remonstrant\(^8\) control takes shape in a sort
of perverted Calvinist idiom, but betrays conceptual debts to Calvin nonetheless. Put
simply, Spinoza does to Calvin’s method what Marx claims to do to Hegel’s dialectic in
the Preface to the 1873 edition of Capital: “The mystification which dialectic suffers in
Hegel’s hands, by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general form
of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its
head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel
within the mystical shell.”\(^9\) For Spinoza the rational kernel is nothing other than the
Calvinist faith in God’s benevolence, rendered in ontological and affective terms. This
claim takes full shape in Chapter Three, in a thorough treatment of Spinoza’s
transformation of Calvin’s earlier determinations of affectus; for the time being, the two
disparate figures enable me to articulate the scope of this dissertation, an investigation of
the Calvinist resources of seventeenth-century theology, philosophy, and poetry.\(^10\)

\(^8\) See Chapter 2 for a thorough investigation of the events coming to a head at the Synod
of Dort and Chapter 3 for a treatment of Spinoza’s encounter with Contra-Remonstrancy
and Calvinism generally.


\(^10\) Barbara Sher Tinsley demonstrates how Pierre Bayle, a figure noted for his drift from
Calvinism (as a Huguenot) to Spinozism went to great lengths to defend Calvin from
attack, praising the Reformer as a gifted administrator and inspired theologian. See
While Calvin and Spinoza mark the conceptual limits of the project, they also point to its temporal scope, beginning with Calvin’s mature work as head of the Reformed Church in Geneva in the 1550s and 1560s and continuing through the spread of Reformed polities, congregations, and concepts into England and the Netherlands during the seventeenth century. Hence this study also explores the resources that Calvin’s theological writing affords the work of John Donne (1572-1631) and John Milton (1608-1674). While much has certainly been written about Milton and Donne, this is the first study to place these figures in such a context, particularly with respect to Calvin, Spinoza, and the proliferation of controversies surrounding Calvinist concepts. I attend to Donne and Milton in Chapters 2 and 4, respectively. Much of the introduction, to say nothing of Chapter 1, is spent in examining Calvin’s own life and work. Where this investigation duly recasts Calvin’s orthodox interventions in theology as inventive engagements with poetry and philosophy, it is consequently the first study to locate Calvinist determinations of faith and affect as a common conceptual language uniting disparate (even contradictory) seventeenth-century poetic and philosophical projects. In the last decade of his life Calvin worked to determine faith (as in Book III, Chapter 2 of the 1559 *Institutio Christianae Religionis*) in terms that invited poetic and philosophical investigation, an invitation that would come to shape some of the most striking

developments in art and thought during the latter period. In this manner, Calvin truly attempted to inaugurate a Christian Philosophy; if the project of the *Institutio* is to instruct “simples…pour les conduire et les ayder a trouver la somme de ce que Dieu nous a voulu enseigner en sa parole” this cannot be accomplished without attending carefully to Scripture, the source of “les matieres principales et de consequence” which comprise “la Philosophie Chrestienne.”

Donne, Milton, and Spinoza, for whom “la Philosophie Chrestienne” became an important point of departure toward other projects, all worked in an conceptual language pioneered by Calvin in the late 1550s and 1560s, even if they refused outright the terms of orthodox Calvinism. What we read in the work of these three exemplary figures are attempts, however tentative, to mobilize Calvin against Reformed/Calvinist traditions. For Donne, Calvin’s writing affords him resources to challenge the transformation of the Reformed tradition in England, specifically after the Synod of Dort in 1618/19. For Milton, *affectus* enables him to descry the onset of Scottish Presbyterianism and the establishment of intolerant church polities and policies after the Restoration. In Spinoza's case, *affectus* challenges the regime of censorship and

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12 See Appendix 2 for a brief treatment of the Synod of Dort (or Dordrecht).
intolerance under the Dutch Reformed Church—a church peopled, particularly after the Synod of Dort, by reactionary Contra-Remonstrants.

“Affect Before Spinoza” investigates the degree to which Calvin’s concepts were inhabited, adapted and transformed across a wide spectrum of political and theological positions—in the ascendancy of state churches and disciplinary societies as well as in the inauguration of radical projects, orthodox and otherwise. This study, moreover, recognizes the prominence of Calvin’s work in the seventeenth century, the degree to which his writings circulated widely in Latin and in various vernacular translations, including French, English, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, and German. This wide array of texts fostered competing interpretations of Calvin’s word as well as to challenges. Some readings, such as Spinoza’s, mobilize Calvin against Calvinism, even if the philosophical concepts and principles are virtually unrecognizable as such. Thus Calvinism affords resources and concepts to artists and philosophes which are not necessarily Calvinist; in many cases, they stand directly opposed to Calvin and to orthodox Christianity. Nevertheless, Article XLVI of the 1714 Journal de Trévoux recognizes the consistency between Calvin’s Institutio and Spinoza’s Ethica. The anonymous Jesuit critic realizes the radical potential of Calvin’s invocations of predestination and affectus. This dissertation proceeds to investigate this consistency and to reveal a dynamic affective philosophy, constitutive of faith and experience, operating at the heart of the Institutio Christianae Religionis (1559), the Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions (1624), Samson

Agonistes (1671) and the Ethica (1667). In turn, it offers new insight into the origins and meanings of affect in contemporary philosophy, emphasizing the continuities between otherwise distinct and divergent movements and figures.

Jean Calvin and Intellectual History

Historians and critics have for too long depicted Calvin as severe and cruel, as merely a theologian of predestination; even after thirty years of exemplary revisionist studies of Calvin’s life, work, and influence, one is still forced to argue for an alternative narrative, for an intellectual Calvin with more supple conceptual resources at his disposal. This is not only true of Calvin but of the Reformed tradition at large, especially as we press into the seventeenth century. The very term “Calvinism,” used to describe Reformed concepts and practices, often exaggerates the degree to which such phenomena are actually related to Jean Calvin’s own corpus of work. While Calvin certainly did bear considerable influence throughout Northern Europe, neither the organization of the Reformed Church in Geneva (a project which occupied the last twenty-four years of his life) nor his exhaustive preaching and writing in the name of an emergent “Christian Philosophy” came to define the core of what seventeenth-century acolytes considered orthodox Calvinism. Indeed, like “Puritanism” and “Quakerism,” “Calvinism” initially takes shape as a pejorative term, “a label attached to certain theological positions by opponents eager to stigmatize them as inventions of fallible individuals.”\(^{14}\) The Oxford English Dictionary confirms that the earliest English iterations of “Calvinism,”

“Calvinist,” and “Calvinian” were polemical and dismissive. According to historian Philip Benedict, “The word emerged in the mid-1550s in the context of no fewer than three debates in which Calvin was then engaged, one over the proper interpretation of the Eucharist, the second over the proper ceremonies of the liturgy, and the third over whether or not secular authorities had the right to punish heresy.” In the past few decades, numerous investigations take the distinctions between Calvin and Calvinism as productive points of departure, including influential studies by R. T. Kendall, David Steinmetz, Richard Muller, Paul Helm, and Philip Benedict. Kendall argues for the emergence of an “experimental” (and sometimes “experiential”) Calvinist tradition in opposition to Calvin’s own work while Benedict and others eschew nominal affiliation altogether through the use of the more neutral designation “Reformed”—a term which registers theological debts to such figures as Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531), Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), Martin Bucer (1491-1551), Wolfgang Musculus (1497-1563), John a Lasco (1499-1560) and Johannes Oecolampadius (1482-1531) as well to Calvin and his Geneva cohort.

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18 See Kendall; and Benedict, xxiii and Chapters 1 and 2 (“Zurich Contra Wittenberg” and “The Second Generation: Switzerland and Germany”). The Reformed tradition, in its first and second generations, is concurrent with (but distinct from) the emergent Lutheran
Calvin was not trained as a theologian or a minister. Calvin’s late work, from the
1550s and 1560s, reveals the scope of his philosophical resources as well as their effect
on thinkers across seventeenth-century letters. I proceed by explaining how Calvin’s
terms work and how they furnish resources for later interventions in philosophy and
poetry. In this sense Chapter One rests on a stark and defamiliarizing approach to Calvin
culled from recent historical and theological scholarship. My close reading of faith,
persuadeo, and affectus across the 1559 *Institutio Christianae Religionis* and Calvin’s
concurrent sermons and commentaries (notably, on the Book of Job, the Psalms, and the
Epistle to the Romans) stands at odds with the caricature of Calvinism given in such
influential works as William J. Bouwsma’s *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait*
(1988), Philip S. Gorski’s *The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the
State in Early Modern Europe* (2003) and Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the
Spirit of Capitalism* (1905). These studies depict Calvin as an intellectual tyrant,

tradition, including such figures as Martin Luther (1483-1546) and Philip Melanchthon
(1497-1560). See Appendix 1 for a comparative treatment of faith and affect in the work
of Melanchthon and Calvin.

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19 See William J Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (New York:
Oxford University Press, 1988); Philip S. Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism
and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago, Illinois: University of
trans. Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism
his Miltonic-Empsonian fantasy *The Golden Compass*, imagines religious intolerance,
anti-intellectualism, and fundamentalism in Calvinist terms; church authority takes shape
after Calvin, as an authoritative figure par excellence, moves the “seat of the Papacy to
Geneva” to establish the “Consistorial Court of Discipline.” See Philip Pullman, *The
unforgiving in his exegesis, obsessed with discipline and calling in a merciless attempt to orient a fallen world to its inherent depravity. While this may be true in some sense, regarding his governance and influence in mid-sixteenth-century Geneva, it is not necessarily the case concerning his theological concepts. Historians have cast Calvin’s theology according to misleading assumptions about his character and habits. Where Calvin himself emerges as a caricature of intolerance and enthusiasm, his thought—and the afterlives of his work, in any context—is depicted accordingly. What we encounter here is, overwhelmingly, the Calvin of double predestination—of election and reprobation from eternity, of a God who determines salvation and damnation independently from human activity from outside of secular time.

Calvin does affirm double-predestination in the 1559 *Institutio* and in a series of controversial texts beginning in the 1540s. Nevertheless, predestination does not define Calvin’s theology. Where the *Institutio* is conceived as a “training” in Christianity, as a set of common places organized after such humanist theological proponents as Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) and Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), predestination does not appear until well into Book III—after such crucial topics as creation, necessity,

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20 Bouwsma’s Calvin, for instance, is “a singularly anxious man and, as a reformer, fearful and troubled”; his theology, a pedantic reaction to a capricious-yet-nonetheless-just God operating beyond a world which is never as it appears. This, and like approaches, identify Calvin with an uncompromising attempt to subordinate human will and agency to divine providence at all costs, to realize in Calvinism a proto-fundamentalist project that locates divine authority in scripture and, in turn, constructs a tortuous exegetical machine through which apparent reality is duly processed. See Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 32-6. See also Thomas J. Davis, “Images of Intolerance: John Calvin in Nineteenth-Century History Textbooks,” *Church History* 65.2 (June 1996): 234-48.
providence, redemption, Scripture, the Decalogue, the Passion of Christ, faith, repentance, and justification. In a sense, the only things that follow predestination in the ordo docendi [the correct order of teaching or instruction] are the sacraments and the treatise on civil government comprising Book IV of the 1559 Institutio. In short, predestination is far from being a sort of “first principle” in Calvin’s theology. It is arguably subordinate not only to providence and necessity but also to the limits of human knowledge of creation and redemption, topics that take precedence in Calvin’s pedagogical project. Chapter 1 below illustrates the degree to which predestination certainly follows from Calvin’s careful investigation of faith and affectus; it cannot be the other way around without deviating from Calvin’s project.

Just as his theology is caricatured and misunderstood, so are the details of his biography. Calvin, often treated as a precise theologian obsessed with logic and order, received no formal training in theology, nor did he live to encounter the Ramist logic that would define later forms of Calvinism.\(^2\) Even the date and form of his conversion is a

\(^2\) While Ramism changed the shape of rhetorical and dialectical instruction in the sixteenth-century university, it did so in the generation following Calvin’s tenure in Paris, Orléans, and Strasbourg. What is evident across Calvin’s oeuvre, however, is a methodology grounded more in humanist rhetoric and dialectic than in Ramism; Calvin thus presents a marked alternative to the Ramism which oriented institutional Calvinism in the years following his death. Calvin most certainly encountered Ramism in Geneva but the terms and results of this encounter demand more care than I am able to give here. For the time being, I refer the reader to the most comprehensive account of Ramism published, to Walter J. Ong’s Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason (1958). Nevertheless, such scholars of Calvinism as Perry Miller and R. T. Kendall identify Ramism as a determinate influence on later Calvinists and Puritans, thereby making method another site of discord between Calvin and the tradition that bears his name. See Walter J. Ong, Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason (Chicago, Illinois:
contested matter, as Calvin seldom writes about himself; save for a brief excursus in the forward to the 1557 *Commentary on the Psalms* (an introduction which primarily instructs the reader in genre and method), he never addresses his own spiritual condition. As Alexandre Ganoczy has shown in his thorough study of Calvin’s youth, treating the period spanning his arrival at Paris in 1523 to his initial exile from Geneva in 1538, the future Reformer’s training was marked more by rhetoric and law than ecclesiology or what we refer to today as “scholastic theology.” Ganoczy even casts severe doubt on whether Calvin actually studied with the nominalist philosopher John Major [Mair], a prospect that earlier biographers seem to accept and which, if true, places Calvin in direct proximity to the theological tradition of scholasticism. Calvin did attend at the Collège de la Marche and the Collège de Montaigu before joining the Faculty of Law at Orléans and studying under

23 Calvin’s education was funded in part by church benefices in Noyon. Wendel, *Calvin*, 17.  
Andreas Alciati at the University of Bourges. Between the former two locations he received sustained exposure to the materials of the late medieval *devotio moderna*, contemplative works by such figures as Geert de Groot (Gerardus Magnus) (1340-1384) and Thomas à Kempis (1380-1472) which offered an alternative to school theology and which bore indelible influence on Calvin’s later work. While stereotypical approaches to the Reformer obscure this, Calvin was well versed in the affective devotional practices of the late Medieval Church, many of which he never departed from. Across the 1559 *Institutio* he cites Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux more than any contemporary advocates of reformation. Moreover, in institutional terms, Calvin’s studies place him closer to fellow Montaigu alumni François Rabelais (1494-1553) and Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) than to Luther.26 By 1528 his intellectual investments in humanism place him in an evangelical circle surrounding the new Queene of Navarre, Marguerite d’Angoulême (1492-1549). While the Queen’s evangelical treatise *Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse* was placed on the Index by the Faculty of Theology at Paris, however, Calvin had only published a few introductions and a commentary on Seneca’s *De Clementia* (1532), none of which created any controversy.27 He was neither native Protestant nor theologian but rather a “Christian Philosopher” of the Erasmian sort, an affinity which

26 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 57. For a possible depiction of the education at Montaigu, under the eye and lash of Pierre Tempête, see François Rabelais, Gargantua and Pantagruel, I.13 and IV.21.

27 Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 71-80. Elizabeth I translated Marguerite de Navarre’s *Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse* in 1544, as a child; her translation was subsequently published by John Bale in several editions beginning in 1548. See Marc Shell, *Elizabeth's Glass: With "The glass of the Sinful Soul" (1544) by Elizabeth I and "Epistle dedicatory" and "Conclusion" (1548) by John Bale* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).
placed him in contact with Nicholas Cop, Rector of the University of Paris. It was Cop, not Calvin, who famously delivered an incendiary sermon on 1 November 1533 that forced Calvin and other supposed members of “the ‘accursed Lutheran sect’” into exile from France. ²⁸

The extent of Calvin’s collusion with Cop over the content of the sermon is not definite. While earlier scholars, hasty to locate in Calvin an impetus to reform during his tenure in Paris, claimed him as the actual author, more compelling recent work has dispelled this thesis.²⁹ Nevertheless, reactionary forces in Paris forced Calvin abroad, just before the climate changed drastically with the public burning of alleged heretic Canus de la Croix in June 1534, the Affair of the Placards the following October, and the execution of Calvin’s friend Etienne de la Forge for heresy in February 1535. Yet even in his first years of exile Calvin’s publication record says relatively little about his theological commitments, unless one considers his renunciation of his benefices in Noyon (an ambiguous act) or his Psychopannychia, a 1534 treatise against the Anabaptists, steps toward Reform. It is in Basle that Calvin tentatively settles and from which he publishes the first iteration of the Institutio Christianae Religionis in 1536. That same year, on his way to Strasbourg, a brief sojourn in Geneva became a lifelong engagement insofar as Calvin, with fellow French exile Guillaume Farel, worked to reshape the character of the local Protestant institution. By November 1536 Calvin and Farel collaborated to draft a

²⁸ See Ganocy, The Young Calvin, 79-83.
²⁹ Ibid., 80-1. According to Ganocy, “the content of the speech sheds light on ideas that were current in the Paris circles frequented in 1533 by the future reformed, but nothing more can be inferred.”
Confession of Faith proper to the Genevan Reformed community; save for a second exile—this time from Geneva—on political grounds (which he spent with Bucer in Strasbourg, from 1538 to 1541), Calvin would work in Geneva for the rest of his life. Yet even here, during the earliest years of his tenure, Calvin’s involvement with the Reformed Church was more of a humanist engagement than a properly “Reformed” one. He began his work not as a preacher but as a professor and polemicist—duties that would duly define his particular comportment to piety and Christian philosophy.

The preceding history is not meant as an apology for Calvin, nor do I, in the following chapters, recuperate a “true” Calvin or Calvinism against misinterpretations. Calvin is a figure who, in addition to penning a careful and complex Christian theology, quarreled mercilessly with Sebastian Castellio (1515-1563) over the right to use violence in defending orthodoxy against heresy and who, in turn, oversaw the public burning of the antitrinitarian Michel Servetus (1511-1553) in Geneva. The records of the Geneva Consistory—the body that Calvin, in the interest of church discipline, established as a sort of master court to administer excommunication and advise secular punishment—are replete with examples of his intolerance and impatience. By 1560, the consistory

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30 After word reached the Reformer’s ears that rival Pierre Amaux spoke against him at a dinner party Calvin demanded that Amaux “apologize on bended knees…before the assembly of Two Hundred,” then “process through the city, kneeling at every major square or intersection to proclaim his regret at having dishonored the word of God, the magistrates, and the ministers.” Calvin not only demanded the excommunication of his rivals in Geneva but also the strict enforcement of religious law. In a particularly striking example, Benedict recounts how “Two men and a woman were barred from the Lord’s Supper for ‘scandal and disrespect to the institution of marriage’ because they watched a man slice a loaf of bread during breakfast after his wedding night to show how many
performed more than 200 excommunications per year, a startling figure by sixteenth-century standards; according to contemporary records, “Roughly one adult in eight was summoned before the tribunal each year.” Calvin’s reputation for severity is, in many respects, deserved.

Nevertheless, the preceding history does underscore Calvin’s training as a humanist, lawyer, and philosopher and the extent to which his most profound theological interventions are buttressed by familiarity with Scripture and secular literature in Latin, as well as his investments in emergent vernacular cultures. Calvin, perhaps more than any other Reformer, brought a particular rigor and care to his work, a practice that left an impression on friends and foes alike. Calvin’s Christian Philosophy appealed to its detractors in its precision, acumen, and legibility across confessions and situations, qualities that betray the Reformer’s legal training as well as his humanist debts to a pan-European republic of Latin letters. One should not confuse the clarity of his work with the quality or character of his interlocutors’ interpretations. Even the most “orthodox” times he had intercourse with his bride.” See Philip Benedict, Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed, 103, 102-3.

31 Benedict, Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed, 102.

32 This is not to imply that other Reformers—or, for that matter, competing Lutherans at odds with Reform movements outside of Germany—did not write with rigor or care; it is, rather, to make a case for Calvin’s legibility across confessions and scholastic idioms due to the character of his training and the tenor of his writing. For instance, the Jesuit Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), over the course of his Disputationes de controversiis christianae fidei (1581-93), a sprawling work published during his tenure in Rome as a polemicist and controversialist, cites Calvin more than any other Protestant figure due to his clarity and consistency. Benedict, Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed, 91-3. See also James Brodrick, Robert Bellarmine: Saint and Scholar (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1961).
engagements with Calvin’s Christian Philosophy differ significantly from his project in the 1559 *Institutio*. Many declaredly “Calvinist” projects would have shocked the Reformer. Take, for instance, the emergence of *Calvinoturcismus* at the turn of the seventeenth century, where Calvinists proposed an alliance between their brethren (in England and the Netherlands) and Muslims to unseat the Antichrist in Rome and establish a sort of ecumenical utopia on earth.\(^3\) The utopian vision of Johannes Heinrich Alsted (1588-1638) is also striking. Alsted experienced the turmoil of the continental Reformation with excitement, looking forward to an earthly determination of the Apocalypse and the expansion of Calvinism.\(^4\) Arminianism and Amyraldism—named for Jacobus Arminius [Jakob Harmenszoon] (1560-1609) and Moses Amyraut (1596-1664), respectively—were quickly denounced by more established Reformed polities and congregations as heretical; nevertheless both Arminius and Amyraut both proceed with striking fidelity to the concepts and terms Calvin establishes over the course of his career.\(^5\) Their followers, moreover, insisted that they practiced Reformed Orthodoxy in


the same manner as Calvin and fought bitterly against other “Calvinists” for license and legitimacy. All of these theological and philosophical interventions proceed in the name of orthodox Calvinism and demonstrate the degree to which Calvin’s philosophical and theological concepts—including his depiction of faith, in terms of *affectus*—afforded resources to Calvinists, Anti-Calvinists, Christians, and Non-Christians alike.

**Affective Experiments in Calvinism**

Early modern philosophers, theologians, and poets drew from a wide variety of Classical and Medieval resources on affect. Nevertheless, Calvin and Calvinism are often left out of the story; affect and the curious appellation “affective devotion” have long been the sole province of Tridentine Catholicism across studies of Renaissance poetry and Reformation theology, as if Calvin and his interlocutors broke entirely from Thomism as well as the rich resources of the Medieval *Devotio Moderna*. In his 1954 study *The Poetry of Meditation*, for instance, Louis L. Martz emphasizes the province of affect in emergent Jesuit practices of meditation in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Martz, expanding T. S. Eliot’s suggestions concerning Metaphysical Poetry, casts sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Jesuitical materials as the predominant

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devotional models for poetry in English; tracing the influence of figures such as Ignatius of Loyola, François de Sales, and Luis de Granada, Martz identifies Jesuit strategies for moving the “‘divine affections, wherewith wee may speake in our hartes to God’ during those colloquies that arise from meditation.” Calvin, Calvinism and Puritanism represent, for Martz, a turn away from meditative practices—from affective devotion, meditative poetry and affect in general. Only the most innovative “Calvinist” poets of the seventeenth-century, particularly Milton, challenged Calvinism’s “stern and terrible outlines” and even then such figures inevitably “were deeply affected by its prevailing temper…not at all conducive to the development of the art of meditation” as such.

Martz’s thesis has, of course, been challenged, even if his determination of Calvinism as stern and cold still reigns among critics and historians. The most thorough reassessment of his thesis on Calvinism comes in 1979, in Barbara Kiefer Lewalski’s monumental study Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric. Wrestling affective devotion from the Jesuits, Lewalski recasts Calvin as a representative of a Protestant contemplative tradition. Calvin attends to nature, to God’s many works, as a theater or demonstration to which he responds with piety and creativity: “the Book of Nature or Book of Creatures was also read symbolically, as a true manifestation or revelation of God (vestigia Dei), invested with spiritual significance which the meditator

38 Martz, 70.
39 Ibid., 156.
does not piously devise but rather discovers” through focus and technique.  

Chief among Calvinist techniques are “preparation” and meditation upon experience, with particular emphasis (as in William Perkins’s work) on “sanctified affections” which gave divine shape to worldly experience.  

Nevertheless, Calvin is for Lewalski less an innovative figure and more a representative of a larger Protestant tradition; the specificity of his contribution is eclipsed against an overwhelming survey of Protestant divines, genres, and practices, with little or no regard for commensurability among her many examples.  Moreover, as Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric is organized according to genre rather than figure or practice Lewalski pays little attention to the specificity of terms themselves, neither rhetorical nor devotional tools nor the affective states with which they were concerned.  Lewalski’s study demands revision lest we forget Calvin’s philosophical import and the terms of his engagement with poetry and rhetoric as well as the tense conflicts between Protestants.

Chapter 1—“Poetic Faith: Persuasio and Affectus in the 1559 Institutio Christianae Religionis” — establishes the terms of the dynamic approach to faith that Calvin establishes in the 1559 Institutio Christianae Religionis.  Located primarily in Book III, Chapter 2 of the Institutio, affectus comes to structure the fundamental relationship between God and man.  Calvin demonstrates, in clear terms, a rhetorical determination of persuasio as the ground from which to approach faith; in a series of emendations across Book III, Chapter 2, he sharpens his definition of faith in such a way

\[41\text{ Lewalski, 163-4.}\]

\[42\text{ Ibid., 158-61, 24.}\]
as to lay bare its affective resources—a decision which, in turn, complicates human agency without resorting to anti-Calvinist notions of cooperation between man and God. In this sense I offer a new way of reading Calvin’s work of the 1550s and 1560s in conversation with poetic and philosophical projects of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries. I also begin to trace the ways in which Calvin’s writing on faith and Christian Philosophy afforded resources for Calvinists and Anti-Calvinists alike. In many ways, his attention to affectus enabled arguments against the dominant confessional forms of Calvinism in the generations following his death. Calvin’s vision of affective faith demonstrated in Chapter 1 is neither the sole property of institutional Calvinism nor limited to Christianity.

John Donne, for instance, turned explicitly to Calvin’s writing on faith and affectus to challenge forms of Reformed Orthodoxy emerging during the early decades of the seventeenth century. In Chapter 2—“The Pulse of the Bells: Christology, Reformed Orthodoxy and the Reconfiguration of the Body in John Donne’s Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions”—I trace Donne’s turn to Calvin as he refuses the terms of Reformed Orthodoxy ascendant at the Synod of Dort in 1618/19. As Chapter 2 demonstrates, Donne explores the terms of affective faith and assurance without recourse to the predestinarian propositions of his Calvinist contemporaries. He affirms, rather, a Christocentric language drawn from Calvin’s writing on faith and the Passion of Christ. In the process, Donne works to shift emphasis away from the disparaging attention to individual salvation endemic among predestinarian thinkers. The Canons of the Synod of Dort, following such influential predestinarian theologians as William Perkins and
Theodore Beza, foreground the individual experience of predestination and thus emphasize God’s hatred of the reprobate. In the eyes of many Calvinists, this turn has serious consequences for human psychology, leading elect and reprobate alike to despair and a hatred of God.\textsuperscript{43} It is an approach to doctrine that Donne finds abhorrent. His \textit{Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions}, in turn, argues for an alternative approach to piety through Calvin’s affective depictions of the Passion and faith. Donne is not against predestination but rather the dominant pastoral, theological, and philosophical approaches to it. In their stead, he affirms an affective experience of God’s benevolence which, subsequently, works to expand their limited determination of human bodies and collectivities. Donne is less concerned with the individual body than with effects, affects, and aggregates, experiments which he affirms across his larger determination of the collective Body of Christ. In this sense Donne’s meditation on his illness in the \textit{Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions} looks forward to Spinoza’s fundamental reconfiguration of the body in the \textit{Ethica}: “nobody as yet has determined the limits of the body’s capabilities: that is, nobody as yet has learned from experience what the body can and cannot do” (\textit{Ethica} III P2 Schol/M 280).\textsuperscript{44}

Spinoza himself drew heavily from Calvin in his approaches to \textit{affectus} and necessity. Not only did he own a Spanish edition of Jean Calvin’s 1559 \textit{Institutio}, but his


\textsuperscript{44} “quid Corpus possit, nemo hucusque determinavit, hoc est, neminem huc usque experientia docuit, quid Corpus ex solis legibus Naturae, quatenus corporea tantum consideratur, possit agere, et quid non possit, nisi a Mente determinetur” (\textit{Ethica} O I.121-2).
early works—principally, the Dutch *Korte Verhandeling van God, de Mensch en Deszelfs Welstand* [*Short Treatise on God, Man, and his Well-Being*]—confirm the influence of Calvin’s versions of Reformed Orthodoxy.\(^{45}\) Like Donne, Spinoza turned to Calvin to refute and oppose dominant versions of Calvinism, or Reformed Orthodoxy. Once again, these dominant versions follow the decisive victory of the Contra-Remonstrants at the Synod of Dort, Calvinists who exercised significant influence in the mid-seventeenth-century Netherlands and who were responsible for the heresy legislation under which Spinoza and other Collegiants and *philosophes* were persecuted. Unlike Donne, however, Spinoza is not interested in emending Reformed Orthodoxy or establishing a true Christian Philosophy. On the contrary, Spinoza turns Calvin and against the Calvinists altogether. This connection between Calvin and Spinoza has never been recognized. Chapter 3 points to a heretofore neglected body of theological resources which Spinoza used to develop the *Korte Verhandeling* and the *Ethica*. Attention to these texts reveals an engagement with Calvin and with Dutch Reformed Orthodoxy in his nascent philosophy of necessity and *affectus*, rendered explicitly in terms of faith and predestination. I end the chapter by returning to Calvin’s 1559 *Institutio* with the 1677 *Ethica* in mind, exploring the continuities and discontinuities between the two approaches to *affectus* and necessity as well as the new readings of Calvin, Spinoza, Reformed Orthodoxy and Spinozism this enables.

\(^{45}\) See *Catalogus van de Bibiotheek der Vereniging het Spinozahuis te Rijnsburg* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 23.
Like Calvin and Spinoza, John Milton uses *affectus* to pose complex problems concerning agency, activity, and passivity. Chapter 4—“The ‘sense of Heav’ns desertion’: *Lustratio, Affectus* and God’s Special Decree in John Milton’s *Samson Agonistes* (1671)—reveals how *Samson Agonistes* is both a formal investigation of tragedy and a meditation on *affectus*. But Milton’s *affectus* departs from the 1559 *Institutio*, where it proceeds, for Calvin, from an investigation of Christ’s exceptional Passion and structures the experiences of justification and predestination. Milton’s *affectus* also departs from the *Ethica*, where it constitutes, for Spinoza, experience in an economy of activity and passivity determined by necessity and revealed by reason. For Milton, *affectus* is the stuff of “secret refreshings,” subjective, indicative of a relationship between Spirit and believer; it does not exceed this relationship, nor does Milton think about *affectus* and election in terms of “nation,” community, or collectivity. Milton’s *affectus* is indicative of a relationship with God, not necessarily constitutive of it.

All of this, however, assumes that we know what *affectus*, or affect, is. Before proceeding to a detailed historical investigation of these terms I offer a brief survey of the concept “affect” across several contemporary critical languages. The following note on affect establishes the outlines for the determination of *affectus* I trace across the dissertation. It also points to the import of this history, from Calvin to Spinoza, for more contemporary philosophical and theoretical projects, including the work of Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Antonio Negri, and Elizabeth Grosz. It illuminates the ways in which affect is a constitutive concept, intimately related to production and relation and non-secular approaches to devotion, attachment, and commitment.
A Note on Affect

Affect is a difficult concept to define, primarily because there are several competing versions of affect across early modern, modern, and contemporary conceptual languages. It is often taken as another word for “feeling,” “mood,” or “emotion”; while this is not always wrong, such easy substitution frequently results in significant error or distortion. Feeling in itself is not necessarily opposed to critical knowledge or reality, nor is mood merely a name for a vague romantic sense of things. Exemplary studies of feeling, mood, and emotion reveal the degree to which such terms are neither opaque nor inexact but, rather, critical to the histories of philosophy and aesthetics.  

Investigations of specific emotions or affects—melancholy, disgust, anxiety, and others—reveal how it is not just the particularity of the sensation but its place in a larger philosophical, analytic, or aesthetic network which determines its political or ethical purchase and importance.  

Affect demands similar attention. Theorists such as Baruch Spinoza and Sigmund Freud use exceptional care in developing systemic treatments of substance and psychic life,


respectively, in terms of affect. Many forms of psychoanalysis—for instance, the work of Freud, Silvan Tomkins, or Julia Kristeva—afford readers sophisticated descriptions of affect which are incorrectly (and all-too-often) conflated with treatments of mere feelings or emotions.  

Numerous interventions in cultural studies invoke affect to signal the importance of the body and to emphasize “circuits of feeling and response” against preoccupations with ideology and rigid social structures. This includes the work of Brian Massumi, Kathleen Stewart, and Ann Cvetkovich as well as imaginative treatments of early modernity by Gail Kern Paster and Michael Schoenfeldt. My hope is that “Affect Before Spinoza” might enter into conversation with these and like studies insofar as I insist upon the specificity of affect in opposition to feeling or emotion (particularly when we are led to understand these terms subjectively). But this is not merely a matter for cultural studies; Jean Calvin warned us long ago, in a section of the 1559 *Institutio Christianae Religionis* descrying additive determinations of faith, against conflating

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3 A thorough survey of modern approaches to affects and their role in structuring the political is Lili Hsieh’s unpublished dissertation *The Politics of Affect: Anger, Melancholy, and Transnational Feminism in Virginia Woolf and Eileen Chang* (Duke University, 2005).

affectus with mere subjective feeling or intention. Where *Affect Before Spinoza* affirms a certain continuity between Calvin and Baruch Spinoza (drawing in John Milton and John Donne as well) it also investigates the differences between these terms, to renew (or continue to renew) interest in the specificity of affect and what this means for philosophy, theology, poetry and ontology.  

*Affect Before Spinoza* examines an archive of writing on affectus, agency, and causality that does not proceed from psychoanalysis. Neither does this study seek recourse in assumptions about subjectivity and collectivity grounded in psychoanalysis or cultural studies. On the contrary, the conversation between Calvin and Spinoza on experience and necessity takes shape in a language of affectus that, in turn, points to belief and ontology. The history of affect identified in this study constitutes the basis of a marked alternative to other, modern approaches to affect grounded in identity and subjectivity. I proceed here, in my “Note on Affect,” to identify what affect is and what affect does, ending with series of propositions articulated across an archive of non-modern texts. Moreover, I identify several twentieth- and twenty-first-century

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5 See Chapter 1 below.

6 By “non-modern” I invoke two important studies that critique dominant modern assumptions about subjectivity and identity. Antonio Negri, in his essay “Spinoza’s Anti-Modernity” (1991), claims that Spinoza and Spinozism offer theoretical and practical alternatives to the forms of subjectivity, politics, aesthetics, and philosophy that emerged in the wake of Hegelian and Romantic thought. Spinozism stands in opposition to the “continual attempt to organize power functionally— in the instrumental rationality of Power” under Hegelian regimes of thought and control. Negri, moreover, encourages an “intellectual Love” that “is the formal condition of socialization, and that the communitarian process us the ontological condition of intellectual Love.” This remarkably Augustinian reading of Spinoza, asserting the primacy of affect in the *Ethica*, enters into conversation with David Aers’ warning in “A Whisper in the Ear of Early
determinations of affect that draw explicitly from Spinoza and adapt the non-modern version of affect at work across the present study—namely, the work of Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Antonio Negri, and Elizabeth Grosz.

I do not offer this “Note on Affect” to police the use of affect or to reveal existing studies as flawed or mistaken in their determination of the concept; I eschew a list of works which conflate affect with emotion or which neglect its origins and vicissitudes across centuries of adaptation and deployment. I am interested, rather, in tracing a new archive, the conversation between Spinoza, Calvin, and proponents of Reformed Orthodoxy in the seventeenth-century, a conversation that certainly stands to sharpen our understanding of affect, religion, faith, and causality. This archive of writing on affect bears indelible influence on our contemporary occasion. It also helps us understand what affect might mean across several contemporary theoretical debates; how it is different from feeling, emotion, or mood; and why this matters.

Modernists; or, Reflections on Literary Critics Writing the ‘History of the Subject.”’ Aers takes issue with literary critics who “construct large-scale cultural generalizations on the basis of a few prescriptive texts”; such critics affirm (and often celebrate) the emergence of liberalism and secularism at the expense of religious experiments and investigations. Aers and Negri, albeit in very different critical languages, descry histories that reflect and reproduce determinately modern assumptions and priorities. See Antonio Negri, “Spinoza’s Anti-Modernity,” trans. Charles T. Wolfe and Timothy S. Murphy, Subversive Spinoza: (Un)Contemporary Variations, ed. Timothy S. Murphy (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 83, 88; and David Aers, “A Whisper in the Ear of Early Modernists; or, Reflections on Literary Critics Writing the ‘History of the Subject,’” Culture and History, 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing, ed. David Aers (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 195.
In what follows I attend to the etymology of affect as well as its distinction from such Latinate terms as passion, emotion, and perturbation. I duly trace several early formulations of affect in the work of Quintilian, Augustine, and Aquinas in an effort to sketch, albeit in broad terms, the development of affect prior to the sixteenth century. I proceed to investigate, in short, psychoanalytic and Romantic determinations of affect before moving to the version set to work by Calvin and Spinoza and alive in the writing of Deleuze, Guattari, Negri, and Grosz. I end the “Note on Affect” with a series of propositions concerning affect meant to aid the reader at the outset of the present study. In the four chapters that follow, I develop this determination of affect at length. Where the present study stands as a history of a particular conversation around faith, necessity, and the constitutive force of affect I hope that the series of propositions below will enable the reader to make broad connections between early modern and contemporary investigations of agency and causality.

Affect/Affectus

The proper noun in Classical Latin is affectio (“The relation to or disposition toward a thing produced in a person by some influence”) rather than affectus, although the latter appears prominently in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Latin. Much is revealed in the etymology of the Roman term (the verb afficio/afficere) where “ad” (here: “with regard to, in respect of, in relation to, as to, to, in”), together with the root “facio/facere” (“to make, to do, to bring to pass, to cause, to effect, to create”), take shape together as a noun [affectus] or verb [afficio] meaning, respectively, “something done to,
something caused or created to” and “to do something to” or “to cause to.” In rhetorical terms, affectus is certainly used often to describe passion or emotion—hence Quintilian’s use of the noun in Book I of the Institutio Oratoria, where the arts of eloquence “ad movendos leniendosque adfectus plurimum valet” [are able to move and to moderate the emotions of many]. Yet in other places it points beyond emotion, figuring instead a general state, disposition, mood, or expression, as in Institutio Oratoria II.xiii.9, where something “gives an impression of action and animation [adfectum].”

Both the noun affectus and the verb afficio are distinct from perturbatio, passio, and motus. Perturbatio is generally used to describe a “confusion, disorder, or disturbance.” The noun passio, from the deponent verb patior (”to bear, support, undergo, suffer, endure”), refers to “a suffering or enduring” or an “event, occurrence, or phenomenon” as well as a “passion or affection.” Both of these terms describe “passions” in the sense that they emphasize passivity; they are disordered, disturbed, suffered, or made to happen. Motus, the Latinate root of the English “emotion,” follows

7 See Lewis and Short.
9 Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, I, 292-3 (II.xiii.9). With respect to subject formation, Laurie Shannon understands affect “In its simplest grammars…from the past participle of ad-facere” as a means of being “made or fashioned toward or in respect of another. Most broadly construed, ‘affect’ thus names subject formation itself as a matter of comporting or comaking, since some other (person, thing) is always party to the process.” See Laurie Shannon, “Likenings: Rhetorical Husbandries and Portia’s ‘True Conceit’ of Friendship,” Renaissance Drama 31 (2002): 4.
10 Lewis and Short, perturbatio.
11 Lewis and Short, passio, patior.
from the verb *moveo* (“to move, stir, set in motion; to shake, disturb, remove” and “to excite, occasion, cause, promote, produce; to begin, commence, undertake”); it is “An impulse, emotion, affection, passion, agitation, disturbance, inspiration” which emphasizes, again, its relative passivity.\(^{12}\) *Affectus* is also opposed to the noun *affectio*; in English, this same opposition is manifest across the two Latinate terms “affect” and “affection.”

**Affectus in Augustine and Aquinas**

While Cicero and Quintillian often use these terms interchangeably, Augustine suggests distinctions between *affectus* and *motus, perturbatio, affectio* and *passio* in *De Civitate Dei*.\(^{13}\) Historians of theology and religious experience have done much to retrieve an Augustinian language of affect, noting the degree to which Augustine, “careful to distinguish passion (*pertubationes*) from emotion (usually *motus* or *affectus*),” renders the passions “as pathological emotions”—with *affectus* or affect again understood as a more general disposition, emotion in the broadest sense only, as a movement or effect.\(^{14}\) In Book XIV Augustine asserts that there is “one city of men who choose to live

\(^{12}\) Lewis and Short, *moveo, motus*.


by the standard of the flesh, another of those who choose to live by the standard of the 
spirit.”

This division is not merely an adaptation of the distinction between Epicurean 
and Stoic preoccupations with body and mind, respectively; Augustine affirms, rather, 
that both of these sects, along with the Neoplatonists, follow the standard of the flesh and 
accord undue primacy to the “‘disturbances’ [perturbationibus] (to employ Cicero’s 
word) or ‘passions’ [passionibus]” of the body in their accounts of “moral failure in 
human behaviour” [humanorum morum vitiositas].

In De Civitate Dei it is not simply 
the physical body that is fallen but the mind as well. As early as Book IX, Augustine 
works to distinguish between two registers of affections or disturbances. He adapts a 
Stoic vocabulary and affirms the interchangeability of affectio, perturbatio, and passio, as 
is evident in his use of the conjunction “sive” in Book IX, Chapter IV: “perturbationes 
sive affectiones sive passiones.”

At the same time, however, Augustine rejects the 
doctrine that “the mind in which this [Stoic] principle is fixed does not allow any of those 
disturbances [perturbationes] to prevail in it against reason,” that Stoics (who he equates
here with Platonists, Aristotelians, and Peripatetics alike) can maintain reason against disturbances and translate such accidents into an economy of advantages and disadvantages.\(^{18}\) For Augustine it is not human reason but rather Scripture that “subordinates the higher mind itself to God, to be governed and succored by him, and puts the passions into keeping of the mind, to be regulated and restrained as to be converted into servants of righteousness.”\(^{19}\) God affects human beings who, in turn, affect and are affected by their world. Augustine, in his critique of Stoic reason, affirms two registers of affect—one from God and another among men—and thus opens human experience to a dynamic economy of activity and passivity. While he does not make a precise or consistent distinction between \textit{affectus} and \textit{affectio}, \textit{motus}, \textit{perturbatio}, and \textit{passio}, he does use \textit{affectus} to distinguish God’s activity from the economy of human passions. God moves, is active, and does not suffer \textit{affectiones} or \textit{perturbationes} as do human beings; his \textit{“affectus”} are not violent \textit{[turbulentus]}\(^{20}\). Even as Augustine uses the term in the negative, denying God’s passivity as well as his capacity to be disturbed, he uses the term \textit{affectus} with reference to God.

God is active in determining the character of men’s wills. In Book XIV, Chapter 6 Augustine uses a dynamic and ambiguous grammar to suspend human agency and to emphasize the experience of “fixed providential design” \textit{[certae dispensationis]} in the

\(^{18}\) See Augustine, \textit{City of God} [Bettenson], 348; and Augustine, \textit{City of God} [Wiesen], 166.

\(^{19}\) See Augustine, \textit{City of God} [Wiesen], 166-7: “Deo quippe illa [Scriptura Divina] ipsam mentem subicit regendam et iuvandam mentique passiones ita moderandas atque frenandas ut in usum iustitiae convertantur.”

\(^{20}\) See Augustine, \textit{City of God} [Wiesen], 170-1.
shaping of human will: “homo qui secundum Deum, non secundum hominem vivit oportet ut sit amator boni, unde fit consequens ut malum oderit.” Secunda is a vague gerund here, suspending judgments regarding agency; it merely connotes “following” and does not make exacting pronouncements with regard to causality. God affects and directs men who in turn follow the will to love rather than to hate and evil. In this initial active economy of the will, men are comported to love or hate through providence and an engagement with Scripture. This is the subject of Book XIV, Chapter 7. From this first register, this initial shaping to love and the character of the will, Augustine proceeds to describe a second economy of “the agitations of the mind, which appear as right feelings in the lives of the righteous” [De perturbationibus animi, quarum affectus rectos habet vita iustorum]. Augustine suggests a distinction between passion or disturbance—affectio, motus, perturbatio, and passio—and affectus rectus, right affect. The ground for this distinction is an apt understanding of human activity in relation to God’s activity, of the means by which human beings become “righteous” and by which they are endowed with a will comported to good. Augustine develops this distinction across Book XIV, Chapter 9, asserting that “If these emotions [motus] and feelings [affectus], that spring from love of the good and from holy charity, are to be called faults, then let us allow that real faults should be called virtues…[for] when the Lord himself condescended to live a human life…human emotion [humanus affectus] was not illusory

21 See Augustine, City of God [Bettenson], 564, 556; and Augustine, City of God [Levine], 310, 286.
22 See Augustine, City of God [Bettenson], 561; and Augustine, City of God [Levine], 304.
in him who had a truly human body and a truly human mind.” Christ, in his exemplary faith, demonstrates true human affectus, distinct from the passions and perturbations common among the faithless. Affectus, moreover, is of another order insofar as it points to an economy of activity and passivity through which men experience faith and love, as opposed to the accidental and occasional disturbances common to all men.

Augustine ends Book XIV, Chapter 9 by suggesting that affectus, in fact, structures the reaction and experience of more common disturbances. He describes the city or society of the impious who do not follow God [Civitas...societas, impiorum non secundum Deum]; for these citizens the same affects [affectibus] which the righteous experience correctly [recta] appear as diseases and revolutions [morbis et perturbationibus]. Affectus is the general term for those common affects which the faithful and faithless experience in different ways, as affectus or as affectiones, motus, perturbationes, and passiones, respectively. Augustine recalls his critique of Stoicism where he describes Stoics as those who “display an empty complacency, the more monstrous for being so rare, which makes them so charmed with this achievement in themselves that they are not stirred or excited by any emotions [affectu] at all, not swayed

23 See Augustine, City of God [Bettenson], 563. The Latin follows: “Hi motus, hi affectus de amore boni et de sancta caritate venientes si vitia vocanda sunt, sinamus ut ea quae vere vitia sunt virtutes vocentur…Quam ob rem etiam ipse Dominus in forma servi agree vitam dignatus humanam…Neque enim in quo verum erat hominis corpus et verus hominis animus, falsus erat humanus affectus.” See Augustine, City of God [Levine], 310.
24 See Augustine, City of God [Levine], 316, 318.
or influenced by any feelings [affectu].”

The Stoics, in their impious hardness, resist affectus altogether and, in turn, believe that they are duly free from passions and disturbances; it is as if they realize the Augustinian distinction between affectus and the passions (affectiones, motus, perturbationes, or passiones) in their perversion of faith.

Affectus, at this moment in De Civitate Dei, points to a dynamic economy of agency as well as to love and faith which, in turn, comport the citizens of the Civitas Peregrinas to a wide range of feelings, passions, and disturbances. This is also the case in the Confessiones where Augustine uses affectus to describe an impulse or activity from God that organizes human activity, as in the example in I.vi.7 where God, through an “ordinatum affectum” or affective arrangement precedes, directs and distributes the flow of human milk resulting in Augustine’s initial health. In the Confessiones, moreover, Augustine uses affectus to describe the enduring bond between God and man which he longs for, the “uniting to God by strongest affect” [praegrandi affectu tibi cohaerens] of I.ix.15 or the “most intimate affect of my mind, expressed to my heart by God” [mihi coram te de familiari affectu animi mei] exposed in the reading of the Psalms in IX.iv.8.

In many instances, affectus is interchangeable with affectio, perturbatio, and passio, but Augustine does consistently use affectus to depict a faithful and intimate relationship with

25 See Augustine, City of God [Bettenson], 566. The Latin text follows: “nonnulli tanto inmaniore quanto rariore vanitate hoc in se ipsis adamaverint ut nullo prorsus erigantur et excitentur, nullo flectantur atque incinentur affectu.” See Augustine, City of God [Levine], 318.
27 Augustin, Confessions [Pierre de Labriolle], 13r, 215r.
God. He also uses it in ways which clearly mark the distinction between affectus and other words connoting passion or feeling, as where describes the marriage bond in II.i.8 (as a coniugalis affectus) or contemplates his affectus animi, his state of mind, in II.ix.17.

This dissertation traces a version of affect, culled from rhetorical and Augustinian devotional languages, in and after the work of Jean Calvin. It will not suffice, however, to pass over Thomism in silence, particularly where Aquinas contributes significant resources to late Medieval versions of affective devotion that were undoubtedly influential to the Reformation. While Aquinas’ attention to affectus in the Summa Theologiae certainly warrants exhaustive study, I offer this tentative treatment, for the time being, in the interest of fleshing out the conversations and continuities between philosophical Thomism and both Calvinist and Spinozist approaches to affectus. Aquinas uses affectus in Question 9 of the Prima Secundae the Summa Theologiae to address the causes of volition. Affectus figures here in relation to desire and the will, but with respect to the initial question “is the will set in motion by the mind?” (utrum voluntas moveatur ab intellectu) Aquinas, quoting Augustine’s commentary on the Psalms, answers in the

28 Augustin, Confessions [Pierre de Labriolle], 35r, 41r.
negative, as “The intellect flies ahead, the desire follows sluggishly or not at all; we know what is good, yet do not delight in it” [praevolat intellectus, sequitur tardus aut nullas affectus; scimus bonum, nec delectat agree]. Terms such as passio and perturbatio are reserved for his discussion of the sensitive appetite of Question 9, Article 2, or the lower appetites and the crude physical changes in the body investigated in Question 10, Article 3 of the Prima Secundae. Aquinas, citing Aristotle, also works to bring passio into a scholastic “affective physics” that looks forward to Spinoza’s project in the Ethica, particularly where Aquinas notes (in Question 20, Article 6 of the Prima Secundae) that “actio et passio sunt unus actus.” Motus is also an ambiguous term in the Summa Theologiae, broadly descriptive of a movement within an economy of activity and passivity as well as an emotion; motus, like affectus, is clearly distinct from both passio and affectio—specifically in Aquinas’ treatment of “passionibus animae in generali” in and after Question 22 of the Prima Secundae. These distinctions, however, are not exactly evident in the body of scientific, philosophical and devotional literature of the seventeenth century inspired by the Summa Theologiae. Versions of Thomism such as Thomas Wright’s The Passions of the Minde in Generall (1596/1601) or Jean François

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Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Volume 17, 62-3.
Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Volume 17, 66-9, 90-3.
Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Volume 18, 100-1. On Spinoza’s “affective physics” see Chapter 3.
Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Volume 19, 2-3.
Senault’s *The Use of the Passions* (1649) emphasized the classification of passions given in Question 26—namely, the division between irascible and concupiscible passions. The *passiones concupiscibilis* are love [*amore*], hatred [*idio*], desire [*concupiscientia*], aversion [*fuga*], pleasure [*delectatione*] and sadness [*tristitia*]. The *passiones irascibilis* are, in turn, hope [*spe*], despair [*desperatione*], fear [*timore*], daring [*audacia*], and anger [*ira*]. This gives shape to a taxonomic tradition as opposed to an affective physics, emphasizing behavior and character at the expense of materialism, theology, and ontology. This is evident on the very title page of the Earl of Monmouth’s translation of Senault’s *The Use of the Passions*, where each passion takes shape as a character (See Figure I). Between Questions 26 and 48 of the Prima Sucundae, however, Aquinas works carefully to develop a consistent theological approach that works proleptically against later taxonomies; for him, the irascible passions precede and move the concupisible passions, just as his treatment of the passions proceeds from a more general Aristotelian treatment of volition in terms of physics and metaphysics.

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35 Aquinas disagrees with Augustine, for whom “all the other emotions are caused by love” [*omnes passiones ex amore causantur*]. For Aquinas, the primary concupiscible passion is desire. See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Volume 19, 48-9, 50-1.


37 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Volume 19, 44-59. This division is supported by a physical argument, where the irascible passions precede the concupiscible passions insofar as the former are transitory while the latter involve a state of rest. See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Volume 19, 44-9.
Senault’s is a taxonomy of characters; Aquinas produces an economy of relation and affection. The degree to which this aspect of Thomism survives into the seventeenth-century is the subject of another debate. For the time being, let it suffice to note that Augustine and Aquinas both bear considerable influence on the archive of writing on affect ranging from Calvin to Spinoza, even in dynamic contradistinction to the projects I investigate below.

Figure 1: Frontispiece from Jean François Senault’s *The Use of the Passions* (1649)
Affect in Psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud develops several approaches to affect across his body of writing. Affect, for Freud, is never reducible to “feeling” or “emotion” but, rather, refers to a fundamental relation between a drive and the experience of that drive within a given topography (a sort of map which considers psychical functions in relation to one another). The definition and importance of affect changes as he shifts attention from the first topography (the organization of the psychic apparatus in terms of the division between unconscious, preconscious, and consciousness) to the second (the organization of the psychic apparatus according to the division between ego, id, and superego). It is thus difficult to render a suitable definition of affect based on Freud’s broad oeuvre. Later attempts to articulate a theory of affect in his metapsychological writing certainly bear the traces of his earlier formulations, but to different ends. To understand the role of affect in Freudian psychoanalysis one must first confront the degree to which he balances quantitative and qualitative aspects of affect in different ways across his work.

“Quantitative” refers to an economy of physical or psychic energy that is released through a variety of affects. In this sense, affects are prior to ideas or emotions; affects are bound up in an economy of excitation and stimulation where discharges of energy are manifest in physical (shouting, flexing muscles) and psychical affects (fright, anxiety). In early formulations we encounter “active” or “sthenic” affects that regulate physical and mental excitation, balancing the economy of energy in a healthy manner through discharge. “Asthenic” affects such as fear and anxiety, however, are reactions to
excitation that do not discharge energy satisfactorily and, in turn, risk resulting in abnormal reactions, in “an anormal expression of the emotions.”

This is evident in Breuer’s fragment “Intracerebral Tonic Excitation—Affects” (1895), part of the larger Freud/Breuer collaboration Studies in Hysteria (1895). The quantitative approach to affect takes shape in Freud’s 1890s formulation “quota of affect” as “A quantitative factor postulated as the substratum of the affect as this is experienced subjectively,” as “the element that remains invariable despite the various modifications which the affect undergoes—displacement, detachment of the idea and qualitative transformations.” The quota of affect, in other words, is the objective discharge of energy that is subsequently experienced qualitatively. Thus by “qualitative” we understand the subjective aspect of the quantitative model, of the quota of affect.

The distinction is clearer in The Interpretation of Dreams (1899/1900), where, upon waking, “it is impossible to reject the affect of dreams as absurd, as one might be tempted to do with their contents.”

Freud marks the difference between the quantitative

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40 André Green, The Fabric of Affect in Psychoanalytic Discourse, trans. Alan Sheridan, New Library of Psychoanalysis 37 (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 23-38. Green understands Freud’s Project for a scientific psychology (1895) as an attempt to resolve the opposition between affect and quota of affect, between quality and quantity. By splitting the psychical process according to quantity and quality, objective and subjective aspects, and, subsequently, in terms of consciousness, Freud renders affect as conscious and quota of affect as unconscious (or at least approaching the unconscious).
quota of affect and qualitative affects bound together with ideas and representations, rendered subjective through the dream-work. They are inextricable. He asserts that “the imagined ideas in the dream-content have undergone displacements and substitutions, while the affects have remained in place unaltered.” This explains the distinction between the content of the dream and the affect. The difference between the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the affect takes shape later in the section “Affects in Dreams”; where sources of affect remain unconscious, one can begin to understand the character of the affect in qualitative terms, as pleasure or unpleasure, while the quantitative aspect might remain incalculable. Freud, in his depiction of the transformations of affects in dreams, attends to both quantitative and qualitative aspects. When affects are subtracted, for instance, we encounter again an economic approach to affect (or quota of affect) that emphasizes the degree to which affects regulate psychical energy through discharge. When affects are displaced or transformed into their opposites, however, this privileges their qualitative aspects and emphasizes the impact of dream-work upon the representational content of the affect, its subjective aspect. Freud thus complicates any easy attempt to identify affect with “feeling,” “mood,” or “emotion.”

Affect is, rather, a systemic concept revealed in Freud’s attempts to find the balance between quantitative and qualitative aspects across several decades; André Green, who adeptly investigates this history Le discours vivant: La conception

psychanalytique de l’affect (1973),\textsuperscript{43} illustrates how Freud wrestles with the relationship between affects and the unconscious as well as with the repression of affects across the two topographies. Freud marks a distinction between the qualitative idea of an affect and “some other element,” heretofore called the quota of affect, which “corresponds to the instinct in so far as the latter has become detached from the idea and finds expression, proportionate to its quantity, in processes which are sensed as affects.”\textsuperscript{44} Nevertheless, for Freud the organism is compelled, in an effort to avoid unpleasure altogether, to repress both of these aspects of affect—the idea or representation of the affect as well as the “something else” specific to quantity and the objectivity of instinct. This raises an important point concerning the relationship between affect and the unconscious, how “the unconscious does not appear in the same way for affect and representation.”\textsuperscript{45}

This intensifies in \textit{The Ego and the Id} (1923); as Freud moves from his first to his second topography, he develops another major distinction between unconscious and conscious affects in terms of language. Basically, he ceases to understand the unconscious in systematic linguistic terms and begins to investigate its non-representational character. Freud complicates the assumption that “All perceptions which


\textsuperscript{45} Green, \textit{The Fabric of Affect in Psychoanalytic Discourse}, 43
are received from without (sense-perceptions) and from within—what we call sensations and feelings—are Cs. [conscious] from the start,” by altering the arrangement between consciousness, preconscious, and unconscious: “the distinction between Cs and Pcs has no meaning where feelings [read: affects] are concerned; the Pcs drops out—and feelings [affects] are either conscious or unconscious. Even when they are attached to word-presentations, their becoming conscious is not due to that circumstance, but they become so directly.” In other words, affects are not merely related to consciousness through language but also otherwise. This shift effects a significant change in his theoretical approach to affects. An unconscious idea can be expressed in language, thus becoming conscious, while an unconscious affect, even through the mediation of language, might resist language and representation altogether. Green describes this relationship as such: “to exist in the unconscious state and to become conscious—that is to say, to pass through the perceptual system—are different for content and affect. The first must pass through language, the second may well be able to short-circuit language.” It is almost as if affect is posed as an atavistic, pre-linguistic trace in mankind which precedes and resists representation in language but which nevertheless can be represented, qualitatively.

In Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety (1925/6), Freud develops this relationship between affects, language, and the unconscious further. He gestures to his earliest work,

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with Breuer, insofar as in his investigation of “the origin of that anxiety—and of affects in general—we shall be leaving the realm of pure psychology and entering the borderland of physiology.” Nevertheless, Freud continues to probe the balance between quantitative and qualitative aspects of affect through his investigation of anxiety. such anxiety and other such “affective states” reveal several aspects of affect, including “a specific character of unpleasure,” “acts of discharge,” and “perceptions of those acts.”

Freud maintains a quantitative economic aspect in his evocation of “discharge” while, at the same time, splits the qualitative aspect of affect between its realization as pleasure or unpleasure (in relation to the drive) and its representation, the manner by which it enters consciousness. At work here is a fundamental distinction between expression and representation, between metonymy and metaphor; affects are expressed in their economic capacity or through the qualitative experience of the drives (as pleasure or unpleasure), as they are, while they are merely represented through the mediation of language. Both describe the experience of an affect, but while the idea of the affect is proper to representation and to its qualitative subjective experience the expression of the affect retains the potential to exceed and overwhelm the subject and language.

Julia Kristeva seems to draw from this version of affect, this balance between quantitative and qualitative aspects. Although it does not contain a definition of affect


\[49\] Sigmund Freud, “Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety” [1926], 93, 132-3.
per se, Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980) demonstrates attention to a specific affect—abjection—and reveals, in turn, how abjection short-circuits language and suspends phenomena between subjectivity and objectivity. Her study, which opens to a thorough treatment of the sacred as well as analysis and literature, takes shape in relation to Freud’s writing on repression and the unconscious. Relatively early in *Powers of Horror*, however, Kristeva recognizes that abjection challenges repression and renders oppositions such as I/Other and Inside/Outside ambiguous; Kristeva, in turn, pushes beyond Freud’s treatment of the unconscious insofar abjection introduces “aesthetic” or “mystical” approaches to phenomena (against Freud’s own scientific or rational approach).^50^

Laplanche and Pontalis offer another approach; they define “Affect” in *The Language of Psycho-Analysis* (1967) as

any affective state, whether painful or pleasant, whether vague or well defined, and whether it is manifested in the form of a massive discharge or in the form of a general mood. According to Freud, each instinct expresses itself in terms of affect and in terms of ideas (*Vorstellungen*). The affect is the qualitative expression of the quantity of instinctual energy and its fluctuations.^51^

Laplanche and Pontalis maintain a clear distinction between affect and quota of affect—between quality and quantity, respectively. This is evident where they determine the affect specifically as “the qualitative expression of the quantity of instinctual energy

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and its fluctuations” and relegate quantity to another entry altogether, under “Quota of Affect.” Laplanche and Pontalis follow Freud’s 1894 formulation in “The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence,” where “a quota of affect or sum of excitation…which possesses all the characteristics of a quantity (although we have no means of measuring it), which is capable of increase, diminution, displacement and discharge, and which is spread over the memory-traces of ideas somewhat as an electric charge is spread over the surface of a body.” Nevertheless, this is not the only approach to the apparent division between quantitative and qualitative aspects of affect. André Green maintains the distinction between these two aspects while nevertheless locating both under the single heading: “affect.” Green, who develops his approach to affect through a systematic theoretical and historical treatment of Freud’s oeuvre, asserts that affect assumed a “pre-eminent role in the primary processes…after the unconscious ceased to play in Freud’s work the role of a system and was replaced by the id, in which are stressed, far more than in the first topography, the economic point of view and the role of the drive’s tendency to discharge.” For Green, then, “the affect may be understood only through the theoretical model of the drive…It denotes the element of energy in this [psychical] representation [of the drive], endowed with quantity and quality, linked to the ideational representative, but capable of being dissociated in the unconscious.” Green suspends affect in tension

53 Green, The Fabric of Affect in Psychoanalytic Discourse, 71.
54 Green, The Fabric of Affect in Psychoanalytic Discourse, 70.
between quantitative and qualitative aspects in an attempt to emphasize its aporetic or paradoxical functions throughout Freud’s work. This tension, in turn, expresses the fundamental relationship between such quantitative aspects as repetition, binding (through Eros), and unbinding (through the destructive drives) and, in turn, the qualitative aspects pleasure and unpleasure. It is as if Green, through a careful analysis of texts surrounding it, reveals an affective framework at work in and after Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920).

Green’s investigation of affect is instructive insofar as he traces the development of the concept throughout Freud’s work and, in turn, demonstrates how post-Freudian psychoanalysis has largely obscured the theoretical/metapsychological importance of affect. Edward Glover and Marjorie Brierley turn their attention to object cathexis rather than to “affective charges of ideas”; Edith Jacobson relegates affects to the realm of stimuli or reactions, ignoring their quantitative aspects; Freud’s late remarks concerning affect give way, in England and the United States, to an overwhelming emphasis on the “resolutely genetic” psychology of personality advocated by Jean Piaget. While Glover, Brierley, Jacobson, and Piaget are seldom cited outside of clinical studies, however, Green locates the more eminent figure Jacques Lacan among those who have turned from Freud’s writing on affect: “Lacan’s work is exemplary…not only because affect has no

55 Green, The Fabric of Affect in Psychoanalytic Discourse, 73-82, 94. D. W. Winnicott and Wilfred Bion contribute significantly to a body of theoretical writing on affect after Freud; Melanie Klein, moreover, influences a generation of clinical and theoretical work, albeit without articulating, herself, “a specific conception of affect.” See Green, The Fabric of Affect in Psychoanalytic Discourse, 73.
place in it, but also because it is explicitly excluded from it." Lacan, for whom the unconscious is, famously, “structured like a language,” demonstrates an enduring preference for Freud’s early topography, concerning language and the unconscious, over his second topography, concerning the differentiation between id, ego, and superego.

While Lacan and subsequent Lacanians have certainly made significant contributions to our understanding of particular affects—anxiety, melancholy, and such—there is seldom attention to affect itself, to the tension Green identifies between qualitative and quantitative aspects as they relate to and structure objective drives and subjective experience.

Where Green works to posit a “true” Freudian determination of affect, suspended between expression and representation, he seems a lone advocate of a dynamic affective dimension of Freudian psychoanalysis. Most contemporary interdisciplinary studies begin by marking their distance from Freud while at the same time attempting to inhabit the languages of psychoanalysis. Teresa Brennan, for instance, works to articulate a social theory of affects while operating under the assumption that affect is merely another term for feeling or mood; in turn, she neglects Green’s revisionist history of Freudian affect and distances her study from what she takes to be “Freud’s own starting point: the belief that the individual psyche is the origin of the drives and affects.”


Flatley claims, against Green, that Freud “never really developed a coherent account of the affects, often treated them as the quantitative energy stemming from the drives, a kind of undifferentiated intensity that is given form and content by the ideas or objects to which they were attached.”59 While I prefer Green’s more dynamic reading of affect in Freud—particularly insofar as it invites us to consider Freud’s debt to Spinoza and to the archive I identify across the present study60—Flatley seems to express a general consensus concerning affect in Freudian psychoanalysis: “Freud was not really interested in affect as a thing in itself, attributing basic human motivation and evaluation instead to the libido (or, depending on the period of his career one is considering, other instincts such as the death drive).”61

Flatley prefers the work of Silvan Tomkins to Freud and affirms, after Tomkins, that affects can be experienced in relation to any objects; they are not restricted the Freudian drives.62 Tomkins establishes a theory of affect that is autonomous in the sense that it has no fundamental relationship to the drives; his observation that “any affect may have any ‘object’” and that this, in turn, constitutes “the basic source of complexity of human motivation and behavior” excites Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank insofar as it unmoors human behavior from Freudian assumptions about sexuality and

59 Jonathan Flatley, Affective Mapping, 12.
61 Flatley, Affective Mapping, 13.
62 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank are largely responsible for introducing the work of Tomkins to an interdisciplinary audience.
normality without jettisoning the rich and complex resources of the psychology of
desire. For Sedgwick and Frank, “What appears to be a diminution in the power
assigned to the sexual drive nonetheless corresponds to a multiplication—a finite and
concrete multiplication, it will emerge—of different possibilities for sexual relevance…
[While] Sexuality as a drive remains characterized here by a binary (potent/impotent)
model…its link to attention, to motivation, or indeed to action occurs only through
coassembly with an affect system described as encompassing several more, and more
qualitatively different, possibilities that on/off.”

Across his four-volume *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* (1962; 1963; 1991; and 1992), Tomkins identifies the affect system as “the primary motivational system in human beings,” comprised of eight
distinct affects: Interest-Excitement; Enjoyment-Joy; Surprise-Startle; Distress-Anguish;
Fear-Terror; Shame-Humiliation; Contempt-Disgust; and Anger-Rage. Tomkins marks
his distance from Freud on the grounds that Freud was wrong to locate management of
the “affect system” under the auspices of the id and in subordination to the primary drives

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64 Ibid., 8.
for sex, food, and oxygen. Tomkins, in opposition to Freud, affirms the freedom of the affect system and its more dynamic capacity for intensity and investment in objects and affects other than those stipulated by the primary drives. Human beings have four “General Images” with respect to affects: “(1) Positive affect should be maximized; (2) Negative affect should be minimized; (3) Affect inhibition should be minimized; (4) Power to maximize positive affect, to minimize negative affect, to minimize affect inhibition should be maximized.”

Affect seems takes shape in a manner that recalls Spinoza’s *Ethica*, as a supple descriptive physics. For Tomkins, however, it is unabashedly humanist and follows Green’s description of post-Freudian subject formation to the letter. Moreover, the anatomy of specific affects rejects the Spinozan understanding of affect as constitutive insofar as it substitutes a Cartesian cartography for a more dynamic and open understanding of affect. One finds it difficult, if not impossible, to imagine new affects in Tomkins’ system.

**Affect Before Psychoanalysis**

Spinoza, “the philosopher who has advanced furthest the theory of the affects and whose thought is the source, either directly or indirectly, of most of the contemporary work in this field,” develops a theory of affect that precedes psychoanalysis, just as it informs certain Romantic approaches to sensation without being reducible to either.

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66 Ibid., 67.
Deleuze and Guattari affirm the distinction between Spinozism and psychoanalysis as they investigate the terms of Spinozan affect across *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. In “1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible…” they offer a sequence of “Memories of a Spinozist” which explores the balance between quantity and quality in a manner which follows Green’s *Le discours vivant*. Attention to affect enables a thorough critique of “Substantial or essential forms”; “Spinoza’s approach is radical,” in turn, insofar as he begins with “elements that no longer have either form or function, that are abstract in this sense even though they are perfectly real.” These elements “are distinguished solely by movement and rest, slowness and speed”—neither atoms nor “finite elements still endowed with form” but, rather, following Part III *Ethica*, an abstract geometry of “lines, 


69 In *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), Deleuze and Guattari include Andre Green in their exhaustive critique of psychoanalysis. This is, however, before the publication of Green’s work on affect—*Le discours vivant*—which opens conversation with Spinozan version of affect (albeit bounded by Freud’s own writing on the subject). Deleuze and Guattari affirm “desiring-production—the machines of desire that no longer allow themselves to be reduced to the structure any more than to persons, and that constitute the Real in itself” against both Freud and Lacan’s interpretation of Freud. “Desiring-production” looks forward to their attention to Spinoza and affect in *A Thousand Plateaus* where affects precede forms and representations in their real constitutive capacities. In *Anti-Oedipus* desiring-production works through relation and variable intensity to expose such structures as Oedipal genealogies and familial organizations as secondary representations. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis, Minnesota; and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 53, 66.

planes, and basic bodies” [de lineis, planis, aut de corporibus].

Deleuze and Guattari establish the terms of affective physics after the Ethica, of

infinitely small, ultimate parts of an actual infinity, laid out on the same plane of consistency or composition. They are not defined by their number since they always come in infinities. However, depending on their degree of speed or the relation of movement and rest into which they enter, they belong to a given Individual, which may itself be part of another Individual governed by another, more complex, relation, and so on to infinity…The plane of consistency of Nature is like an immense Abstract Machine, abstract yet real and individual; its pieces are the various assemblages and individuals, each of which groups together an infinity of particles entering into an infinity of more or less interconnected relations.

This “plane of consistency”—the realm of real affective physics at work in Spinozism—enables us to begin with ontology rather than subjectivity, ideology, or representation; it describes the terms of becoming which shape real relations among and between different assemblages, bodies and intensities.

This language is deliberately abstract. Deleuze and Guattari affirm, after Spinoza, the origin and nature of Nature, the mind, and affectus as an affective physics. This has “nothing to do with a form or a figure, nor with a design or a function,” nor is it teleological in the sense that it manifests a “ground buried deep within things” or “an end or a project in the mind of God.”

The plane of consistency, rather, reveals a physics of

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71 See Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 254; and Ethica III/O I 119.
72 See Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 254.
immanent relation between individuals. These are not “individuals” in the subjective sense, where ideological forces shape our understanding of political subjects comprising a polity or corporate body, but “individuals” insofar as Deleuze and Guattari name basic forces, bodies, and intensities which cannot be divided indefinitely. These “individual” qualities of bodies, intensities, and forces are affects; “every relation of movement and rest, speed and slowness grouping together an infinity of parts…corresponds to a degree of power”—in other words, to an affect.\textsuperscript{74} Affects are the most basic units of force, power, and real meaning. They are certainly not reducible to emotion or feeling but rather to intensity and relation. Just as Spinoza uses a dynamic economy of affects to challenge Cartesian and Thomist taxonomies of passions, Deleuze and Guattari use real affects to challenge representative or metaphorical approaches to value. They claim, “In the same way we avoided defining a body by its organs and functions, we will avoid defining it by Species or Genus characteristics; instead we will seek to count its affects.”\textsuperscript{75} In this sense they emphasize, after Spinoza, use and value. For instance, “A racehorse is more different from a workhorse than a workhorse is from an ox.”\textsuperscript{76} Deleuze and Guattari identify a primary, real physics of relation that challenges representative taxonomies and speculations concerning kind and value.

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\textsuperscript{74} See Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 256.
\textsuperscript{75} See Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 257.
\textsuperscript{76} See Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 256
Antonio Negri also attends to affect in an attempt to transform “the theory of value ‘from below,’ from the base of life.” Negri uses Spinoza’s concept of affect to examine the terms of living labor and its autonomy from regimes of capitalism in the postmodern economy. The real affective economy of production challenges the legitimacy of capitalist metrics and representative measures of value; in turn,

The more the measure of value becomes ineffectual, the more the value of labor-power becomes determinant in production; the more political economy masks the value of labor-power, the more the value of labor-power is extended and intervenes in a global terrain, a biopolitical terrain. In this paradoxical way, labor becomes affect, or better, labor finds its value in affect, if affect is defined as the "power to act" (Spinoza). The paradox can thus be reformulated in these terms: The more the theory of value loses its reference to the subject (measure was this reference as a basis of mediation and command), the more the value of labor resides in affect, that is, in living labor that is made autonomous in the capital relation, and expresses—through all the pores of singular and collective bodies—its power of self-valorization.

Negri’s attention to affectus after Spinoza is not merely conceptual. In The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza’s Metaphysics and Politics (1981) Negri demonstrates how the Ethica reveals “the objective nexus of truth…freed from every perceptive premise,” an affective physics “subordinated only to the project of constitution: We are

78 Negri, “Value and Affect,” 79-80. Brian Massumi asserts that “Affect holds a key for rethinking postmodern power after ideology.” His study, however, obscures the potential for affect to enable thought against ideology before postmodernity, as in the work of both Calvin and Spinoza. See Massumi, Parables for the Virtual, 42.
faced with the absolute radicalism of objective being.” Spinoza opens thought to relations as they are, to affects which structure collectivities and assemblages. Affects or affectus are only passions when we experience them passively, a problem which is, foremost, ethical insofar as bodies approach perfection as they maximize their abilities to act. Negri emphasizes Spinoza’s preoccupation with activity at the heart of affectus and thus illustrates the autonomy of active, productive living labor—of affective labor—against secondary or representative measures of value. Such metrics are imposed upon affectus and experienced passively; Negri, following Spinoza, works to enable the affective power of living labor to recognize its autonomy in constituting value.

Negri’s is an apt understanding of affect insofar as living labor is irreducible to any single subject or individual. Psychoanalysis, at its best, determines affect as an experience of a drive or trauma that exceeds the subject, destroying and reconstituting subjectivity through a process that taxes the capacity of representation. This is, in many ways, drawn from the Ethica, particularly where we understand conatus in Spinoza’s work as a subjective principle of survival or “striving.” But Spinoza and his most careful interlocutors are clear insofar as conatus is not merely subjective: every thing, in its essence, “endeavors to persist in its own being” [in suo esse perservare conatur](III P6/M 283/Ethica O I.125). Spinoza’s theory of the conatus, how each thing endeavors to persist in its own being, its actual and indefinite essence, is crucial to the affective

physics of the *Ethica*. It “entails a metaphysical principle of inertia,” not a human or organic desire or compulsion. Deleuze and Guattari thus begin to reveal a great deal about affect in Spinoza and Spinozism.

Spinoza offers a provocation towards the beginning of Part III of the *Ethica*, asserting that “nobody as yet has determined the limits of the body’s capabilities: that is, nobody as yet has learned from experience what the body can and cannot do” (*Ethica III P2 Schol/M 280*). Deleuze and Guattari are correct to investigate this statement in terms of affect: “We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can and cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affect of another body, either to destroy that body or be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body.” “Body” does not mean human organism here but rather retains its broad, abstract definition. For Spinoza, a body is a geometrical unit, a measure in his

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80 See *Ethica* III, Propositions 6-9.
82 “quid Corpus possit, nemo hucusque determinavit, hoc est, neminem huc usque experientia docuit, quid Corpus ex solis legibus Naturae, quatenus corporea tantum consideratur, possit agere, et quid non possit, nisi a Mente determinetur… Unde sequitur, cum homines dicunt, hanc vel illam actionem Corporis oriri a Mente, quae imperium in Corpus habet, eos nescire, quid dicant, nec aliud agere, quam speciosis verbis fateri, se veram illius actionis causam absque admiratione ignorare” (*Ethica* O I.121-2).
affective physics. For Calvin and Donne, a body is a collectivity, the Body of Christ, the *Corpus Mysticum*. All are composed of and through affective relations. Such bodies activate other affects within larger affective economies of activity and passivity.

Elizabeth Grosz adeptly locates art itself as “the art of affect more than representation, a system of dynamized and impacting forces rather than a system of unique images that function under the regime of signs.” For Grosz, affects are not limited to human subjectivity; on the contrary, the true art, the art of affect, is “a project that that disjars, distends, and transforms frames, that focuses on the intervals and conjunctions between frames.” Art attends to affect rather than representation insofar as it reveals continuities between human life and “natural” life, comporting human collectivities to activity in the spirit of the *Ethica*. Art—and, subsequently, affect—are animal and cosmic, exceeding and enveloping human beings in myriad ways and, in turn, investigating new affects and experiences which challenge existing representations of human life and community. Like Calvin’s *affectus* and *persuadeo*, Grosz’s affects situate

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84 See Chapter 3.
85 See Chapters 1 and 2.
87 Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art*, 18.
human beings in radically different arrangements and relationships: “Affects are precisely these nonhuman becomings of man.”

In the interest of clarity, I affirm several initial propositions concerning affect, propositions which I trace across the trajectory of the dissertation:

I. Affects are not reducible to feelings or emotions

II. Affects exceed, reconfigure and reorganize bodies and subjects

III. Affects constitute increasingly complex forms through relation, as the materials of expression (not representation)

IV. Affects are always productive; it is only when they are experienced passively that they seem otherwise

V. Affects are thus constitutive of—and integral to—a dynamic economy of activity and passivity

VI. Affect suspends and transforms questions of agency to privilege relation. The “autonomy of affect” names the network of intensities, bodies, and relations that comprise and integrate human operations in terms of activity and passivity; it is not, as in Tomkins’ approach, subjective autonomy (in the sense that the affect system it is independent of the primary drives while still local to the human).

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Chapter 1—Poetic Faith: *Persuasio* and *Affectus* in the 1559
*Institutio Christianae Religionis*

In the 1559 *Institutio Christianae Religionis* Jean Calvin introduces a dynamic
determination of faith that draws from the resources of rhetoric and poetry and which, in
turn, sets to work new investigations of faith and assurance in determinately
philosophical and poetic registers. Located primarily in Book III, Chapter 2 of the
*Institutio*, *affectus* comes to structure the fundamental relationship between God and man.
Calvin establishes, in clear terms, a rhetorical determination of *persuasio* as the ground
from which to approach faith; in a series of emendations across Book III, Chapter 2, he
sharpens his definition of faith in such a way as to lay bare its affective resources—a
decision which, in turn, complicates human agency without resorting to anti-Calvinist
notions of cooperation between man and God. In this sense I offer a new way of reading
Calvin’s work of the 1550s and 1560s in conversation with poetic and philosophical
projects of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries, yet unmoored from such declaredly
“Calvinist” successors as Théodore de Bèze (Theodore Beza)(1519-1605), William
Perkins (1558-1602), and Franciscus Gomarus (1563-1641). Thus what follows is an
investigation of the resources that Calvin’s writing affords “Calvinists” and “Anti-
Calvinists” alike, a study that takes as a point of departure Richard Muller’s ground-
breaking work on the “unaccommodated” Calvin—in other words, a Calvin without
Calvinism, without the tradition of Calvinism identified by R. T. Kendall as
“experimental.” Such an approach is crucial in examining not only Calvin’s work but also his influence beyond confessional theology, particularly where Calvin helped shape approaches to poetry, philosophy, and theological disputation in the seventeenth century. We encounter in Calvin’s theology, in his writing on faith and nature, a conceptual vocabulary that bears indelible influence on later, seventeenth-century conversations across a variety of confessions and political situations. This chapter, in examining his innovative rhetorical determination of faith, reintroduces Calvin foremost as a thinker of both experience and affect. Rather than impose a description of affect on the *Institutio Christianae Religionis*, I locate an approach to affect in Calvin’s own work, making a case for affect in such a way that opens conversations and investigations in future chapters but which nevertheless takes shape in an early modern vocabulary. Suffice it to say, at this moment, that Calvin’s is a significant contribution to the history of affect, the precise terms of which will be made clear across this dissertation.

This study locates Calvin’s description of affect in his later work, culminating in his remarkable treatment of faith in Book III of the 1559 *Institutio Christianae Religionis*. Here Calvin resorts to a striking and illuminating description of faith as a form of knowledge that “can in no wise be separated from a devout disposition [*pio affectu*]”

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Here, after sustained investigations of knowledge across Books I and II ("De Cognitione Dei Creatoris" and "De Cognitione Dei Redemptoris," respectively), Calvin complicates his earlier conclusions by introducing a kind of knowing that is proper to the heart and to affectus, to affect. As faith is a matter of both the heart and the understanding, he develops an attendant critical vocabulary that departs from the speculative philosophical and theological languages lambasted in the prior Books. Moreover, where “faith is a knowledge of the divine benevolence toward us and a sure persuasion [persuasio] of its truth” (III.ii.12/B 556) we encounter an attempt to draw together theological languages of knowledge and affect in a nexus organized around his use of persuasio. It is a

2 “Fides in Christi notitia sita est. Christus nisi cum Spiritus sui sanctificatione cognosci nequit. Consequitur, fidem a pio affectu nullo modo esse distrahendam” (III.ii.8/OS IV 18).

3 “assensionem scilicet ipsam, sicuti ex parte attigi, et fusius iterum repetam, cordis esse magis quam cerebri, et affectus magis quam intelligentiae” (III.ii.8/OS IV 17).

4 “fides divinae erga nos benevolentiae notitia est, et certa de eius veritate persuasio” (III.ii.12/OS IV 21-22).

5 R. T. Kendall, in Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649, attends to “persuasion” in the history of Calvinism, but with no real specificity. For Kendall, “persuasion,” as a synonym for “saving faith” in Calvin’s own writing, stands starkly against a competing experiential tradition of Calvinist writing dependent upon a voluntaristic language of faith—“accepting, receiving, assenting, resting, yielding, answering, and embracing.” Moreover, among the key marks of the end of Calvin’s own theology is “the demise of faith as a persuasion.” Despite recognizing the importance of the term, Kendall’s determination of “persuasion” takes too much for granted; it is not so easily opposed to the voluntaristic language of Calvin’s successors nor is it so keenly aligned with faith without attention to faith’s status as a form of knowledge. See R. T. Kendall, Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649, 200, 211. For a critical treatment of Kendall’s determination of voluntarism as well as his understanding of Calvin’s vocabulary see
language that Calvin develops, in fidelity to the Pauline Epistles, to describe faith as a
way of knowing something—in this case, the truth of one’s election—that is nevertheless
indemonstrable to human reason due to the latter’s imperfection. Faith “is a sure
persuasion [persuasio] of the truth of God—that it can neither lie to us, nor deceive us,
nor become void—[and] those who have grasped this certainty assuredly expect the time
to come when God will fulfill his promises, which they are persuaded [persusione]
cannot but be true” (III.ii.42/B 590); the operative terms persuasio and persuasione
point to the integration of knowledge, experience, sensation, and affectus in Calvin’s
determination of faith.

With the term persuasio Calvin poses a rather complex problem of agency in
rhetorical terms, a testament to the lasting influence of rhetoric—Melancthonian,
Erasmian, Ciceronian, Quintilian, or some sixteenth-century amalgamation—on the
Reformer’s theology, even beyond the structure of the Institutio as a set of loci
communes. Indeed, persuasio recalls an oratorical vocabulary and looks to the
importance of form and structure in moving the hearts of listeners. But there still rests a
problem of agency here, in terms of how and by whom hearts are moved; it is a problem
which undoubtedly originates for Calvin in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans (Calvin’s

Richard Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a
Theological Tradition*, 159-61.

6 “Nam si fides...certa est de veritate Dei persuasio, quod nec mentiri nobis, nec fallere,
nec irrita esse queat: qui hanc certitudinem conceperunt, simul profecto expectant fore ut
promissiones suas Deus praestet, quae eorum persuasione non nisi verae esse possunt”
(III.ii.42/OS IV 52).

7 See Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 126-33.
influential *Commentarius In Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* was first published in 1540) but which translates familiar Augustinian, Medieval, and Reformation debates over providence and predestination, election and reprobation into a rhetorical idiom.

*Persuasio* registers this problem of agency insofar as Calvin seizes on the ambiguity of the term: the Latin distinctions between the various uses of the noun *persuasio* (as both an action, “a convincing, persuading, persuasion” and as something held, a “conviction, persuasion, belief, opinion”) and the verb *persuadere* (“to bring over by talking, to convince of the truth of any thing, to persuade” or “to prompt, induce, prevail upon, persuade to do any thing”). Both terms point to a spectrum of degrees of conviction, from more tentative persuasions to firm and certain beliefs. The terms also mark the process of convincing as well as a strong conviction that is held, a means of persuading and its successful conclusion at stake in one word. In this sense Calvin uses the Latinate forms of “persuasion” deliberately to describe the work of faith as a complex and dynamic knowledge of the relationship between man and God. It is under such conditions that faith is proper to the subject of Book III, to “*De Modo Percipiendae Christi Gratiae*” — the way of receiving the grace of Christ.

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8 Lewis and Short.

9 The title of Book III in full: “*De Modo Percipiendae Christi Gratiae, et qui inde fructus nobis proveniant, et qui effectus consequantur.*” (OS IV 1). I translate this as “On the manner of receiving [with the dual sense of “perceiving” or “feeling” in *Percipiendae*] Christ’s Grace, from which happiness comes to us and which effects follow.”

10 I follow Ford Lewis Battles in rendering “*percipiendae*” as “receiving,” although the verb “*percipere*” might also indicate, under other circumstances, a form of perception – a knowing, learning, or understanding – as well as a mode of feeling (Lewis and Short). I suggest that Calvin’s discussion of faith activates all of these other meanings and that the “*Modo Percipiendae Christi Gratiae*” (including the last topics organized under this
The ambiguity of the term poses a problem for readers but this is, as I illustrate below, a fruitful problem, an impasse which is productive and which inaugurates poetic trends in an attempt to register and negotiate an inevitable problem of will. Moreover, Calvin’s use of *persuasio* in proximity to faith points to election and to the assurance of the heart in such a way that makes experience, sensation, and affect extremely relevant. Believers are “more strengthened by the persuasion of divine truth than instructed by rational proof... [and] from this we conclude that the knowledge of faith consists in assurance rather than in comprehension” (III.ii.14/B 560) just as the “solid constancy of persuasion... requires full and fixed certainty, such as men are wont to have from things experienced and proved” (III.ii.15/B 560). Neither assurance nor certainty (insofar as they are distinct) can be achieved “without our truly feeling [God’s goodness in its]

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heading: predestination, election, and reprobation) demands a more complex understanding of the relationship between man and God than a mere “reception,” an understanding of affect and assurance as well as merely *knowing*. 

11 “divinae veritatis persuasione confirmati magis quam rationali demonstratione edocti... Unde statuimus, fidei notitiam certitudine magis quam apprehensione contineri” (III.ii.14/OS IV 25). See also III.ii.33/B 581: “it will not be enough for the mind to be illumined by the Spirit of God unless the heart is also strengthened and supported by his power. In this matter the Schoolmen [scholastici] go completely astray, who in considering faith identify it with a bare and simple assent arising out of knowledge, and leave out confidence and assurance of heart [cordis fiducia et securitate]” (“Nec satis fuerit mentem esse Dei Spiritu illuminatam, nisi et eius virtute cor obfirmetur ac fulciator. In quo tota terra scholastici aberrant, qui in fidei consideratione nudum ac simplicem ex notitia assensum arripiunt, praeterita cordis fiducia et securitate” (III.ii.33/OS IV 44)).

12 “solidior persuasionis constantia... plenam et fixam, quails de rebus compertos et probatis esse solet, certitudinem requirit” (III.ii.15/OS IV 25).
sweetness and experiencing it in ourselves” (III.ii.15/B 561). But the sweetness of God’s goodness is not limited to our enjoyment. Calvin also determines faith with reference to the experience of fear, of the Pauline “fear and trembling” of Phillipians 2:12, of “the reverent fear that we must experience whenever we come into the presence of God’s majesty, and by its splendor understand how great is our own filthiness” (III.ii.23/B 569). What is at stake in this determination of faith is its affective dimension, the degree to which faith is experienced and felt as it is known. Moreover, Calvin, following Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux, presents faith in terms of persuasion in order to complicate the human understanding of the concept. Insofar as the term plays on the ambiguity between a knowledge that follows from God’s persuasion and a knowledge that is at once a granted persuasion or conviction, it is a productive site of tension and instruction in Calvin’s theology of grace; it suspends the reader and communicant, in language, between two seemingly opposing determinations of the will and, in the process, dispatches attempts to locate human agency according to the simple and ultimately reductive terms of autonomy and determinacy.

In what follows I offer a close reading of faith in the 1559 *Institutio* focused on the remarkable treatment of the concept in Book III, Chapter 2. Calvin’s attention to faith at this point in the text is exemplary in its presentation of a dynamic and careful method, indicative of the exhaustive editorial process of the *Institutio* begun in 1536. A

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13 “Id autem fieri nequit, quin eius suavitatem vere sentiamus, et experiamur in nobis ipsis” (III.ii.15/OS IV 26).
14 “Ubi decenter fidei audaciam, quae Dei misericordiae innititur, cum religioso timore coniungit, quo nos affici necesse est quoties in conspectum divinae maiestatis prodeuntes, ex eius splendore, quanta sit nostra obscenitas, intelligimus” (III.ii.23/OS IV 33).
reading of Calvin’s approach to such a difficult scriptural concept affords the reader
enough insight to counter erroneous popular assumptions about his dogmatic coldness,
strict methodology, or cruelty. Moreover, in attending to the emergence of “persuasion”
as a site where approaches to knowledge and affect converge in the Institutio I
demonstrate the degree to which Calvin draws from the resources of rhetoric to describe
the experience of faith as such. Moving from the 1559 Institutio to other later works by
Calvin is duly instructive in marking the resources of rhetoric and of productive
ambiguity in his theology of faith. A close examination of a related sermon sequence in
translation—Anne Lock’s Sermons of John Calvin, Vpon the Songe that Ezechias made...
(1560)\(^{15}\)—also reveals the influence of Calvin’s affective approach to faith on English
poetry. Lock, the author of the first sonnet sequence in English (appended to her 1560
translation of Calvin’s Sermons on Isaiah 38) realizes in vivid language the poetic and
philosophical resources of Calvin’s determination of faith. Her meditation on the concept
reveals an early encounter with Calvinist notions of affect and knowledge that sheds new
light on early modern discourses of poetry, sensation and experience.

**Faith as Knowledge in the 1559 Institutio**

Generally, studies of knowledge in Calvin’s works begin with Edward A.
Dowey’s 1952 determination of the *duplex cognitio Dei*, of the bipartite structure of the
1559 Institutio organized according to the division between the knowledge of God as

\[^{15}\text{Full Title: Sermons of John Calvin, Vpon the Songe that Ezechias made after he had been sicke, and afflicted by the hand of God, conteyned in the 38. Chapiter of Esay. Translated out of Frenche into Englishe. 1560.}\]
Creator and knowledge of God as Redeemer. Dowey is certainly astute in his location of faith under the second part of the *Institutio*, proper to the knowledge of God as Redeemer; nevertheless, where I am concerned with affect and the experience of the created world, I follow Barbara Pitkin in her revision of Dowey’s thesis, particularly with respect to her reading of faith which “in its proper sense is knowledge of God’s redemptive activity” but where it “is also appropriate, proper, and, indeed, necessary to understand the knowledge of faith as including a knowledge of God in God’s general creative activity as well.” Faith spans both sections of the text, albeit in different ways.

By the end of the 1550s, faith is, for Calvin, integral to both forms of knowledge, yet not reducible to either, particularly where “scripture is not the ultimate object of providential faith, any more than of saving faith…[but rather] functions as an indispensable guide for looking up to and contemplating God’s providence manifest in God’s works in nature and history.” But this is not self-evident within the *Institutio*; Calvin works to establish faith’s status as a form of knowledge, and much of the early work of Book III, Chapter 2 (hereafter, III.ii) marks its distinction from other forms.

Calvin’s explanation of faith in III.ii proceeds as a series of tentative definitions that, once posited, are subject to scrutiny and clarified in such a way as to come to the most clear and accurate determination possible. A careful reading of the text reveals the

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18 Ibid., 158.
work of a theologian who is less interested in imposing rigid concepts than in instructing his audience of the dangers of strict exegetical approaches, exhorting them to encounter Scripture with an appropriate understanding of their own limitations as well as of its perfection. Across numerous descriptions of Scripture Calvin is careful to emphasize both of these aspects, foregrounding the human relation to the Word in terms of their ability or inability to apprehend what is absolutely perfect (even in its accommodations):

“Scripture exhibits fully as clear evidence of its own truth as white and black things do of their color, or sweet and bitter things do of their taste” (I.vii.2/B 76). But readers must be duly instructed of their own defects; their reading of Scripture requires guidance. In this way, III.ii exemplifies Calvin’s 1559 description of the *Institutio* from the “*Johannes Calvinus Lectori*” as a work that enables the “godly reader” to “approach Scripture armed with the knowledge of the present work” (B 5).

Because faith is absolutely integral to our understanding of Scripture, however imperfect that understanding may be, it is in terms of Scripture that Calvin first works to establish faith’s status as a form of knowledge. Indeed, in III.ii, even prior to his first tentative definition of faith in Section 7, Calvin notes that “in our daily reading of Scripture we come upon many obscure passages that convict us of our ignorance” (III.ii.4/B 546). This statement unequivocally draws from his elucidation of Scriptural

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19 “Non enim obscuriorem veritatis suae sensum ulbro Scriptura prae se fert, quam coloris sui res albae ac nigrae: saporis, suaves et amarae” (I.vii.2/OS III 67).
20 “modo praeentis operas cognitioine, quasi necessario instrumento, praemunitus accedat” (*Johannes Calvinus Lectori* OS III 6).
21 “ac quotidie legendo in multos obscuros locos incidimus, qui nos ignorantiae coarguunt” (III.ii.4/OS IV 11).
knowledge in Book I, where he tempers his treatment of Scripture and the human ability to grasp its force and nature: “Scripture will ultimately suffice for a saving knowledge of God only when its certainty is founded upon the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit... for only by faith can this be known” (I.viii.13/B 92). Though faith is something other than the knowledge of our own ignorance, it is certainly founded on it. Nevertheless, ignorance is of itself insufficient; even where Scripture is only efficacious to us through “the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit... for only by faith can this be known,” Calvin begins to critique approaches to piety founded on ignorance as well as those approaches which determine faith as a sort of rapt or enthusiastic attention to Christ. He asserts that “Faith rests not on ignorance, but on knowledge. And this is, indeed, knowledge not only of God but of the divine will” (III.ii.2/B 545). This is markedly different from definitions of faith that rest on a “submission of our feeling [sensus nostri submissione],” definitions of faith that require believers to “suspend judgment, and hearten ourselves to hold unity with the church” (III.ii.2,3/B 545). Such doctrines, according to Calvin, renounce both knowledge and true faith in their adherence to corrupt Roman Catholic principles.

22 “Quare tum vere demum ad salvificam Dei cognitione Scriptura satisfaciet, ubi interiori Spiritus sancti persuasione fundata fuerit eius certitudo” (I.viii.13/OS III 81)
23 “Non in ignorance, sed in cognitione site est fides: atque illa quidem non Dei modo, sed divinae voluntatis” (III.ii.2/OS IV 10).
24 “in quibus ipsis nihil magis expedit quam iudicium suspendere, animum autem affirmare ac tenendum cum Ecclesia unitatem” (III.ii.3/OS IV 11).
25 It is important to note that Calvin’s polemic against Roman Catholicism obscures the fact that he develops an approach to faith in continuity with Medieval Catholicism—namely, with Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, and the materials of the Devotio Moderna, all of which figure prominently across the Institutio.
Calvin’s critique of ignorance in III.ii extends to its polar opposite, to speculative attempts to know God absolutely and ontologically, in his very being. This critique follows from his lengthy attack on idolatry in Book I, drawing distinctions between the knowledge of God “in himself” [in se], the knowledge that God exists, and the knowledge of his will. In III.ii.6 Calvin evaluates these three categories in very clear terms:

In understanding faith it is not merely [unum] a question of knowing that God exists, but also—and this especially—of knowing what is his will toward us. For it is not so much our concern to know who he is in himself, as what he wills to be toward us. Now, therefore, we hold faith to be a knowledge of God’s will toward us, perceived from his Word. But the foundation of this is a preconceived conviction [persuasio] of God’s truth (III.ii.6/B 549).

Knowledge that God exists is basic to any understanding of faith, although it is not sufficient on its own. All human beings are naturally endowed with some knowledge of God’s existence; drawing from Cicero’s De Natura Deorum, Calvin gives a comparative anthropological reading of this general sense of divinity [divinitatis sensum] as early as I.iii, prior to the introduction of Scripture (in I.vi) and of the Trinity (I.xiii). Faith cannot refer to knowledge of God’s existence alone [unum] as this reveals nothing of Christ. Proceeding from this general sense of God’s existence, Calvin identifies two

26 “Neque enim unum id in fidei intelligentia agitur, ut Deum esse noverimus, sed etiam, imo hoc praecipue, ut qua sit erga nos voluntate, intelligamus. Neque enim sire quis in se sit, tantum nostra refert, sed qualis esse nobit velit. Iam ergo habemus fidem esse divinae erga nos voluntatis notitiam ex eius verbo perceptuam. Huius autem fundamentum est, praesumpta de veritate Dei persuasio” (III.ii.6/OS IV 15)
other approaches to faith as knowledge by way of another distinction: it is “not so much our concern to know who he is in himself, as what he wills to be toward us.” That to know God “in himself” is “not so much our concern” is consistent with Calvin’s numerous critiques of speculative knowledge across Book I, where “Men who pose this question [What is God?] are merely toying with idle speculations. It is more important for us to know of what sort he is and what is consistent with his nature” (I.ii.2/B 41). The term *speculatio* is not simply a derogative name for thinking. It refers specifically to approaches that probe the very being and substance of God, that proceed from the corruption, error, and superstition of human knowledge. Calvin begins the *Institutio* with a thorough critique of knowledge-as-presumption, of the human intellect which is unable (or refuses) to recognize its appropriate relationship to God, its “ignorance, vanity, poverty, infirmity, and—what is more—depravity and corruption” (I.i.1/B 36). Human knowledge of creation, and the limited human knowledge of God the Creator, is the subject of Book I and, indeed, the first topic of the *Institutio Christianae Religionis*. But even the critique of speculation in Book I is inadequate to the task of understanding faith; where our ignorance is integral to the earlier critique it is, as illustrated above, improper to any apt understanding of faith. Thus Calvin is careful in III.ii not to revisit earlier determinations of human ignorance but rather to establish that the Being of God is

27 “*Itaque frigidis tantum speculationibus ludunt quibus in hac quaestione insistere propositum est, quid sit Deus: quum intersit nostra potius, qualis sit, et quid eius naturae conveniat scire*” (L.ii.2/OS III 35)
28 “*ignorantiae, vanitatis, inopiae, infirmitatis, pravitatis denique et corruptionis*” (I.i.1/OS III 31).
29 See Dowey.
“tantum nostra refert”—it is not of particular concern to us, specifically with reference to faith. Having established our ignorance and its usefulness in Book I, faith demands a different emphasis; it must take knowledge, reformed in Book I, as a point of departure. Thus faith is defined as “a knowledge of God’s will toward us, perceived from his Word.” In this sense Calvin exhorts readers to apprehend God’s will and its work in the world, particularly with respect to our salvation. Hence his is not so much an exhortation against ignorance in general but rather a new emphasis on God’s will as something of which human beings cannot remain ignorant.

But how is knowledge of God’s will towards us distinct from the knowledge of God in itself, in se sit? Here, in relation to God’s will, Calvin points again to Scripture—and specifically to the “promise of grace, which can testify to us that the Father is merciful; since we can approach him in no other way, and upon grace alone the heart of man can rest” (III.ii.7/B 550). The relationship between man and God is emphasized; it is significant that faith takes shape as a knowledge of a relationship here in Book III, after the reader has encountered the topics organized under the knowledge of God the Redeemer in Book II—specifically Christ’s role as mediator realized in the Incarnation. It is largely in Book II that readers are to become familiar with

\[\text{30} \text{ “Proinde gratiae promissione opus est, qua nobis testificetur se propitium esse PAtrem: quando nec aliter ad eum appropinquare possumus, et in eam solam reclinare cor hominis potest” (III.ii.7/OS IV 16).} \]

\[\text{31} \text{ A full treatment of the Incarnation at this point would take us too far from faith; let it suffice to say that Book II, Chapters 12 through 17 of the Institutio treat Christ’s Incarnation and mediation in such a way that enables the later discussion of faith. I return in part to Book II below, in my treatment of the affective dimensions of Christ’s “descent into hell,” as well as in Chapter 2, where John Donne returns to Calvinist} \]
redemption, through detailed investigations of Scripture as well as through meditations on the principles of the Athanasian Creed (insofar as “we have in it a summary of our faith, full and complete in all details; containing nothing in it except what has been derived from the pure Word of God”) (II.xvi.8/B 513). Thus the knowledge of God the Redeemer brings with it apt knowledge of the promise of grace, looking forward within the text to Calvin’s full treatment of faith; without attention to the promise of grace, revealed in Scripture, it is “plain…that we do not yet have a full definition of faith, inasmuch as merely to know something of God’s will is not to be accounted faith” (III.ii.7/B 550). Readers must attend to this promise of grace for it alone stands as the foundation of our knowledge of God’s will toward us. The promise of grace completes the tentative definition of faith given in III.ii.6 insofar as it takes shape as “a preconceived conviction [persuasio] of God’s truth.” It is only in relation to this persuasio that Calvin revises his definition of faith in III.ii.7, where knowledge of God’s will toward us becomes, explicitly, “a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to

approaches to faith and affective devotion in his reflections on predestination and the 1618/19 Synod of Dort.

32 “Potius hoc in symbolo animadvertendum ut plena et numeris omnibus absoluta fidei summa nobis constet, in quam nihil ingeratur nisi ex purissimo Dei verbo petitum” (II.xvi.8/OS III 492).

33 “Constat ergo nondum plenam haberi a nobis fidei definitionem: quando voluntatem Dei qualem cunque nosse, pro fide censendum non est” (III.ii.7/OS IV 15).
our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (III.ii.7/B 551). Faith, as a knowledge of God’s will toward us, is foremost a knowledge of God’s benevolence.

**The Division of Faith between Hearts and Minds**

At this point that Calvin points to another key facet of faith, realized in his tentative and instrumental presentation of faith as “a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us, founded on the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (III.ii.7/B 551). It is initially from Romans 10:10 that Calvin draws the language of the heart, a crucial citation given the importance of the statement “With the heart men believeth unto righteousness” [Corde enim creditur in iustitiam](C Romans 222; Romanos 216). It is in his determination of faith that the heart becomes an organ for knowing. As with both *speculatio* and the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit, Calvin refers relatively early in the *Institutio* to the heart with reference to knowledge. As he develops an understanding of the proper comportment to the knowledge of God the Creator in Book I, we are consistently reminded that this is

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34 “Nunc iusta fidei definition obis constabit si dicamus esse divinae erga nos benevolentiae firmam certamque cognitionem, quae gratuitae in Christo promissionis veritate fundata, per Spiritum sanctum et revelatur mentibus nostris et cordibus obsignatur” (III.ii.7/OS IV 16).

not that knowledge which, content with empty speculation, merely flits in the brain, but that which will be sound and fruitful if we duly perceive it, and if it takes root in the heart. For the lord manifests himself by his powers, the force of which we feel [sentimus] within ourselves and the benefits of which we enjoy [fruimur]. We must therefore be much more profoundly affected by this knowledge than if we were to imagine a God of whom no perception came through to us (I.v.9/B 61-2).  

This knowledge that “takes root in the heart” is developed at length in III.ii. It is revealed here as faith itself, following Romans 10:10—“With the heart men believeth unto righteousness”—and affirming an assent that “is more of the heart than of the brain, and more of the disposition [affectus] than of the understanding” (III.ii.8/B 552). At no point does this attention to the heart supplant knowledge or substitute feeling for knowing. It is added to the understanding; it exceeds mere knowing. Thus, while Calvin’s argument certainly takes shape in the distinction between “brain” and “heart” he is not committed to such a crude distinction nor is this dualism anything more than a tentative separation, a pedagogical strategy drawn from Scripture (and from Paul in particular). As quoted above, a “right definition of faith” consists in “a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us… both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (III.ii.7/B 551, my emphasis). Faith is of both

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36 Atque hic rursus observandum est, invitari nos ad Dei notitiam, non quae inani speculatio tempore contenta in cerebro tantum volitet, sed quae solida futura sit et fructuosa si rite percipiatur a nobis, radicemque agat in corde. A suis enim virtutibus manifestatur Dominus: quarum vim quia sentimus intra nos, et beneficiis fruimur, vividius multo hac cognitione nos affici necesse est quam si Deum imaginaremur cuius nullus ad nos sensus perviniret” (I.v.9/OS III 53).  

37 See Note 3.
the heart and the understanding, although it is declaredly “more of the heart than the
mind” [cordis esse magis quam cerebri](III.ii.8/OS IV 17)—a distinction that points to
the scope of persuasio in the 1559 Institutio.

**Persuasio and Agency**

In order to understand precisely what Calvin is pointing to in this division
between heart and mind it is important to recognize the degree to which III.ii is marked
by the use of persuadere and persuasio. Calvin describes faith as a “firm persuasion of
the rational soul” as early as 1536; while the 1559 Institutio certainly builds on this early
foundation, it also marks a significant development in the ordo docendi, the order of the
topics organized to make their relationships more clear, insofar as Calvin’s treatment of
faith precedes his elaboration of both repentance and predestination. The relationship
between the heart and faith, as well as the distinction between knowing with the mind and
knowing with both heart and mind, will be made apparent through an examination of
these terms in III.ii and their work in the nexus of concepts around faith. But first,

persuasio and persuadere themselves. The noun persuasio refers to the action or result
of convincing, persuading and to the thing held—to a conviction, persuasion, belief, or
opinion. The verb persuadere, “to bring over by talking, to convince of the truth of any
thing, to persuade” or “to prompt, induce, prevail upon, persuade to do any thing.” In
quantitative terms, Calvin uses the verb persuadere or the attendant noun persuasio 48

38 Muller, The Unaccommodated Calvin, 162-3. See also Note 5, on Kendall’s attention
to “the demise of faith as a persuasion,” the scope of his history of Calvinism after
Calvin, and Muller’s subsequent critique of Kendall’s position.
39 Lewis and Short.
40 Lewis and Short.
times in Book III, 21 of which appear in Chapter II alone. This stands in contrast to 27 instances in Book I and 12 in Book II. But even the frequency of *persuadere* and *persuasio* is difficult to discern where English translations render them haphazardly as “persuasion” and as “to convince” and “conviction.” While the Latin terms may lend themselves to such interpretations, the strength of Calvin’s language lies in its ambiguity, in the possibility that both *persuadere* and *persuasio* point to a process as well as to an archive of rhetorical texts and terms. In English, and especially in modern English, our ability to recognize this subtlety is at risk; where “conviction” is usually a certain judgment or decision proper to the law, just as to convince is of an entirely different order than to persuade (the business of the professor or lawyer as opposed to the confidence man). In Latin the distinction is less immediately clear. Calvin uses *persuadere* and *persuasio* deliberately, activating numerous possible meanings and tenses as an action and a noun. He does not make use of the verb *convincere* (“to overcome, convict, refute, expose”; “to prove incontestably, show clearly, demonstrate”) in his treatment of faith, nor does he avail himself of a Latin lexicon suitable to demonstration, proof, and absolute certainty. Such is the language of speculation; faith requires a vocabulary more suited to pious knowledge.

Moreover, *persuadere* and *persusio* enable Calvin to make sophisticated statements about agency. Insofar as both terms, in their ambiguity, point to the process of persuasion or convincing as well as the result, readers are left to imagine the terms of the

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41 See III.ii.6/B 549, III.ii.7/B 551, III.ii.16/B 562, III.ii.40/B 587.
42 Lewis and Short.
process. To put the matter bluntly, how does God convince or persuade men to believe? Does God endow men with formed persuasions or convictions from eternity in the sense that they only realize persuasio as a result, substitutable with “belief” or “conviction”? Or does God occupy a position as a sort of divine orator and, if so, what kind of agency does this grant elect and reprobate alike, in their ability to accept or reject his artful advances? The latter sentence spells out in detail what is implicit in Calvin’s Latin, even where it is perhaps disingenuous to describe the relationship between man and God in such bare terms. Nevertheless, Calvin’s use of persuadere and persuasio does suggest a more subtle way of posing questions related to predestination, election and reprobation (which, incidentally, follow Calvin’s discussion of faith in Book III, after penance, justification, and prayer)—even where he exploits the ambiguity between forms of the terms, between the status of persuadere or persuasio as a process and a resultant state.

A close reading of II.iii affords us a more informed understanding of how persuadere and persuasio work in terms of faith. Calvin establishes the status of human agency with respect to the verb persuadere in Section 10 where men “persuade themselves” [sibi persuadent] to believe improper and illusory determinations of faith—men who, “prompted by some taste of the Word [verbi gustu affectos], greedily seize upon it, and begin to feel its divine power; so that they impose a false show of faith not only upon the eyes of men but even upon their own minds” (III.ii.10/B 554). The

43 “Tales non dubitamus quodam verbi gusto affectos ipsum avide arripere, et divinam eius virtutem perscentiscere: ut fallacy fidei simulatione non hominum oculis modo imponant, sed suis ipsorum animis. Ipsissimam enim pietatem esse sibi persuadent illam
grammar of the sentence first confirms that such men persuade themselves, that they are in some sense the subjects of the action, albeit they proceed from Scripture. Whether or not they proceed as readers of Scripture is less clear as they are “prompted by some taste of the Word” in a nondescript sense. But one must not be too quick to wrest agency from the human subjects, particularly after the statement a few sections earlier where “the foundation of [faith] is a preconceived conviction of God’s truth” [Huius autem fundamentum est, praesumpta de veritate Dei persuasio](III.ii.6/B 549/OS IV 15), another place where persuasion (here, as a noun, as something that is assumed [praesumpta] to be true) is determinedly human, a preconceived persuasion of the knowledge of God’s truth on which faith rests in the human understanding.

Moreover, the Battles translation at hand is perhaps misleading in Section 10: “avide” could mean “eagerly” as easily as “greedily” here, so it is not necessarily for lack of zeal or desire for piety that such men falter. There is a sense in which “greedily” leads us to consider such men as reprobate which, at this point in the exposition, is not necessarily the case (although it certainly invokes this understanding). The description of men who eagerly “seize” upon Scripture evokes images of enthusiasm and zeal proper to human agency while “greedily” is more of a judgment; they register two different orders of description in one adverb, one of which points to human agency while the other points to God’s judgment, to election and reprobation. Competing orders of agency are also at

quam Dei verbo deferent reverentiam, quia nullam esse impietatem reputant, nisi manifestum et confessum eius vel probrum vel contemptum” (III.ii.10/OS IV 20). 82
stake in this distinction, between an eager human will and a greedy reprobation, preordained from eternity.

This approach to faith in Section 10 reiterates another earlier use of *persuasio* where men improperly and “presumptuously dignify that persuasion [*persuasionem*], devoid of the fear of God, with the name ‘faith’ even though all Scripture cries against it” (III.ii.8/B 551). Just as they are the subjects who persuade themselves, human beings “dignify,” sanction and confirm a “persuasion” regarding faith which is nonetheless untrue. In such cases Calvin demonstrates the extent to which persuasion in either Latin form is a process in which men engage and through which human truths (however aberrant) are maintained.

Scripture affords Calvin an important precedent regarding the work of *persuadere* and *persuasio* within III.ii, one which complicates human agency and which emphasizes adoption and membership in Christ. This citation comes from Paul’s Epistle to the Romans—a text which shapes Calvin’s understanding of the term and its location within a larger nexus around faith as it figures prominently in the most perfect definition of faith offered in the *Institutio*, in III.ii.40. Here Calvin cites Romans 38-39: “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord” (C Romans 188).

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44 “Superciliose tamen, tota Scriptura reclamante, persuasionem illam timore Dei vacuam, fidei nominee dignantur” (III.ii.8/OS IV 17).
45 “38 Persuasus enim sum quod neque mors, neque vita, neque Angeli, neque principatus, neque virtutes, neque praesentia, neque futura,
Prior to the 1559 *Institutio* Calvin published an extensive commentary on Romans in 1540, an artful redaction and interpretation of Scripture in which we encounter some of the Reformer’s earliest articulations of predestination. Calvin revised his commentary on Romans for publication in Latin in 1551 and 1556 and prepared French editions of the text in 1542/3, 1550, and 1556; it is thus safe to say that Romans was an important resource as he revised the exhaustive *Institutio* for republication in 1559. Calvin relates the seminal statement on election from Romans 8:28-30—“For whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be confirmed in the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren: and whom he foreordained, them also he called: and whom he called them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (C Romans 179)—to rhetoric as he renders predestination specifically in terms of the cross:

Paul now employs a climax [*gradatione*] in order to confirm by a clearer demonstration how true it is that our conformity to the humility of Christ effects our salvation. In this he teaches us that our participation in the cross is so connected with our vocation, justification, and finally our glory, that they cannot in any way be separated… In order that readers may better understand the meaning of the apostle, it is well that they should recall my previous statement that the word *predestine* does not refer to election, but to the purpose or decree of God by which He has ordained that His people are to bear the cross… What Paul therefore intends to show by this climax is that the afflictions of believers, which cause their present humiliation, are intended solely that they may obtain the glory of the kingdom of heaven and reach the glory of the resurrection of Christ, with whom they are now crucified (C Romans 181-182).^{46}

39 Neque altitudo, neque profunditas, neque ulla alia creatura poterit nos dirimere a charitate Dei, quae est in Christo Iesu” (*Romanos* 185).

^{46} “Iam ut clarius demonstratione confirmet quam verum sit, illam cum Christi humilitate conformationem saluti nobis esse, gradatione utitor. In qua docet, sic cum vocacione,
The predestination of the believers, the purpose to which the elect are afflicted and charged to bear the cross with Christ “with whom they are now crucified” [cum quo nunc crucifiguntur], is the lesson upon which Paul’s statement of assurance, cited in III.ii.40, is predicated. Thus where Calvin affirms, after Paul, that “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord” (C Romans 188), we encounter in the *Institutio* a precedent for reading “persuasus...sum” as an artfully posed problem of agency and membership in Christ. Paul’s firm persuasion—indeed, his conviction—that nothing can wrest him from Christ’s love once given follows directly from a careful analysis of election and justification; Paul, in affirming “persuasus...sum,” marks his human belief as inextricable from matters of predestination, secret and revealed. Calvin confirms this entirely. The very degree to which the treatment of faith in the 1559 *Institutio* follows the topical organization of the Epistle to the Romans is striking, particularly where Calvin’s direct citation of Romans 8:38-39 in Section 40 is preceded by a discussion of adoption and reprobation (as early as Section 11) and, more
immediately, by the depth of the cross and humiliation in Section 37. Here, after Paul, Calvin locates true faith in proximity to membership in Christ and to illumination by the Spirit.

Agency is complicated in the preceding Pauline text and in Calvin’s citation. In formal terms, Calvin evinces an adept knowledge of rhetoric in his identification of Paul’s “climax” or *gradatione*, a term identified by Cicero in *De Oratore* and by Quintilian in the *Institutionis Oratoriae*.47 This knowledge of rhetoric certainly informs his understanding of persuasion as well as his reading of Romans; in both cases we are presented with models of human agency and participation in the crucifixion that follow directly from Calvin’s characterization of Christ as sole actor “when he illuminates us into faith by the power of his Spirit [and] at the same time so engrafts us into his body that we become partakers of every good” (III.ii.35/B 583).48 Indeed, where Calvin notes that Paul “employs a climax in order to confirm by a clearer demonstration how true it is that our conformity to the humility of Christ effects our salvation” we need not exclude real human agency from this statement. “Conformity” [*conformationem*] is neutral in the sense that it does not necessarily tell us whether we have or lack the ability to conform,

47 Quintilian locates *gradatio* in his discussion of figures (as expressions of forms of thought [*forma sententiae*]), in Book IX of the *Institutionis Oratoriae*. See Cicero, *De Oratore*, trans. E. W. Sutton, Loeb Classical Library, 2 Vols (Cambridge Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press and William Heinemann, 1942), II, 164-65 (III.liv.207). Hereafter referred to as *Institutio Oratoria* followed by volume and page numbers; and Quintilian IX.i.34.
48 “Christum, ubi nos in fidem illuminat Spiritus sui virtute, simul inserere in corpus suum, ut fiamus bonorum omnium participles” (III.ii.35/OS IV 46).
whether we are able to realize this conformity as agents or whether it is merely an indication of our election or reprobation as God ultimately animates us.

**Persuasio in Calvin’s Rhetorical Vocabulary**

What is also apparent from his commentary on Romans and the *Institutio* is the degree to which Calvin’s familiarity with rhetorical terms and procedures informs his understanding of faith.⁴⁹ Indeed, historians and critics have emphasized the role of rhetoric across his body of work as well as in his intellectual formation.⁵⁰ But close attention to the terms of persuasion in the *Institutio* affords us a somewhat different view of Calvin as a theologian less interested in applying rhetorical principles and technologies than in mining the resources of rhetoric for a more thorough and able treatment of faith in affective terms.

Calvin’s use of rhetorical terms certainly reveals much about his education and intellectual formation; numerous scholars also note the degree to which Calvin follows

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⁴⁹ I am not interested in advancing Calvin’s “humanism” as a general term through which his entire theology or “Christian Philosophy” might be understood, nor is my reading of his rhetorical understanding an affirmation concerning the primacy of such resources across his work. See Quirinus Breen, *John Calvin: A Study in French Humanism*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Archon Books, 1968) and Charles Partree, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977).

his important correspondents Philip Melanchthon and Martin Bucer in his encounter with Scripture as eminently rhetorical, albeit in plain terms accommodated to human understanding. This sense of accommodation colors sixteenth-century rhetorical commentary across confessional divides, “For what manne can be delited or yet be perswaded, with the onely hearing of those thynges, whiche he knoweth not what thei meane.” His distinct use of *persuasio/persuadere* evinces his familiarity with the most important rhetorical resources, Classical, Medieval, and Modern. Thomas Wilson’s *Arte of Rhetorique* (1553/1560), the most comprehensive and popular English rhetorical treatise of the sixteenth century, draws from many of the same sources as Calvin, albeit to a different purpose in a distinct genre and idiom. Despite glaring differences in scope and material, Calvin and Wilson agree in the determination that the orator “muste perswade, and move the affeccions of his hearers in such wise, that thei shalbe forced to yelde unto his saiying.” The difference, of course, has to do with the identity and status

51 On Melanchthon’s influence see: Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of his Religious Thought*, 134-5; Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 126-33; John R. Schneider, *Philip Melanchthon’s Rhetorical Construal of Biblical Authority: Oratio Sacra* (Lewiston, Queenston and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 81. In what are perhaps the most complete treatments of Calvin’s rhetorical resources to date, Olivier Millet points to Martin Bucer’s method in particular as an influence on Calvin. See Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole* and Millet, “*Docere/Movere.*”


53 Wilson compiles information from Aristotle (from, among other sources, *De Rhetorica* and *De Interpretatione*), Cicero (*De Inventione, De Oratore*, and *Ad Herennium*), Quintilian (*Institutio Orationes*), Rudolphus Agricola (*De Invenzione Dialectica Libri Tres*), Erasmus (*De Copia, Ciceronianus, and De Ratione Studii* in particular), and Melanchthon (the 1519 *De Rhetorica Libri Tres* and the *Institutiones Rhetoricae* of 1522) to produce an authoritative anatomy of rhetoric.

54 Wilson, 28
of the orator and the rhetorical work; for Wilson, the Arte of Rhetorique takes shape as a sort of technical manual while for Calvin the Institutio adapts rhetorical concepts to attend to Scripture and experience. Calvin looks to manuals and primers as well as to markedly rhetorical projects, such as Melanchthon’s De Rhetorica Libri Tres (1519), which establish important theological methods: the organization of loci communes or topics and the determination of Scripture as subject to rhetorical and literary methods.

Included among these methods are enarratio—what Moss defines as “the study of texts, literary and other, and the making of commentaries that set them within their own linguistic and cultural context”—as well as inventio, which Cicero renders as “the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one’s cause plausible” [excogitatio rerum verarum aut veri similium quae causam probabilem reddant].

55 We can find evidence of the inextricability of rhetoric from theology in Wilson’s treatment of necessity in the Arte of Rhetorique. The manual reveals Calvinist influence in Wilson’s description of a “kynde of necessitie [that] is, when we persuade men to beare those crosses paciently, whiche God doeth sende us, considering will we, or nill we, nedes must we abide them.” This convergence may be less coincidental than one expects as Wilson, a Protestant exile, sought refuge on the Continent upon the accession of Mary in 1553, settling in a Reformed community in Padua not unlike Strasbourg or Geneva. He eventually settled in Rome upon the dissolution of the English Protestant community at Padua where, after a prolonged employment as currier to no less than Pope Paul IV, his Protestantism came to the attention of Edward Carne, Queen Mary’s Ambassador. Probably upon Carne’s request Wilson was summoned to appear before the King and Queen of England; disobeying this order, Wilson was brought before the Inquisition as a heretic, tried, and tortured – a narrative of which appears in the preface to the 1560 edition of The Arte of Rhetorique. See Wilson, xxix-xxxiii, 79-80.

Wilson, who adapts *inventio* directly from Cicero, defines it as “a searchyng out of thynges true, or thynges likely, the whiche maie reasonably sette furth a matter, and make it appere probable.” But for Cicero and Wilson—as well as other students of Ciceronian eloquence/rhetoric for whom “The function of eloquence seems to be to speak in a manner suited to persuade [persuasionem] an audience, the end is to persuade [persuadere] by speech”—*inventio*, the most difficult part of rhetoric, also names a more general critical attention to order and composition. It also names a different horizon for oratory: persuasion, in addition to instruction. *Inventio*, attention to the organization and techniques of an argument or position, thus points to specific criteria to determine the effectiveness of oratory. It introduces, among other variables, *affectio* (as given in Cicero’s *De Inventione* I.xxv.36) in determining the quality and scope of an eloquent presentation.

Millet, in an attempt to locate Calvin’s rhetorical resources in Renaissance as well as Medieval and Classical contexts, emphasizes his debts to Lorenzo Valla, Desiderius Erasmus, and Martin Bucer in identifying an emergent sixteenth-century tradition of theologians linking *persuasio* to *fides*. According to Millet, “il est clair que la *persuasio* de la *mens* est supérieure à la simple *fides* parce qu’elle emporte, avec l’*animum*, qui comporte encore un aspect intellectuel (*sententia*) les sentiments, ou affects, et les “forces” humaines, soit la totalité des facultés ou des instances anthropologiques qui

57 Wilson, 31.
définissent l’homme." Through *persuasio*, theologians imagined faith as a much more enduring and encompassing relation between God and man. Millet, drawing again from contemporary rhetorical determinations of faith, foregrounds the dyad “*docere/movere,*” teaching/moving, to describe the work of persuasion in faith as an ideal form of eloquence; appearing in precise Ciceronian terms, *docere/movere* gives voice in Millet’s study to a declaredly theological adaptation he subsequently attributes to Calvin: “*Littera docet, movet spiritus*”—the letter teaches, the spirit moves.60

Millet’s is an excellent point of departure into the 1559 *Institutio*, as Calvin certainly uses *persuasio* to sharpen his treatment of faith as knowledge throughout Book III, pointing to assurance and conviction while at the same time deploying it against presumption and certainty. Rhetoric does not necessarily deal with certainty but rather with arguments structured to persuade; even the supreme orator, treated in Cicero’s influential commentary *De Optimo Genere Oratorum*, “is the one whose speech instructs, delights and moves the minds of his audience [*animos audientium et docet et delectat et permovet*]. The orator is in duty bound to instruct; giving pleasure is a free gift to the audience, to move them is indispensable [*permovere necessarium*].”61 For Calvin, this distinction between arguments, this emphasis on arguments that both instruct and move the audience, is realized in his use of *persuasio*. As such *persuasio* enables different criteria for knowledge as well as different horizons for certainty—particularly where

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59 Millet, “*Docere/Movere,*” 41.
60 Ibid., 50.
certainty affects both the mind and the heart, as explored above. As Calvin develops the terms of *persuasio* throughout his treatment of faith, he sharpens his understanding of the kind of certainty faith demands. III.ii abounds with such examples; here, against those men who “presumptuously dignify that persuasion [*persuasionem*], devoid of the fear of God, with the name ‘faith’ even though all Scripture cries against it” (III.ii.10/B 554), Calvin emphasizes the importance of assurance and constancy in relation to the form of persuasion proper to faith. He certainly does this in his citation of Romans above, where one cannot wrest a true believer from their persuasion in Christ, just as he is clear in Section 14 that “the knowledge of faith consists in assurance rather than in comprehension” (III.ii.14/B 560). In Section 15 he sharpens this definition yet again:

> We add the words ‘sure and firm’ in order to express a more solid constancy of persuasion. For, as faith is not content with a doubtful and changeable opinion, so it is not content with an obscure and confused conception; but requires full and fixed certainty, such as men are wont to have from things experienced and proved. For unbelief is so deeply rooted in our hearts, and we are so inclined to it, that not without hard struggle is each one able to persuade himself of what all confess with the mouth: namely, that God is faithful” (III.ii.15/B 560).

This description of faith as constancy is illuminating. Here Calvin’s treatment of faith draws from rhetorical resources to pose a complicated if implicit question: what

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62 See Note 11.
63 “Addimus, certam ac firmam, quo solidior persuasionis Constantia exprimatur. Nam ut dubia et versatili opinione non est contenta fides, ita nec obscura perplexaque conceptione: sed plenam et fixam, quails re rebus compertis et probatis esse solet, certitudinem requirit. Tam alte enim et radicitus haeret in cordibus nostris incredulitas, et ita ad eam sumus propensi, ut quod ore fatentur omnes, Deum esse fidelem, non absque arduo certamine quisquam sibi persuadeat” (III.ii.15/OS IV 25).
persuades? What is the object of *inventio*? Persuasio is split with reference to faith, between the “solid constancy of persuasion” expressed as a sort of ideal and the challenge of “unbelief,” the difficult (and ultimately impossible) task of persuading oneself of God’s promise. Calvin uses this comparison or split to juxtapose sources of faith—sources which take shape as orators in Calvin’s rhetorical determination of persuasion. If we approach this problem in terms of oratory, terms that Calvin certainly suggests in III.i, we encounter one source from within the human heart, a degraded source that is already inclined to unbelief and thus unable to persuade itself of God’s benevolence. The second source is God—not necessarily God *in se* but rather the God of Scripture, nature, history and the mediation of the Incarnation (the subject of Book II of the 1559 *Institutio*).

In a sense, Calvin poses the true source of faith, God, as a capable orator who speaks through scripture and worldly phenomena. Olivier Millet describes this as a human interaction with “la parole divine”; indeed, as Millet confirms, Calvin “identifie la foi chrétienne avec la persuasione oratoire, à la lumière du couple *docere/movere*”; the Reformer “utilize de manière parfois plus explicite que Bucer un scéma complet, *docere/conciliare/movere*, pour render compte du processus de communication et d’appropriation par l’homme de la parole divine, processus dans lequel la vérité se révèle subjectivement grâce au ‘maître intérieur,’ à la fois lumière éclairant l’intelligence et grâce transformatrice des affects.”64 Moreover, where Susan E. Schreiner has explored the extent to which nature reveals God’s providence—“the faithfulness of God to

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64 Millet, “*Docere/Movere,*” 50.
creation, the belief that creation is the stage for God’s activity, the revelatory function of nature, the survival of human nature after the fall, the preservation of societal life, and the redemption of the cosmos”—we can begin to understand the ways in which faith, as a knowledge of God’s benevolence, is as appropriate to creation as it is to redemption. In other words, if Calvin invites us to consider God’s benevolence in his works, in the theater of creation as well as in Scripture, then faith takes shape as a form of knowledge that negotiates the natural world of creation and human experience in an attempt to discern God’s providence. As the 1559 *Institutio* makes very clear, God’s providence is certainly distinct from predestination. Predestination refers specifically to human election and reprobation from eternity, all of which pertain to Book III; providence, on the other hand, names the divine governance of nature and history, a more general sovereignty that testifies to God’s benevolence and the eventual redemption of a fallen humanity (which, in spite of sin, remains in the image of God).

Calvin thus foregrounds a certain type of experience in faith that is not a knowledge of God *in se* put is rather a persuasion of God’s benevolence. Again, this benevolence is realized both in creation and through God’s fundamental activity as

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66 Drawing from Augustine’s monumental work *De Civitate Dei*, Calvin introduces providence as a working concept as early as I.v.10 in the 1559 *Institutio* (B 63). The 1559 treatment of providence is opposed to both the 1536 *Institutio* which “mentions providence only sporadically and combines it with the doctrine of predestination” and the polemical piece *De aeterna Praedestinatione Dei* (1552) which, in strange fashion, reverses the order of the topics so that providence follows predestination. See Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory*, 7, and Jean Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. J. K. S. Reid (London: James Clarke, 1961).
mediator, through Christ. One notable example from III.ii is David who “with
innumerable complaints… declares how unquiet his mind always was… [but
nevertheless] amidst all these assaults faith sustains the hearts of the godly and truly in its
effect resembles a palm tree: for it strives against every burden and raises itself upward.
So David, even when he might have seemed overwhelmed, in rebuking himself did not
cease to rise up to God” (III.ii.17/B 562-3).
David is endowed with a certain knowledge
of God’s benevolence, the same knowledge that is at stake in Calvin’s concurrent
sermons on Job (which he began delivering in 1554). In Sermon 130 Calvin affirms
(after Job 34) “that there is no vnrighteousnesse in God. Euery man confesseth it, but
fewe do know it, and are fully perswaded of it…So then let vs learne to submit our selues
to gods prouidence, confessing that all his doings are good: and then shall we count him
righteous, and yeeld him his due prayse.” Moreover, in Sermon 96 Calvin famously
ascribes an almost unnatural control over the waters of the earth to God’s goodness and
righteousness, a fact that all of humanity experience as benevolence:

Iob addeth immediately: that he hath set boundes to the waters, even vntil light
and darknesse come too an end. Behold yet another work of God well worthie to

67 “Ille tamen quam non semper pacato animo fuerit, innumeris querimoniiis declarat, ex
quibus paucas elegere sufficient… inter istas concussiones piorum corda fides sustentat:
vereque palmae vicam obtinet, ut contra quasiibet onera nitatur, sursumque se attollat:
sicuti David, quum obrutus videri posset, se tamen increpando, ad Deum surgere non
destitit” (III.ii.17/OS IV 27-8).
68 John Calvin, Sermons on Job [Sermons of Maister Iohn Caluin, vpon the Booke of IOB,
Translated out of French by Arthur Golding, 1574], 16th-17th Century Facsimile Editions
(Great Britain: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1993), 611 (Sermon CXXX). See also Sue E.
Schreiner, Where Shall Wisdom Be Found? Calvin's Exegesis of Job from Medieval and
bee remembred, namely, that the waters bylowe are bounded, and that God holdeth them fast, so as they cannot passe their bounds: and that the same indureth and shall continually indure vnto the worldes end… If a man aske the Philosophers and such as serche the whole order of nature: they will confesse that if the Elements had their full scope through out according vnto their nature, the earth should be hidden vnder the water: and in good sooth, experience shewes it to be so… [yet] we haue not the wit too knowe Gods infinite goodnesse towards vs, and his like power, to yeeld him thankes for it, and to confesse our selues beholding to him diuerse wayes for our lyfe.⁶⁹

God’s benevolence is immanent to nature and experience as well as to the soteriological concerns at stake in Calvin’s treatment of faith, to the fit or apt coupling of “the boldness of faith that rests upon God’s mercy with the reverent fear that we must experience whenever we come into the presence of God’s majesty, and by its splendor understand how great is our own filthiness” (III.ii.23/B 569).⁷⁰

Calvin, in his use of persuasio as well as in his rhetorical treatment of revelation (in Scripture, nature, and experience), subjects his early observations regarding creation to a more thorough (if implicit) institutio oratoria. Where he once asserts that “God’s powers are actually represented as in a painting” and that “the whole of mankind is invited and attracted to recognition of him, and from this to true and complete happiness” (I.v.10/B 63), his treatment of faith in III.ii invites us to consider God’s powers in

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⁷⁰ “Ubi decenter fidei audaciam quae Dei misericordiae innititur, cum religioso timore coniungit, quo nos affici necesse est quoties in conspectum divinae maiestatis prodeuntes, ex eius splendore, quanta sit nostra obscoenitas, intelligimus (III.ii.23/OS IV 33).
deliberately rhetorical terms. Thus, persuaded of God’s inherent goodness, we first attend to the ambiguous agent of persuasion. As illustrated above, the Latinate forms of “persuasion” complicate our understanding of agency in the 1559 *Institutio* by offering *persuasio* as both a process in which we are implicated as agents and as a determinate result whereby we are at once “persuaded” or “convinced” by God from eternity. In III.ii, Calvin complicates this scheme further in a deliberately “artful” manner (with critical emphasis on rhetoric as an art). In his treatment of faith, Calvin presents revelation as a sort of ideal oratory in which God’s benevolence is obvious; nevertheless, where the *Institutio* takes shape as a commentary on revelation, Calvin both alludes to and instructs us in the tools of rhetoric through which God’s eloquence is manifest. But for Calvin, this training in oratory is tentative; he determines faith in rhetorical language, as *persuasio*, in an effort to sharpen our understanding of its terms as a form of knowledge—specifically as a form of knowledge of God’s benevolence realized in terms of affect.

**Calvin’s Affectus**

We encounter in Calvin’s treatment of *persuasio* and *persuadere* an attention to *affectus* that takes many of the conclusions synthesized by Thomas Wilson as points of departure toward a theology of grace that accounts for human agency. Indeed, faith is realized in human beings in affective terms. For Calvin, as in the 1553 *Arte of

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71 “Fatendum est igitur, in singulis Dei operibus, praesertim autem ipsorem universitate, non secus atque in tabulis depictas esse Dei virtutes, quibus in eius agnitionem, et ab ipsa in veram plenamque foelicitatem invitatur atque illicitur universum hominum genus” (I.v.10/OS III 54).
Rhetorique, the ability to persuade proceeds from an apt understanding of rhetoric—it's terms, techniques, and ends. This is perhaps most clear in his frequent use of the Latin noun affectus—“a state of body, and [especially] of mind produced in one by some influence” or, more generally, “a state or disposition of mind, affection, mood.” It also extends to his use of its attendant verb afficere—“to do something to one” or “to exert an influence on body or mind, so that it is brought into such or such a state.” Calvin bases his own determination of affect or affectus on a rhetorical model, one that is present in the classical sources and undoubtedly in the more theologico-rhetorical approaches of Erasmus and Melanchthon but which receives its most clear English definition in Wilson’s vernacular work:

Affections therefore (called Passions) are none other thing, but a stirring or forsing of the minde, either to desire, or els to detest and loth any thing, more vehemently then by nature we are commonly wont to doe. We desire those things, we loue them, and like them earnestly, that appeare in our judgement to be godly: wee hate and abhorre those things that seeme naught, vngodly, or harmefull vnto vs. Neither onely are wee moued with those things, which wee thinke either hurtfull, or profitable for our selues, but also we reijoyce, we be sorie, or wee pittie an other mans happe (Wilson 266).

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72 Lewis and Short.
73 Lewis and Short.
74 In the Institutio Oratoria VI.ii.8 Quintilian defines the Latin “affectus” specifically in terms of its Greek precedent “pathos” – as a determination of emotion that is markedly distinct from morals or “mores,” following from the Greek “ethos” (Institutio Oratoria, II, 420-1). Quintilian renders affect (in this early Latin form, “adfectus”) in terms of tragedy, “almost entirely concerned with anger, dislike, fear, hatred, and pity” (Institutio Oratoria, II, 428-9); love wavers in between ethos and pathos.
“Affections” take shape here as forces that exceed the hearer; they operate by a “stirring or forsing of the minde,” moving the hearer to a change of status or feeling, but are ultimately irreducible to the hearer alone. Affects, like persuasion in Calvin’s lexicon, point to a process or situation as opposed to an entirely subjective feeling or belief. Moreover, where “perswasion” might function as a sort of technical term in Wilson’s vocabulary, Calvin’s use of its Latin cognates—particularly with respect to the Pauline determination above, in terms of agency—stands in contrast. While Calvin seems to accept a basic definition that draws from familiar rhetorical sources and authorities, he ultimately grounds a critique of human knowledge and certainty in an adaptation of persuasion. In this sense, it is not enough to settle upon the classical definition; Calvin’s treatment of affectus warrants further attention.

Affectus is collocated with persuasio across III.ii, as Calvin sharpens his determination of faith in a series of instructive emendations. Again, as with persuasio, Paul directs his investigation; where Calvin affirms that men of faith are certainly “more strengthened by the persuasion of divine truth than instructed by rational proof” (III.ii.14/B 560), he draws explicitly from Ephesians 3:18 which determines the love of Christ as “profunditas et sublimitas,” a love “supereminentem cognitioni” [that overcomes knowledge] (III.ii.14/OS IV 25). Calvin is careful not to ascribe any object to the persuasion involved in faith other than God’s benevolence; in fact,

75 “divinae veritatis persuasione confirmati magis quam rationali demonstratione edocti” (III.ii.14/OS IV 25).
Even where the mind has attained, it does not comprehend what it feels. But while it is persuaded of what it does not grasp, by the very certainty of its persuasion it understands more than if it perceived anything human by its own capacity. Paul, therefore, beautifully describes it as the power ‘to comprehend…what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge’ (III.ii.14/B 559-560).

In an earlier section of III.ii, Calvin approaches faith through recourse to **fidem implicitam** [implicit faith], not a proper knowledge of God’s benevolence but rather a sense held by those who are nevertheless inclined to piety. Such people “are called ‘believers’; not in an exact sense, indeed, but in so far as God in his kindness deigns to grace that pious affection with such great honor” (III.ii.5/B 547-8). By III.ii.14, Calvin sharpens his definition of faith as a knowledge that is at once a persuasion, the object of persuasion that nonetheless eludes human understanding. Thus the “**pium illum affectum**” [that pious affect] of **fidem implicitam** (III.ii.5) becomes a specific entity that the mind still cannot fully comprehend: “**delectionem Christi**” (III.ii.14). Thus where **affectus** first takes shape in III.ii as a marker of piety, as a base inclination, Calvin specifies (over the course of several sections) that the **pia affectione** (III.ii.8) is in fact a knowledge of God’s benevolence and Christ’s love that is experienced cognitively and emotionally. It is proper to both heart and mind.

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76 Neque etiam ubi pertigit, quod sentit assequitur: sed dum persuasum habet non capit, plus ipsa persuasionis certitudine intelligit quam si humanum aliquid sua capacitate perspiceret. Quare eleganter Paulus, qui id vocat comprehendere quae sit longitudo, latitudo, profunditas et sublimitas, et cognoscere supereminentem cognitioni delectionem Christi” (III.ii.14/OS IV 25).

77 “vocari fideles, non quidem prope, sed quatenus Deus pro sua indulgentia pium illum affectum tanto honore dignatur” (III.ii.5/OS IV 13).
Nevertheless, this understanding of *affectus* is not merely additive; Calvin is very clear across III.i i that “they are speaking foolishly when they say that faith is ‘formed’ when pious inclination is added to assent. For even assent rests upon such pious inclination—at least such assent as is revealed in the Scriptures!” (III.i i.8/B 552). While speaking directly against a Roman distinction, a “*nugatoria fidei formatae et informis distinctio*” [worthless distinction of formed and unformed faith](III.ii.8), Calvin is also addressing in more general terms the extent to which *affectus*—like *persuasio*, a state and a process of sorts—is irreducible to the heart or the mind. It is not merely the feeling of the heart, as opposed to the knowledge of the intellect, as is often assumed when *affectus* is rendered as “emotion.” On the contrary, it is both prior and posterior to “*assensum*” [assent] in Calvin’s description of faith. It is not a mere emotional state or result that is added to assent to Christ, to the base knowledge of God’s benevolence. It is not complementary but rather primary in the sense that it determines the relationship.

*Affectus* comes to *structure* the fundamental relationship between God and man; it is not an exaggeration to say that faith is realized in terms of *affectus*—clearly distinct from both knowledge and emotion, but bound up with both terms—in III.i i of the 1559 *Institutio*. Where *affectus* (and related verbal and adjectival forms) receives its most thorough theoretical treatment here, it prepares the reader for a more careful and nuanced understanding of justification and prayer (in III.xi-xviii and III.xx, respectively)—all of

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78 “Quoniam res minime dubia est, uno verbo statuimus, eos inepte loqui quum fidem formari dicunt, accessione piae affectiovis ad assensum facta: quum assensus quoque pia affectione constet: qualis saltam in Scripturis demonstratur. Sed alterum multo clarius argumentum se etiamnum offert” (III.i i.8/OS IV 18).
which precede election and reprobation in the ordo docendi of the Institutio. Calvin is very clear in making affectus and persuasio the grounds through which to address faith and, by extension, election and reprobation. This is in part obscured by the popular Battles translation of the Institutio where, in III.ii.12, in describing false faith, Battles renders Calvin’s Latin to read: “as a persuasion of God’s fatherly love is not deeply rooted in the reprobate, so they do not perfectly reciprocate his love as sons, but behave like hirelings” (III.ii.12/B 557). While the first section of this translation is quite accurate, Battles translates “sed mercenario quodam affectu ducuntur” as “but [they] behave like hirelings”; a better translation would retain the importance of “affectu” here, reading “but they are led by mercenary affects/affections” (III.ii.12/B 557/OS IV 22), maintaining the primacy of affectus in structuring the relationship between man and God.

Proceeding from persuasio and affectus, Calvin emphasizes constancy and states in certain terms, “Unbelief does not hold sway within believers hearts, but assails them from without” (III.ii.21/B 567). This is not only a statement on faith and affect but also a gloss on Job 13:15: “Although he kill mee, yet vwill I trust in him: nevertheless I vwill reprove my vvayes in his sight.” Calvin delivered a sermon on this verse during the years immediately preceding (if not concurrent with) the revision of the Institutio for republication in 1559, a sermon which begins with the caveat “that the Scripture sheweth vs many things which our vnderstanding cannot brooke” and thus reflects in part the

79 “non intus in cordibus piorum regnat incredulitas, sed foris oppugnat” (III.ii.21/OS IV 31).
80 John Calvin, Sermons on Job, 232 (Sermon L).
definition of faith above. The sermon is duly instructive in aiding us to understand Calvin’s determination of affectus, in this case against the quotidian translation of the Latin affectus as emotion or passion. According to Calvin,

Jobs meaning is, that although hee bee ouerthrowne, and as it were inraged by his passions: yet is it not as much to say as that he hath forgone all pacience & intendeth to stand in contention with God, or to alienate himself quite and clean from him, or that he is minded to stomack the matter in such wise, as he will have no more to do with him. Wherefore? He protesteth that hee hopeth, whatsoeuer come of it. Although he kil me (saith he) and confound me: yet wil I not cease to trust in him: neuerthelesse I wil reprove my wayes in his sight.

Calvin glosses Job here in such a way that looks proleptically to faith in III.ii, particularly in his depiction of Job’s faith as constancy—a sort of pious affection that is steadfast in its devotion, in its knowledge of God’s benevolence. He depicts Job as “ouerthrowne” by “his passions,” forces that seem to assault him from outside but which nevertheless fail to affect his constancy. The passions are somehow less interior than faith; while Calvin certainly explains this turn in his commentary, this seems even less difficult if we collate the sermon on Job 13 with the Institutio. In the Sermons on Job Calvin notes that “It shoulde seeme that these affections are contrarie, and so they be in deede” but ultimately that “faythe ouerruleth oure affections,” that faith as a “peace of God must be of such power as it may get the maystrie in the ende, and all oure passions bee brought in awe of it.” Arthur Golding, who translated the sermons into English, seems to use “passions”

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81 Ibid.
82 Ibid., 235-6.
83 Ibid., 236.
and “affections” interchangeably in these latter sentences; the 1559 Latin affords Calvin a different sort of precision. Nevertheless, the kernel of Calvin’s 1559 argument is present even in the English translation of the *Sermons on Job*—namely, that faith, in terms of *persuasio* and *affectus* (even rendered as “passion”), overcomes all other passions from its seat in the heart and mind of the devotee. It is primary in the sense that, as a pious affection, faith structures the relationship between man and God and organizes the encounter with worldly phenomena, including its attendant passions.

Calvin’s determination of faith in III.i also draws from his late commentary on the Psalms (published in French in 1563); in III.i.23, as he cites Philippians 2:12 on “fear and trembling,” Calvin also attends to Psalm 5:7, “And I in the manifoldnesse of thy mercye will enter into thy howse, I will worship in thy holy temple in the feare of thee.”

His commentary on this verse in particular affirms God’s promise of mercy to the elect, a point to which David (the alleged author) speaks as his “purpose was, too warrant himself assured help upon trust of Gods mercye: yet notwithstanding he sheweth therwithall, that when he shalbee deliuered, he wilbe thank full and myndfull of it.”

Calvin finds in David’s verse an appropriate topical order as well, one that licenses the movement from faith to justification to prayer that Book III of the *Institutio* certainly reflects. Moreover, Golding renders Calvin’s French in familiar terms: “no man prayeth aright, saue he, which hauing felt [God’s] grace, beleueth, and is fullye perswaded, that he wilbe

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85 Ibid.
mercyfull untoo hym.” Calvin concludes his comments on Psalm 5:7 with a note that proceeds from Philippians 2:12 and looks duly to III.ii.23: “there is ioyned untoo it [persuasion of God’s mercy] the feare of God, which putteth a difference betweene the right [and] godly trustfulnesse, and the fleshly carelessenesse.” After the reiteration of Psalm 5:7 in the text of the Institutio, Calvin glosses the verse with an eye to affectus—“the boldness of faith that rests upon God’s mercy with the reverent fear that we must experience whenever we come into the presence of God’s majesty, and by its splendor understand how great is our own filthiness” (III.ii.23/B 569). Faith is determined as a pious affect, and the experience of faith—whether in terms of fear or joy or both—is organized by this understanding of a relationship with God structured in affective terms.

By the end of III.ii Calvin extends this reorganization of affects under the pious affect (faith) to include love and hope, important qualities he draws from scholastic [Scholastici] controversies as well as from Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews 11:1. In III.ii.41, Calvin denies that the faithless experience God’s love in any real sense,

For truly, that abundant sweetness which God has stored up for those who fear him cannot be known without at the same time powerfully moving us [afficiar]. And once anyone has been moved [affecit] by it, it utterly ravishes him and draws him to itself. Therefore, it is no wonder if a perverse and wicked heart never experiences that emotion [affectus] by which, borne up to heaven itself, we are

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86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 See note 70.
admitted to the most hidden treasures of God’s kingdom, which should not be defiled by the entrance of an impure heart (III.ii.41/B 589).89

With this penultimate statement on faith in III.ii, rendered entirely in affective terms (afficio and affectus), Calvin cements our understanding of the concept as a pious affection which determines the relationship between man and God and which, in turn, organizes the subordinate affections (the units of rhetorical invention) accordingly. It becomes virtually impossible for the faithless man to know (in any cognitive sense) or even feel God’s love because the relationship between God and man is not structured affectively. No mere knowledge of God—or even “feeling” of God, in a bare sense devoid of faith (from the sensum divinitatis of Book I to the unformed faith under fire in III.ii.9-10)—affords the communicant affective knowledge of God’s benevolence and love, a knowledge which is proper to heart and mind because it, in effect, structures the division as well as the assembly (heart and mind together).

Calvin’s ultimate definition of faith in III.ii takes the affective terms of III.ii.41 as a point of departure. Here, at the end of III.ii, faith “is a sure persuasion [persuasio] of the truth of God—that it can neither lie to us, nor deceive us, nor become void—[and] those who have grasped this certainty assuredly expect the time to come when God will fulfill his promises, which they are persuaded [persuasione] cannot but be true”

89 “Vere enim cognosci illa suavitatis affluentia non potest, quam Deus timentibus se recondidit, ut non simul vehementer afficiat. Quem autem semel affecit, penitus ad se rapit et effert. Proinde mirum non est si perversum cor et obliquum nunquam subit hic affectus: quo in caelum ipsum traducti, ad reconditissimos Dei thesauros admittimur, et ad sacratissima regni eius adyta, quae profanari impuri cordis ingressu non decet” (III.ii.41/OS IV 51-2).
Having isolated faith as a pious affect Calvin lays the groundwork for a Reformed “affective devotion,” one that poses productive questions of agency and which in turn licenses the devotee to read his or her experiences and affections for signs of piety. In a sense, it is nothing new to say that Calvinists look to their experiences and affections for such cues; what is at stake here, rather, in recognizing in true faith the pious affection that is persuaded beyond doubt of God’s benevolence, is a different horizon for agency. As *persuasio* invites us to suspend the problem of agency and will, as a process and a result, Calvin enables us to encounter the philosophical problems at stake in determination and predestination not as a labyrinth but rather as a matter of *affectus*. By the end of III.ii Calvin attends to agency in affective terms; the structure of the relationship between God and man restores the human experience of faith to prominence.

Many commentaries find in Calvin and Calvinism a limited communicant for whom God is ultimately unknown; working proleptically against such determinations, Calvin mines the resources of rhetoric, which yield a basic affective unit (*affectus*), in order to locate in faith a fundamentally dynamic and mutual relationship between man and God. He does so in a language suited to *affectus* which poses problems regarding agency and, indeed, “cooperation” without the trappings of cooperative grace, a notion which Calvin ultimately abhorred. The pious *affectus* proceeds from a God who persuades mankind, in grace and nature, of his goodness; man, in turn, realizes this benevolence as both a form of knowledge and an overwhelming failure of true comprehension. This is, however, neither paradoxical nor debilitating; on the contrary, 

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90 See Note 6.
the situation is *structured as such* by the pious affect—namely, faith. Both man and God are implicated and active in this scheme. God proceeds as a sort of orator who persuades man of his benevolence, a *persuasio* that in itself suspends agency in a rhetorical idiom; once man is persuaded—or is it “at once man is persuaded”?—he is endowed with a sure and firm knowledge in affective terms, an active faith that is at once a freely given understanding of the *delectionem Christi*. Man, in turn, participates in structuring the relationship with God, reorganizing multiple affects under the pious affect faith.\(^9\)

Reading faith as such, Calvin invites us to consider other sources of knowledge—sources which confirm or deny God’s benevolence in affective terms—in constructing the relationship between man and God so crucial to understanding Book III of the *Institutio*: “On the manner of receiving Christ’s Grace, from which happiness comes to us, and which effects follow.”\(^9\) Scholars of Reformed theology have heretofore emphasized nature as a source of this knowledge, and rightly so; Calvin touches upon this often over the course of the *Institutes*. Nevertheless, as the concluding sections of the


\(^{92}\) See Note 9.
present chapter illustrate, Calvin’s determinations of *persuasio* and *affectus* also provide resources—and new uses—for poetry.

**Poetic Faith: Ann Lock and the Sermons of John Calvin, Upon the Songe that Ezechias made…**

According to Calvin, in the preface to his commentary on the Psalms, it is

> Not without cause am I woont to terme the book the Anatomy of all the partes of the Soule, inasmuch as a man shalnot find any affection in himselfe, wherof the Image appaereth not in this glasse. Yea rather, the holy Ghost hath here lyuely set out before our eyes, all the gracies, sorowes, feares, doutes, hopes, cares, anguishes, and finally all the trubblesome motions wherewith mennes mindes are woont to be turmoyled. The rest of the Scripture conteineth what commaundmentes God hath enioyned to his seruantes to be brought unto us. But in this booke, the Prophets themselues talking with God, bycause they discover all the inner thoughtes, do call or drawe euery one of us to the peculiar examination of himself, so as no whit of all the infirmities to which wee are subiect, and of so many vyces wherewith we are fraughted, may abyde hidden.  

It is not coincidental that Calvin, in working to determine faith as a pious affect towards the end of the 1550s, comments extensively on the Psalms and the Book of Job—two Scriptural resources recognized by contemporaries as treatises on both piety and poetry. According to Lewalski, “The Book of Psalms was widely recognized as the compendium *par excellence* of lyric poetry—a view reinforced by the avalanche of metrical versions of the Psalms in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.” Moreover, the Book of Job—along with the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon—was

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93 “John Calvin to the Reader,” *The Psalmes of Dauid and others, with M. Iohn Calvins Commentaries*, [xi].
“often identified [with] the poetical ‘third part’ of scripture, a classification used in Coverdale’s Bible, and the influential Protestant Latin Bible of Junius and Tremellius.”

Job, a hexameral epic poem of sorts, offset the Psalms’s overwhelming emphasis on lyric. Beyond meter and form, however, Calvin notes often the degree to which both works prove extensive illustrations of faith’s affective dimension. He speaks to the function of poetry in his preface to the commentary on the Psalms in particular, where the Holy Spirit has “lyuely set out before our eyes,” in a compendium of lyric poetry, an anatomy of affects to the purpose of instructing us to recognize faith and its subordinate affects, so the latter of which “may abyde hidden.” This does, of course, pertain to the Psalms—the work of the Holy Spirit in Scripture, albeit accommodated to effect the limited human intellect. Nevertheless, “secular lyric” has the potential to speak to the same issues, as is evident in the work of the Calvinist poet and translator Anne Lock (1534-1590s).

Upon her accession to the throne in 1553 Mary Tudor restored Catholicism to England, a particularly bold statement given the previous six years of Protestant experimentation under Edward VI and Lord Protector Somerset (Edward Seymour). Mary’s accession presented Protestants in England with a crisis, many of whom responded by going into exile in the continent. One such exile, Anne Lock, arrived in Calvin’s Geneva in May 1557. Lock, a friend and correspondent of Scottish Reformer John Knox (1510-1572), is perhaps best known for penning the first published sonnet sequence in English—“A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner: Written in maner of a

95 Ibid., 32.
Paraphrase upon the 51. Psalme of David” (1560). But her poetry was not published alone, as an independent volume. The sequence is, rather, appended to Lock’s translation of Calvin’s sermons on Isaiah 38, sermons that he preached in November 1557 while Lock herself was in attendance. Lock’s translation of these four sermons on the song of Hezekiah—published as *Sermons of John Calvin, Upon the Songe that Ezechias made after he had bene sicke, and afflicted by the hand of God, conteynd in the 38. Chapiter of Esay* (1560)—is in fact the first publication of the material; while she may have worked from the manuscript copy of Denis Raguenier, “a professional stenographer [who] recorded Calvin’s sermons as he spoke” from 1549 to 1560, Raguenier’s “official” version of the sermon sequence did not appear in French until 1562. The publication detail is important because it underscores Lock’s own theological contributions, her notable work as a translator, exegete, and poet.

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With respect to the present task—investigating Calvin’s affective determination of faith—Lock’s sonnet sequence enables us to realize the scope of Calvin’s invention, the degree to which Calvinist faith licensed poetic projects with due investments in affect. It follows four sermons which are replete with references to *persuasio*, where whomever has “this perswasion [of the goodnes of God] deply roted in him” is also “one of the children of god”—a Scriptural investigation of “what ought to be the affection of the faithful” set in terms of “Ezechias” [Hezekiah’s] sickness in Isaiah 38.\(^9\) The sequence of four sermons reiterates (or, rather, looks forward, from the pulpit in 1557, to) the careful attention Calvin gives to faith in III.ii. Through the story of Hezekiah, Calvin exhorts his audience to realize faith in affective terms; here, “our salvation lieth in faiythe and hope, it is hidden and we see it not with naturall sense,” but only comported through faith do we experience “in the tastinge of good things (which he nowe dealeth among us),” only as such may we “be confyrmed in the fayth of the Heavenly lyfe.”\(^10\)

As in III.ii, throughout the sermons Calvin underscores the degree to which knowledge of God *in se* is incomprehensible, a knowledge of God in nature or phenomena is overwhelming, and only a knowledge of God’s benevolence—to which we

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\(^10\) Ibid., 19.
come by persuasion to faith—is within human grasp, but only in affective terms. Hence the sermons assert the proper organization of knowledge and affects according to the pious affect, faith; in Lock’s translation, Calvin makes this clear insofar as “we can not pronounce one worde to his prayse, which proceedeth from a good hartie affection, except we be thoroughly perswaded in this, that God is mercyfull unto us, and that we use to our profit the benefits which we receave of his hande.”

Citing Psalm 40, Calvin claims that we “ought to be ravished” by this knowledge—indeed, by faith—and thus “learne to styrre up him selfe accordynge to that which he receyveth of the graces of God, for the number is infitinite.” This is certainly consonant with Calvin’s commentary on Psalm 40, where it is David’s purpose to exhort the faithfull to consider gods prouidence, that they should not stick to cast all theyr care upon [it], for wheras some eythier chafe though unquietnesse or quake at euery little blast, and othersome bestir them to fortifie them selues with earthly defces: all this springeth of the ignorance of this doctrine, that God gouerneth mens affayres according to his discretion.

Here Calvin gives a rather biting indictment of those who approach providence (and, by extension, predestination) without an apt understanding of faith. They completely misunderstand the doctrine, to their own risk and detriment; such men do not understand or experience providence as evidence of God’s benevolence but rather as a threatening force, as an unknown order directed by an invisible capricious sovereign.

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101 Ibid., 53-4.
102 Ibid., 54.
103 John Calvin, *The Psalms of Dauid and others*, 159.
The reference to Psalm 40 in the sermon on Isaiah 38 directs the communicant to consider God’s boundless grace, an incalculable infinite store that is nonetheless experienced through accommodation and which ought to “ravish” and overwhelm the faithful. Overall, the four sermons reiterate the same important points on faith that Calvin affirms in the 1559 *Institutio*; what sets the sequence apart formally (while maintaining the conceptual thrust of faith, *persuasio*, and *affectus*) is Lock’s sonnet sequence, the “meditation folowyng unto the ende of this boke, not as a parcel of maister Calvines worke, but for that it well agreeth with the same argument.”

Lock proceeds, in “A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner,” by “expressing the passioned minde of the penitent sinner”; like the Psalms, which Calvin depicts as “the Anatomy of all the partes of the Soule, inasmuch as a man shalnot find any affection in himselfe, wherof the Image appaereth not in this glasse,” Lock uses lyric poetry to render the sinner’s cast of affections. Moreover, Lock’s sonnet sequence takes shape with explicit reference to Psalm 51, a cue that connects her own poetic enterprise to the generic and contemplative project of the Psalms. What becomes clear very early in the sonnet sequence is Lock’s commitment to poetry as an effective medium for conveying the affective dimensions of faith. Like Calvin’s rhetorical investigations, *affectus* emerges here (albeit in the English vernacular, realized in a series of operative terms for “feeling” and “sense”) as a sort of poetic unit, as the concept which organizes the

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106 Lock does not argue that poetry is a privileged medium but rather, simply, that it is effective.
speaker’s experience of grace. Faith, in turn, guides the reader of the sequence, an artful presentation of repentance in which the reader is led to find hope in the expression of sorrow, in which affects such as shame and despair are reorganized under the pious affect faith to make different sense of the poems. Lock’s distribution of affects is instructive insofar as it invites the reader to use faith in making sense of an argument from Scripture as well as an artful mediation, her sonnet sequence.107

Her sonnets are replete with examples, all of which draw upon the resources of poetry to express the complexity of faith in another form. A convenient point of entry into the sequence is in the final sestet of the fifth sonnet under the heading “A Meditation of a penitent sinner, upon the 51. Psalme”:

My cruell conscience with sharpned knife
Doth splat my ripped hert, and layes abrode
The lothesome secrets of my filthy life,
And spredes them forth before the face of God.
Whom shame from dede shamelesse cold not restrain,
Shame for my dede is added to my paine (M 5:9-14/65-6).108

107 Moreover, Lock testifies, proleptically, against the recent accusation that “Ramist syllogism results in a piece of pure Calvinism”; she harnesses the linguistic and rhetorical effects of poetry to emphasize the most important points of Calvin’s determination of faith in an idiom that opposes, before the fact, the tools of Ramist logical demonstration. See Brian Cummings, The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 257.
108 Hereafter, in the text, I refer to the sonnets as such: by section (to either “The preface, expressing the passioned minde of the penitent sinner,” given as P, or “A Meditation of a penitent sinner, upon the 51. Psalme,” given as M), followed by sonnet number and line number(s), separated by a colon, and appropriate page number in the modern edition appearing after a forward-slash. For the complete sonnet sequence in two parts, see Anne Lock, “Sermons of John Calvin,” 62-71.
Here we find a familiar conceit with roots in Petrarchan poetry as well as in Pauline meditation: the heart on displayed (in the sense of the verb “displayed” as shown as well as in the play on “dis” and “layed,” in a heart rendered visible through violent dissection). The penitent speaker depicts conscience as an anatomizing force that, with a tool likened to a “sharpned knife,” displays all of her (if we accept that the speaker is Lock) sins before “the face of God.” “Knife” is a repeated term, recalling God’s wrath, “sharper than the knife” (P 1:7/62), which endows conscience with due force in the first sonnet of the Preface. God’s wrath follows from the sinner’s neglect of the law—a neglect which is evident and predictable in a way that grace is not: “When markes and tokens of the reprobate,/ My growing sinnes, of grace my senslesse cheare, Enforce the profe of everlasting hate,/ That I conceive the heaven’s king to beare/ Against my sinfull and forsaken ghost” (P 4:2-6/63). In these artful phrases Lock meditates on faith, a pious affect that is implicit in the very line, in the form of the poem. The sinner’s offenses accumulate those “growing sinnes” that seem the “markes and tokens of the reprobate”—“profe” of the speakers damnation from eternity, realized in a ceaseless score of sins which conscience searches and displays. Yet the degree to which the sinner’s “ghost” is indeed “forsaken” is questionable. Sin is knowable in a manner that grace and God’s benevolence are not, hence Calvin’s rhetorical treatment of faith (via persuasio) and insistence on God’s infinite goodness, both of which found a language suited to faith that is more about affect than logical demonstration (the method of the scholastici). A careful—indeed, faithful—reader might pause for reflection with the

109 See Note 89.
enjambment between lines 5 and 6, on “[My growing sins] That I conceive the heaven’s king to beare/ Against my sinfull and forsaken ghost.” Lock invites the faithful reader to consider the complex and ambiguous meaning of “beare” here before proceeding to the next line. Just as the speaker cries for mercy, that “heaven’s king” might not bear his wrath against a sinfull “ghost,” the pause between lines gives comfort to the faithful reader who recognizes God’s benevolence—indeed, who recognizes the province of Book III of the *Institutio*, on the manner of receiving Christ’s Grace, from which happiness comes to us—in the Christ who bears the sins of man to the cross. Calvin’s commentary on Psalm 51 makes this clear as he glosses line 9 of the Scriptural verse—“Thou shalt purge me with Isop, and shalbee cleane: those shalt wash mee, and I shalbe whiter than Snow”—as such: “we knowe it to bee the office of the holy ghost to wash our consciences inwardly with the bloud of Chryst, that our filthiness keep us not from accesse unto God.”¹¹⁰ For Calvin, this trinitarian understanding is evident in Psalm 51; for Lock, the project is different and thus it is a conceptual point realized formally in a sequence of poems with no explicit references to Christ. Here, even in an expression of woe, in a plea for mercy, Lock artfully instructs the reader to search for evidence of God’s benevolence and to proceed accordingly.

This is no small point of instruction. In a very real sense, Lock not only presents us with a sequence without Christ but also one without faith. Neither appear explicitly, save one mention of “the faintnesse of my faiythe” (M 19:10/71). Lock demonstrates a keen knowledge of Scripture here and, approaching the Psalms of David in terms of

¹¹⁰ John Calvin, *The Psalms of Dauid and others*, 204.
inventio, realizes an idiom proper to David and to a Hebrew accommodation. Like the Psalm, the sonnet sequence takes shape in terms of grace and mercy; Christ is present in the form of the poems but not necessarily or explicitly as a subject. Faith, in turn, takes shape as the “zeal, and this affection of Abraham,” as a limited knowledge of God’s benevolence gleaned from a world before Christ. Yet Lock alludes to Christ insofar as “law unperfect shade of perfect light/ Did use as an appointed signe to be/ Foreshewing figure of thy grace behight” (M 9:3-5/67), forecasting the grace received by mankind “With death and bloodshed of thine only sonne,” the “swete hysope” (M 9:6-7/67) sprinkled upon men to wash away their sins.

Yet it is in the impetus to prayer itself that Lock locates God’s benevolence, in an idiom which runs through the individual sonnets and which follows from Calvin’s treatment of prayer in the appended sermon sequence. In the sections that Lock translates, Calvin attends to Hezekiah’s lament, to the strange description of his suffering where “he chattered as a Crane or as a swallowe, and that he mourned like a Dove.” Calvin takes this to mean that the suffering king is visited by unrepresentable passions, “that anguishe helde him in locked in suche sorte, that he had not so muche as a word fre to expresse hys passions…thys is a greate extremitie.” Indeed, where Hezekiah, as one of the faithful, is unable to utter a word in prayer, Calvin confirms that men are bound to “cast forth grones and sighes which may shew some excessive passion, as if we wer even there upon the rack, and God heareth even those groninges: as also we se, that s. Paule

112 Ibid., 26.
113 Ibid.
saith, that the holy gost moveth us to unspeakable grones, such that cannot be expressed.”

Taking Hezekiah’s suffering as a point of departure, Calvin explores the terms of the pious affect, even insofar as the experience of faith—especially when tested—is often expressed not in language but in “excessive passion.” From this men learn “that by the word of God, we have been taughte what is his force, and that we have also fealte it by experience, although we conceave therof but a portion onely.”

Moreover, “the stormes that the faythfull fele when God searcheth them earnestly and to the quicke, surmount al that may be expressed with mouth.”

Lock’s poetry also works in this idiom, spoken before a God that stands “so fixt before my daseld sight” (P 1:4/62), by a penitent sinner who declares her situation in no uncertain terms: “blinde, alas, I groape about for grace./ While blinde for grace I grope about in vaine,/ My fainting breath I gather up and straine,/ Mercie, mercie to crye and crye againe” (P 2:11-14/62-3). Yet the prayers are naught but “bootlesse noyse” (P 3:5/63), “tost with panges and passions of despair” (P 5:13/64), spoken before a source of justice—God—that “ameseth” (M 1:8/64). Nevertheless, Lock does not leave the reader in despair; on the contrary, the faithful reader learns to recognize faith and its attendant concepts in the very impetus to prayer, in the speaker who “This hidden knowledge have I learned of thee [God],/ To fele my sinnes” (M 8:7-8/66) and who recognizes even in prayer the fruits of God’s grace, which “In faintest hope yet moveth me to pray,/ To pray for mercy, and to pray to thee” (P 13:11-12/68). Lock recognizes faith as the source of

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114 Ibid., 29.
115 Ibid., 29-30.
116 Ibid., 31.
prayer and, in turn, depicts a speaker who realizes “I can not pray without thy moving ayde,/ Ne can I ryse, ne can I stande alone” (P 17:9-10/80). This attention to prayer is continuous with Calvin’s own investigation of faith in terms of *affectus* and *persuasio* insofar as Lock meditates on prayer in an effort to suspend exact determinations of will, in order to pose them in more dynamic terms, in ways that emphasize the affective or experiential dimensions of human agency. Her choice of prayer is also instructive insofar as prayer follows faith in Book III of the 1559 *Institutio*, after repentance and justification and immediately prior to predestination, election and reprobation. Her mediation on Psalm 51 is thus a sort of palimpsest, an apt aid in comprehending the *ordo docendi* of the 1559 *Institutio*; in turn it is also a realization of Calvin’s affective determination of faith in poetry, in a form which, after rhetoric and recent interventions in theology, accepts *affectus* as a unit through which the relationship between man and God is structured.
Chapter 2— The Pulse of the Bells: Christology, Reformed Orthodoxy and the Reconfiguration of the Body in John Donne’s *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*

“If any body dye in the house…Bells are never ronge for them, nor any sermon made, but 2 or 3 invite the persons neighbours & friends, at a certain hower to come and accompany him to his burial.”

From the diary of Edward Davenant, English delegate to the Synod of Dort, concerning “Dutch customes”

Critical emphases on the body and illness in John Donne’s *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions, and Severall Steps in my Sicknes* (1624), though often fruitful, have largely obscured the ways in which this polemical and theological work advances an affective Reformed Orthodoxy centered on Christ. While the *Devotions* certainly depict

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the corporeal and medical circumstances of his illness and recovery, Donne’s attention to the body and its limits do more than test the province of medical metaphors and their descriptive efficacy. Drawing from Calvin’s determinations of *affectus* as a transformative relation, Donne binds together the passions and reason in a language suited to faith; in turn, he offers a description of his ordeal which reconfigures approaches to the body as well as to assurance and salvation. This chapter thus extends biographical and stylistic studies of the *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* by placing the work in conversation with other early modern investigations of faith and affect. I demonstrate the degree to which Calvin’s treatment of faith—in the 1559 *Institutio*, the sermons on Isaiah, and in his massive 1555 exegetical project, *Harmonia ex tribus Evangelistis composita, Matthaeo, Marco et Luca* [*A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke*]—grounds Donne’s advancement of an alternative Reformed Orthodoxy with Christ at its center. But “alternative” to what? As this chapter demonstrates, Donne explores the terms of faith and assurance without recourse to the predestinarian propositions of his Calvinist contemporaries but rather in a Christocentric language. In this sense, attention to Donne’s subtle treatment of Christ and Calvin offers us new

insight into the transnational conversation regarding the shape of Orthodox Calvinism coming to a head at the Synod of Dort (or Dordrecht) in 1618/19. In his Devotions Donne points to an earlier Calvinist idiom emphasizing Christ’s passion as the basis of faith, reconfiguring contemporary conversations held at Dordrecht and in England concerning Christ’s life and death. As illustrated below, Donne’s 1624 book departs from the character of Calvinism (and, in England, “Puritanism”) after Dort—namely, from the strict predestinarian articles of faith ensconced in the acronym TULIP: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, perseverance of the saints—by offering an alternative orthodoxy realized as an affective relationship to God.

In this sense, Donne’s Devotions do much to “flesh out” Calvin’s treatment of affectus in the 1559 Institutio. Not only does Donne engage with Calvin’s approach to faith in III.ii, he deals rather thoroughly with the material immediately preceding III.ii as well—Book II, Chapters xii through xvii, on Christ’s incarnation, his office as mediator, and his function as redeemer. In the Devotions, Donne renders these central Christological points in intimate, experimental terms. In the seventeenth century, the term “experimental” carries the weight of trial and proof as well as of experience and witness to the Gospels. Moreover, where Donne’s meditations take Calvin’s Christological writings as productive points of departure, he also draws structural and conceptual influence from Calvin’s exegesis of Isaiah 38 (first rendered into English by Anne Lock in 1560), foregrounding the importance of prayer, illness, grace, and recovery. The Devotions proceed under the guiding assumption that Donne stands
among the elect; his bout with sickness, like Hezekiah’s, is not rendered as a test of faith but rather as a series of meditations describing faith as an affective encounter with God. Here Donne translates Calvin’s Latin vocabulary into a medical register, drawing from existing diagnostic languages and treatments of affects and passions in order to probe their limits as well as more challenging and encompassing descriptions of the body.

Donne had intimate knowledge of the Synod of Dort. He partook in a diplomatic mission to the United Provinces in 1619/20 where he preached at the Hague and received a medal commemorating the Synod directly from the States General. Donne traveled to the Continent as part of an embassy to Germany led by Viscount Doncaster (James Hay), to attempt to mediate between opposing parties in the succession conflict that precipitated the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648)—namely, between the Holy Roman Emperor, Ferdinand II, heir to the thrones of Austria, Bohemia, and Hungary, and his rival, the Protestant king of Bohemia, Frederick V, Elector Palatine (and his wife Elizabeth Stuart, James VI and I’s daughter). On their return trip to London, the embassy spent considerable time in the United Provinces, visiting Arnhem, Utrecht, Haarlem, Leiden, and Amsterdam before stopping for more substantial business at the Hague; after preaching to a Dutch Reformed congregation at the Hague, Donne continued his return journey through Rotterdam and Dordrecht itself before crossing the North Sea from Hellevoetsluis.

The circumstances and impact of the Synod of Dort ask us to look closely at the theological concepts and languages at stake in the contest between the Dutch

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4 See Appendix 2 for an extended treatment of the Synod of Dort.
Remonstrants, Dutch Counter-Remonstrants, and foreign ambassadors (including several important representatives of King James VI and I and the English clergy). From Arminianism and its Dutch discontents to the native English conversations regarding William Perkins, Theodore Beza, and their posterity, the arguments heard at Dort evince an overwhelming emphasis on predestination. Donne’s Devotions offer an alternative depiction of salvation, faith, and agency grounded in Christology. Investigating two important if oblique scriptural precedents for the Devotions, Hezekiah’s illness in Isaiah 38 and Christ’s own suffering and despair depicted in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, I demonstrate the substance of Donne’s return to Calvin and to Christ in the face of a confrontational international Reformed Orthodoxy preoccupied with predestination. Donne argues against Calvinism, in a sense, without Calvin. For Donne to take such loci as points of departure toward a thorough self-examination such as the Devotions deliberately shifts the emphasis away from predestination across English and Northern European Reformed exegetical conversations. I conclude by returning to Donne’s exacting medical meditations, to his sickness and recovery, in an attempt to situate his Reformed approach to Christology in terms of corporeality and agency. The Devotions, in their detailed and intimate determinations of the body, do not merely offer a model of self-examination and spiritual metaphor; on the contrary, Donne’s work points readers towards an affective understanding of faith, drawing from Calvin but looking forward, in turn, to reconfigurations of the body according to Reformed Orthodox faith.
De Ordine Controversiarum [the order of the controversies or heads of doctrine]:

The Transformation of Orthodoxy at Dordrecht

It would be inaccurate to characterize the Synod of Dort as a struggle between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, as if the Remonstrants were not themselves invested in maintaining an orthodox determination of predestination against what they perceived to be a Counter-Remonstrant perversion of scripture. The most incendiary point, for many Remonstrant theologians and their allies, was the degree to which Counter-Remonstrant (or Gomarist) approaches to salvation restricted “the merits of Christ’s death to a predetermined group of individuals”—the doctrine of limited atonement affirmed at the Synod of Dort.⁵ The Synod was a contest of rival orthodox positions in which the Counter-Remonstrant version prevailed. Nevertheless, in the effort to disprove and discredit Remonstrant or Arminian approaches to faith and predestination, Dutch and English theologians alike reorganized points which Calvin himself had established in the 1559 Institutio, emphasizing predestination at the expense of Christology. This section focuses attention on the monumental shift from an earlier Reformed Orthodoxy grounded in Calvin’s Christology to a competing version, in ascension at Dort, centered on predestination and limited atonement. A careful examination of the Canons of the Synod of Dort (particularly the 1619 English text, The Judgment of the Synode holden at Dort, Concerning the five Articles) and related theological documents in English, Dutch, and Latin demonstrates the degree to which the struggle against Counter-Remonstrant versions of predestinarian theology threatened to change the focus of Reformed

⁵ Benedict, 311.
Orthodoxy; this is a change which many English divines, including Donne, vehemently resisted. In what follows I focus on predestination and limited atonement in order to understand Donne’s theology in the Devotions as a return to the earlier Christological language of Calvin’s Institutio, sermons, and commentaries.

In the English text of The Judgment of the Synode holden at Dort, Concerning the five Articles (1619), an ordo docendi is established with respect to the heads of doctrine. First and foremost, the theologians and divines dealt exhaustively with “Gods Predestination.” The second head of doctrine explained Reformed Orthodox positions “concerning Christs death and the redemption of men by it,” followed by “Doctrinall Heads” three and four, “concerning Mans Corruption, And conversion to God, together with the manner thereof.” The fifth and last point establishes Reformed Orthodox doctrine “concerning the perseverance of the Saints,” the degree to which the elect, God’s chosen people, are truly and certainly incapable of falling from faith and grace.

The theological disputes leading up to the Synod of Dort are too often characterized as a battle between proponents and opponents of predestination, a summary that is simply untrue. Arminius’s emendation of Reformed doctrine, thoroughly

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7 Milton, 297.
8 Milton, 305, 308.
9 Milton, 315.
demonstrated in his *Examination of Perkins’ Pamphlet on the Order and Mode of Predestination* (1600; published in 1612), is still a theology of predestination; while Arminius argues unabashedly against a certain version of predestination, neither he nor his Remonstrant followers reject predestination at large.\(^{10}\) Nevertheless, it is significant that the Canons of Dort establish predestination as the ordinal concept from which the succeeding four heads of doctrine proceed; contemporary depictions of the theological struggle between Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants accurately and consistently render their fundamental disagreement in terms of predestination. The English divine John Overall, for instance, articulates the distinction between Remonstrant and Counter-Remonstrant positions in a series of popular manuscript treatises that Donne would likely have read.\(^{11}\) Overall is an informed theologian with insight into the Dutch debates; he is also, in a sense, neutral, as he disagreed with both Remonstrant and Counter-Remonstrant positions. While his sustained correspondence with Remonstrant Hugo Grotius kept him abreast of the political and partisan contours of the crisis, his apt understanding of the theological struggle led him to argue emphatically for a third position—namely, the Church of England’s approach to predestination, located somewhere between the Remonstrant and Counter-Remonstrant positions.\(^{12}\) Overall understands rival approaches


\(^{12}\) See Milton, 55-6. Also, in three Latin manuscript treatises, all of which circulated anonymously, Overall anticipates an *ordo docendi* regarding the five heads of doctrine.
to predestination to occupy the forefront of the controversy between the “Remonstrantes sive Arminiani” and the “Contra-Remonstrantes sive Puritani,” between the Arminians and, in an appellation which gives the dispute a peculiarly English cast, the Puritans. Across three treatises, written in anticipation of the Synod of Dort, predestination figures prominently. For Overall, moreover, the order of presentation is important, and he seems to recognize how the organization of points in the Dutch Reformed disputations preceding the Synod of Dort marks a significant change in Reformed doctrinal history: “From the changing position of the article of predestination, linked articles—such as those concerning the death of Christ, grace and perseverance—are drawn together in different ways.”

Overall’s manuscript treatise *On the Five Articles disputed in the Low Countries* is an accurate anatomy of the Dutch conflict. Concerning predestination, he depicts the Remonstrant position as such: “the Remonstrants maintain a general and conditional decree—conditional upon faith, according to the general evangelical promise of the salvation of all men because of Christ having died for them, if they believe in him with a divine predestination, the death of Christ, free will and grace, the mode of operation of divine grace, and the perseverance of believers. See *On the Five Articles disputed in the Low Countries; The judgement of the Church of England concerning divine predestination*; and *The judgement of the Church of England concerning divine predestination, explained in Article 17 of its confession. In which is defined what is predestination to life, and what follows from it*; in Milton, 55-103.

13 Milton, 66.

lively and persevering faith, with the aid of the Word and Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{15} Nevertheless, the Remonstrants also “maintain a particular and absolute decree, from foreknowledge of faith, to save those particular men whom God foresaw would through grace believe, and on the other hand to damn those whom he foresaw would remain in sin, impenitent and unbelieving.”\textsuperscript{16} The Remonstrant or Arminian, position, then, emphasizes a key distinction between God’s particular and general decrees, between God’s particular and absolute judgment of humanity from eternity, which proceeds from his foreknowledge of whether or not men will maintain their faith throughout their lives, and his general and conditional decree which maintains that men are endowed with the ability to believe and remain faithful (with the help of the Holy Spirit and Scripture). Hence the Remonstrants affirm a conditional agency, a determination of the will that enables humanity to strive after the promise of Christ’s redemption for all men. It is important to assert the degree to which this Remonstrant position is a direct reaction to William Perkins’s post-Calvinian approach to predestination, precisely that which Arminius thought fit to dispute vehemently and at length in several early treatises. Arminius, the Dutch Remonstrants, and their English allies all proceed from the assumption that William Perkins’s diagram

\textsuperscript{15} Milton, 64. In Latin: “Remonstrantes ponunt Praedestinationis decretum Generale et Conditionatum, sub conditione fidei, scundum generalem promissionem Evangelicam, de servandis omnibus hominibus propter Christum pro iis mortuam, si in eum per verbum et Spiritum Sanctum eidem assistentem, fide viva et perseverante crediderunt.” See Milton, 66.

of predestination from *A Golden Chain* (1590) is in error.\(^{17}\) Perkins, a supralapsarian “indebted to the second-generation exponents of Cavin, such as Theodore Beza,” taught “that God had divided mankind unconditionally into elect and reprobate even before the fall of Adam.”\(^{18}\) Arminian and Remonstrant affirmations of God’s conditional decree and his foreknowledge attempt to temper the model of predestination advanced by Perkins and his acolytes, opposing the absolute supralapsarian division of elect and reprobate.

Perkins continued to be an important theological resource for the Counter-Remonstrants, Gomarists, and English Puritans, even if many of the delegates assembled at Dordrecht were not exactly acolytes. The Dort theologians rejected the supralapsarian position, a blow to Franciscus Gomarus, who continued to advance a strict supralapsarian version of predestination long after both William Perkins’s and Jacobus Arminius’s deaths.\(^{19}\) Nevertheless, they also rejected Remonstrant attempts to temper God’s absolute decree. According to Overall, the Counter-Remonstrants excluded the “general and conditional decree,” maintaining only “a single, particular and absolute decree, pertaining to certain individuals selected out of the human race, who are alone given faith and perseverance, and saved, because of Christ having died for them alone, and through the efficacious and irresistible grace of the Holy Spirit, all the rest being rejected and damned.


\(^{18}\) Tyacke, 29.

\(^{19}\) See Tyacke, 95-7; and White, 184-7.
by an absolute decree.” Explicit in this determination of predestination is a doctrine of limited atonement, where Christ’s death purchased satisfaction solely for the elect rather than all men, “having died for them alone”—hence the movement from the first to the second doctrinal head, from predestination to Christ’s death and atonement. In this sense, Overall’s depiction of the *Ordine Controversiarum* is accurate and insightful: “From the changing position of the article of predestination, linked articles—such as those concerning the death of Christ, grace and perseverance—are drawn together in different [varie] ways.” Overall glosses “different” [varie] with a brief history of orthodoxy, spanning from the Patristic era to more recent Reformation controversies. While the Remonstrant position follows from “the ancient Fathers before Augustine [ante Augustinum], and of many after him, and of many papists [Pontificis], Lutherans, and many others,” the Counter-Remonstrant position follows “the judgment of Zwingli, Calvin and the puritans [Puritanorum]” but remains “unknown to all of the ancient Fathers, even to Augustine and his followers.” Overall, like many of his contemporaries, seems to take offense at the position suggested by the preeminent theologians at Dort, suggesting supralapsarianism despite the nominal rejection of

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22 Milton, 64, 66-7.
Perkins and Gomarus. For Overall, as for Donne, “different” [varie] points to the transformation of Reformed Orthodoxy at Dordrecht in 1618/19 and to the degradation of Christ’s suffering and sacrifice.

Overall suggests dissatisfaction with the transformation of Reformed Orthodoxy, with the tenor of the controversies that precipitated the Synod of Dort and the theological language, centered on predestination, that emerged from the confrontation between Remonstrants, Counter-Remonstrants, and foreign delegates sent to mediate the dispute. This transformation is evident in the language and organization of the English text of The Judgment of the Synode holden at Dort, Concerning the five Articles. The treatise begins with a brief Preface, which recounts the circumstances of the Synod and purports to record “those opinions of Arminius, and his followers” so that they “might accurately bee examined, and determined of by the rule of Gods word onely, the true doctrine established, and the false rejected, and concord, peace, and tranquillity (by Gods blessing) restored to the Low-Countries.”

Treatments of the recently-confirmed orthodox positions follow, as well as elaborate rejections of the Arminian errors, taken “out of their owne Bookes, Confessions; and Declarations partly heeretofore set foorth, partly now exhibited to this Synod.” The first article, “concerning Gods Predestination,” sets out the most pressing issues of the Synod in order: “Forasmuch as

23 In this sense, Overall seems to argue proleptically against later historians, such as Nicholas Tyacke and Peter White, who understand the Synod of Dort to mark the certain defeat of supralapsarianism rather than a mere reframing of Perkins’s (and Gomarus’s) position, in a different language, suitable for a national synod with transnational aims and audiences.
24 Milton, 340.
25 Milton, 341.
all men have sinned in Adam, and are become guiltie of the curse, and eternall death, God had done wrong unto no man, if it had pleased him to leave all mankind in sin, and under the curse… But herein was the love of God made manifest, *In that he sent his onely begotten Sonne into the world, that whosoever beleeveth in him might not perish, but have life everlasting*, I. Joh. 4.9. Joh. 3.16.”26 Here, in the treatment of God’s Predestination, the Canons of Dort seem to establish the total depravity of mankind as well as the mercy of Christ (from the Gospel according John) before moving directly to predestination. But this is not exactly the case. The language of the first article emphasizes the terms of belief in Christ rather than the scope of his mercy, as in the quotation from John (where “whosoever beleeveth in him might not perish”) as well as the succeeding treatment of God’s mercy, where “that men may bee brought to unto faith, God in mercy sends Preachers of this most joyfull message, to whom he will and when he will: by whose ministrie, men are called unto repentance and faith in Christ crucified” and where “Whosoever beleeve not these glad tidings, the wrath of God remaines upon them.”27 From the beginning, the Canons of Dort emphasize God’s election over his benevolence, the degree to which he ministers “to whom he will and when he will,” and render belief (and faith) subordinate to predestination—a conceptual order directly at odds with Calvin’s own treatment of faith and predestination in the 1559 *Institutio* (as demonstrated in Chapter 1). In the Canons of Dort, as in the *Institutio*, “God bestoweth faith on some, and not on others” and the “cause, or fault of this unbeliefe, as of all other

26 Milton, 297-8.
27 Milton, 298.
sinnnes, is in no wise in God, but in man.”  

But there is no talk of faith as a firm persuasion of God’s benevolence, nor is there any attention to the ways in which understanding faith as an affective engagement with God change what inevitably appear as the harsh and unforgiving terms of predestination, election, and reprobation.

Instead, the Canons explicitly privilege election over faith, as “the unchangeable purpose of God, by which, before the foundation of the world, according to the most free pleasure of his will, and of his meere grace, out of all mankinde…he hath chosen Christ unto salvation a set number of certaine men, neither better nor more worthy then others, but lying in the common misery with others.”  

In an attempt to confound the unorthodox Arminian or Counter-Reformant version of God’s particular and absolute decree, election is defined as “made, not upon foresight of faith, and the obedience of faith…but unto faith, and the obedience of faith, holinesse.”  

This initially seems like earlier Calvinist versions of predestination, as in the 1559 *Institutio*, where faith is bound up inextricably with election. Here, however, the emphasis changes significantly from faith to election, where “Election is the fountain of all saving good; from whence faith, holinesse, and the residue of saving gifts, lastly everlasting life it selfe, do flow.”  

Through a series of substitutions, the Canons of Dort replace election as “the unchangeable purpose of God” with election as “one onely good-pleasure, pupose [sic], and counsell, of the will of God, by which hee hath chosen us from eternity both unto

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28 Milton, 298.  
29 Milton, 299.  
30 Milton, 299.  
31 Milton, 299.
“grace, and glory” and then, subsequently, with a definition of election without a subject (God), as “the fountain of all saving good” itself. Hence election, rendered as the most prominent of God’s offices, not only takes precedence over God’s benevolence and mercy but reorients his very agency. Here the Canons of Dort relegate Christ to the margins, a textual strategy illustrated in a series of exegetical citations under the first article, depicting Christ’s role as mediator, celebrated in Calvin’s *Institutio*, in passive terms. Drawing from the first book of Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians, we encounter God as Father who “hath chosen vs in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in loue: Who hath predestinate vs, to be adopted through Iesus Christ in himselfe, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherewith he hath made vs freely accepted in his beloved.” But the citation ends immediately before Ephesians 1.7, on Christ’s sacrifice; the treatment of election in the Canons of Dort does not include any mention of an active Christ, the second person of the Trinity, “By whom we haue redemption through his blood, even the forgiuenesse of sinnes, according to his rich grace.” This is not to accuse the Canons of Dort of some sort of anti-Trinitarianism but rather to recognize a shift in expression and organization, where Christ is *given* and *sent* (in a reference to John

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32 Milton, 299.
34 Ephesians 1.4-7 in *The Geneva Bible (The Annotated New Testament, 1602 Edition)*, 96r. The 1602 annotations are instructive, asserting that “holines of life cannot be separate from the grace of election” in a scholastic language of efficient and final causality.
3:16), elect and reprobate alike are chosen in Christ, and believers demonstrate faith in Christ, but where Christ himself is only active in the sense that “Christ himselfe” declared “Gods election…by Gods appointment.” There is virtually no mention of Christ’s life, death, or teaching, nor is there any reference to the Christological articles of the Athanasian Creed (confirmed by Calvin in the Institutio) or the larger exegetical tradition with which the Canons of Dort are in conversation.

It is important to be clear about the scope of my claim; while the language of the Institutio regarding faith is certainly here, it appears without scaffolding, without an adequate understanding of life in Christ, and under a very different order of concepts or topics. It is rendered vestigial rather than primary. Towards the end of the first Article, as the Canons work to ward off both despair and antinomianism, we encounter “Those, who as yet do not effectually perceive in themselves a lively faith, or a sure confidence of heart in Christ, the peace of conscience, an endevour of filial obedience, a glorying in God through Christ, and nevertheless use the meanes, by which God hath promised, that he wil work these things in us.” Faith, described as “lively,” as “a sure confidence of heart in Christ,” certainly structures the engagement with predestination when one is first assured of God’s benevolence and asked to encounter Christ’s sacrifice. But here in the first article there is no such promise, no such treatment of God’s benevolence but rather a repeated determination of “the decree of Election, and Reprobation, revealed in Gods

35 Milton, 298-302.
36 Milton 301.
Word.” It is not faith that structures the engagement with predestination but rather the opposite. Predestination structures our understanding of faith: “Which as perverse, impure, and wavering men doe wrest unto their owne destruction, so it affords unsperkable [sic] comfort to godly, and religious soules.” While this is not necessarily wrong, it marks a dramatic shift in the organization and expression of topics. Moreover, predestination and election do not merely precede limited atonement in the ordo docendi, in the unfolding of orthodoxy in the Canons of Dort; they take conceptual shape in terms of limited atonement, where election is defined directly as the “salvation [of] a set number of certaine men.” We encounter no description or depiction of Christ’s mercy or of his triple office; on the contrary, Christ himself is “chosen unto salvation a set number of certaine men,” a peculiarly passive determination of the Passion which works to recast the “meere” of “meere grace” as a condition of Christ’s passive sacrifice rather than a description of grace as solely (i.e. merely) instrumental, over human agency, in securing election for even the smallest remnant of mankind.

The version of predestination advanced by the Canons of Dort, at work in The Judgment of the Synode holden at Dort, Concerning the five Articles, is not necessarily opposed to Calvin’s vision in the Institutio or to the visions of the English Delegates who advocated, towards the end of the proceedings, for less rigid concepts and “harsh expressions.” Each of the judgments concerning the five articles are, in a sense, correct; the method of presentation and the language of orthodoxy, however, are starkly different,

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38 Milton, 298-9.
39 Milton, 296.
just as the Canons recast key terms, concepts which held other articulations of Reformed Orthodoxy together, as minor or marginal points. Faith is perhaps the least recognizable Reformed concept in the orthodox statement of the Synod; it is defined in terms that directly oppose Calvin’s own determination of faith in the 1559 *Institutio*. In the treatment of the Arminian errors concerning “Man’s corruption, And conversion to God, together with the manner thereof,” the Canons of Dort argue explicitly against those

That teach, that the grace, whereby wee are converted unto God, is nothing else but a gentle inducement; or (as others explaine it) that the most noble kinde of working in mans conversion, & most sutable to our nature is that, which is performed by suasorie motives, or advise: and that no cause can be alleadged, why even such morall grace allone, should not of naturall men make spirituall: nay moreover, that God doth not produce the consent of our will otherwise, then by way of morall counsaling: and that the efficacie of Gods working, wherein he exceedeth the working of the Devill, consisteth in this, that the Devill promiseth temporary things, but God things eternall. For this is downe-right Pelagianisme, and warreth against the whole course of the Scriptures: which besides this swasory kinde of moving, acknowledge in the conversion of man, another manner working of Gods spirit, and that more divine, & of farre greater efficacie, Ezek. 36.26. *I will give you a new heart, & a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh, &c.*

 Granted, the Counter-Remonstrants adeptly argue against those that suggest that faith, realized in conversion by grace, is “nothing else but a gentle inducement,” “performed by suasorie motives, or advise: and that no cause can be alleadged, why even such morall grace allone, should not of naturall men make spirituall.” In the “Epistle Deducatorie” to the *Devotions*, Donne himself distinguishes between three

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40 Milton, 314-5.
births—“Naturall,” “Supernatural,” and “preter-naturall”—in a manner that extends our understanding of faith from mere persuasion to a conviction of God’s benevolence, “in returning [Donne] to Life, from this Sicknes” (Epistle Dedicatorie). But this does not discount the purchase of this language of “swasory kinde[s] of moving,” experiential engagements with the world which confirm God’s benevolence and, in turn, work to structure the affective relationship between man and God and among men. The Canons of Dort, however, refer to this language (the very terms of faith in III.ii of the *Institutio*) only in the negative, correctly rejecting “suasorie motives, or advise” as the only impulses to conversion and faith but implicitly denying persuasion and affective faith any role whatsoever in the conversion to faith. The terms of the Canons of Dort are unforgiving here, where they, “besides this swasory kinde of moving, acknowledge in the conversion of man, another manner working of Gods spirit, and that more divine, & of farre greater efficacie”—a shift which stands in stark contrast to Calvin’s own determination of faith, where the working of “God’s spirit” operates precisely according to “swasory kinde[s] of moving” (as discussed at length in Chapter 1). Once again, the Canons of Dort drift far from previous iterations of Reformed Orthodoxy. Across the five Articles, this is the only treatment of faith that resembles Calvin’s own, located in a controversial statement against the Remonstrants, an explicit condemnation of “suasorie motives” which is ultimately subtended by a tacit rejection of any affective determinations of faith. Just as predestination precedes Christology in the new Dortian *ordo docendi*, the new Reformed Orthodox treatment of faith precedes from predestination, election, and reprobation.
In the *Institutio*, faith immediately precedes justification and predestination; for Calvin, faith itself follows directly from a lengthy treatment of Christ’s mediations, his triple office as king, priest, and prophet, at the end of Book II. I read this material at length below, with reference to Donne’s recuperation of Calvin’s Christology in the *Devotions*. Nevertheless, before moving to Donne’s work in the early 1620s, it is important to mark the degree to which the Canons of Dort reduce the Christological emphasis in the treatment “concerning Christs death and the redemption of men by it.”

Here under the Second Head of doctrine, the Canons do emphasize that “This death of the sonne of God is the onely, and most perfit sacrifice, and satisfaction for sinnes, of infinite price, and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sinnes of the whole world.” But the emphasis quickly shifts from Christ’s sacrifice to those who “being called by the Gospel doe not repent, nor beleeve in Christ, but perish in their infidelitie.” Granted, the Canons of Dort do specify that such men are damned not “for want of, or by any insufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ offered upon the crosse, but by their owne proper fault,” and that “as many as truly beleive, and are freed by Christs death from their sinnes, are saved from destruction.”

There is some nominal attention to Christ’s human perfection as well as the potential for his sacrifice to redeem all of mankind. In other words, it is not for lack of power or ability that Christ does not save all people.

Nevertheless, “God willed, that Christ by the blood of his crosse (whereby hee was to

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41 Milton, 305.
42 Milton, 305.
43 Ibid., 305.
44 Ibid., 305-6.
establish a new covenant) should effectually redeeme out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all them, and them onely, who from eternity were elected unto salvation…that hee should bestow faith on them”—an articulation of limited atonement which states, in no uncertain terms, that “by the blood of his crosse” Christ only redeems those who “from eternity were elected unto salvation.”

Let me pause to establish the order of topics here. Mankind, fallen by their own sins, are predestined from eternity to election or reprobation. Christ’s death, albeit effective enough to purchase salvation for all, saves “all them, and them onely” who are elected by God from eternity. Faith, although integral to both topics, is never explicated beyond the use of illuminating adjectives or objects: “lively,” “justifying,” “in Jesus Christ.”

Without a more thorough treatment of faith, a lacuna that seems to strip the documents of affective piety or complicated treatments of agency, the Canons of Dort explain Christ’s death in logical terms, leading directly to a doctrine of limited atonement. Christ’s death merely atones for the sins of one part of mankind, a relatively small remnant.

**The Devotions in Context: Christology against Predestination-Centered Theology**

Donne, ordained in January 1614/15, was perhaps too inexperienced a minister, theologian, and emissary to join the English delegates to the Synod of Dort in 1618. As his first sermon at St. Paul’s Cross was not preached until 24 March 1617, it is hard to imagine Donne inspiring the sort of confidence in James as the more weathered and established figures the king sent to Dordrecht: George Carleton, Joseph Hall, John

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46 Ibid., 301, 306, 298.
Davenant, and Samuel Ward. Nevertheless, in 1619 James saw fit to send Donne to the Continent on a diplomatic mission to Germany and the Netherlands, as chaplain to the King’s ambassador, Viscount Doncaster (James Hay). The embassy was to mediate between emergent powers in a struggle which precipitated the Thirty Years’ War, as the “new government of Bohemia,” under Frederick V, Elector Palatine, and his wife Elizabeth Stuart, James’s own daughter, “appealed for aid not only to the Protestant states of Germany but also to the stronger powers of England and the Netherlands.” The tasks of the embassy included treating with heads of state in Germany as well as encouraging support for Frederick and his Protestant subjects among the Dutch. James chose Donne in particular for this position. According to Bald, Donne “had gone abroad [in 1611] with Sir Robert Drury to keep in touch with developments on the Continent, and, while Drury had concerned himself with political events, Donne’s eye had been fixed on the situation of Protestants abroad. It is no wonder that James thought of him as a suitable person to accompany Doncaster’s embassy,” for which service the King rewarded Donne with a promotion to Dean of St. Paul’s upon his return.

Donne certainly played an important role as chaplain and ambassador abroad, duties that took him through the Netherlands in the immediate aftermath of the Synod of Dort. Proceeding with an intimate knowledge of the affairs at Dordrecht, Donne

48 Bald, 340.
50 Bald, 340.
“presented himself as one with his Dutch and Walloon colleagues in administering the sacraments and preaching the Word,” culminating with his sermon given at the Hague on 19 December 1619.  

Paul R. Sellin argues that Donne delivered his sermon before an audience of men who had been called to “sit in judgment of Oldenbarnevelt” the previous year, offering “outright, public endorsement of the Synod of Dort and the political measures that the States General, the Council of State, the Estates of Holland (not to speak of the other provinces), and the House of Orange were following in support of the synodal findings.”  

In this reading Donne, like James, supported the Counter-Remonstrant party at the Synod of Dort. The Hague sermon, on Matthew 4:18-20, works first to establish charity between men, as Christ “loves not schisme neither between them whom he cals,” but ultimately affirms the decisions of the assembly at Dort over matters of doctrine; Sellin confirms that, “Although his remarks appear to be so tempered as expressly to exclude neither Gomarist nor Arminian, they must have implied to Contra-Remonstrant listeners that he essentially accepted their line in matters of belief.”  

Sellin’s study of the Doncaster expedition is thorough and compelling, an important supplement to Bald’s earlier biography of Donne in which relatively little is

52 Ibid., 124-5.  
53 Donne’s Hague sermons were initially published in two parts, posthumously in LXXX Sermons in 1640, as Numbers 71 and 72. In the title, Donne relates the composition of the sermon from memory, during his “sicknesse at Abrey-hatche in Essex, 1630, revising my short notes of that Sermon.” See The Sermons of John Donne, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, Volume II (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1955), 269, 278-80; and Sellin, So Doth, So Is Religion, 124.
said about his affairs in the United Provinces.\textsuperscript{54} Sellin also recognizes the connection between the embassy and the Synod of Dort, particularly where he identifies Donne as “the first Anglican clergyman to pay an official call on the Netherlands establishment after the departure of the English delegates at the close of the synod. In fact, his stay coincided with a remarkable moment of cooperation between the English and Dutch churches in quelling fundamental doctrinal differences that had threatened the very unity of the Reformed church, the Protestant alliance, and the Dutch republic itself.”\textsuperscript{55}

Nevertheless, Sellin’s reading of the “Fishers of Men” sermons delivered at the Hague is frustrating. He is eager to suggest that Donne speaks in full support of the Canons of Dort and that his address affirms that the Synod, the assembly of “Divines and Ecclesiasticall persons,” is above the “censure” of “buyers and sellers, and farmers,” the men of the “Market” as opposed to the “Fishers of men” themselves.\textsuperscript{56} What Sellin seems to bypass is the larger context for Donne’s statements about the assembly of “Divines and Ecclesiasticall persons” who “cast their nets into a deeper Sea…where they are much less fishers, into the secret Councils of God.”\textsuperscript{57} Donne emphasizes the pastoral work of preachers and describes the enduring preoccupation with speculative theology that shaped the proceedings at Dort. He is referring primarily to speculation concerning predestination, questions which “search farther into Gods eternall Decrees, and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} See Bald, 362-5.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Sellin, \textit{So Doth, So Is Religion}, 7.
\item \textsuperscript{56} \textit{The Sermons of John Donne}, II: 278-9.
\item \textsuperscript{57} \textit{The Sermons of John Donne}, II: 278-9.
\end{itemize}
unrevealed Councels,” but do not provide effective pastoral tools to save souls and bring men to God:

It is well provided by your Lawes, that Divines and Ecclesiasticall persons may not take farmes, nor buy nor sell, for returne, in Markets. I would it were as well provided, that buyers and sellers, and farmers might not be Divines, nor censure them. I speake not of censuring our lives…But I speak of censuring our Doctrines, and of appointing our doctrines; when men are weary of hearing any other thing, then Election and Reprobation, and whom, and when, and how, and why God hath chosen, or cast away. We have liberty enough by your Law, to hold enough for the maintenance of our bodies, and states; you have liberty enough by our Law, to know enough for the salvation of your soules; If you will search farther into Gods eternall Decrees, and unrevealed Councels, you should not cast your nets into that Sea, for you are not fishers here. *Andrew and Peter cast their nets, for they were fishers*, (therefore they were bound to do it) And againe, *for they were fishers*, (if they had not been so, they would not have done so).58

Sellin is correct to identify in this passage a limited endorsement of the Canons of Dort, particularly in the sense that the “Lawes” particular to “Divines and Ecclesiasticall persons” are not for open censure. But this is true under the condition that such laws enable people “to know enough for the salvation of [their] soules.” Donne doubts that any overwhelming emphasis on predestination can have effectively incline believers to piety. He is skeptical of the preoccupation with “Election and Reprobation,” the speculative questions concerning “whom, and when, and how, and why God hath chosen, or cast away.” Across the entire sermon, this is the only reference to either election or reprobation by name; predestination is avoided entirely. In its stead, Donne investigates the terms of Christ’s simple injunction to his first Apostles, “*Sequere me, Follow me.*”

Donne is much more invested in a Christological determination of calling, demonstrated in a complicated and subtle grammar but in a strikingly different register than the Canons of Dort: “These persons then thus disposed, unfit of themselves, made fit by him, and found by him at their labour, labour in a lawful Calling, and in their owne Calling, our Saviour Christ calls to him.”

This is distinct from predestination, the Counter-Remonstrant approach to which is satirized in Donne’s forceful depiction of rhetoric. Christ works with “weake means” upon “weake men,” “onely by one Sequere me, Follow me, and no more, cannot be thought easie.” The “way of Rhetorique” is vastly different, “working upon weake men” by other means: “first to trouble the understanding, to displace, and to decompose, and disorder the judgement, to smother and bury in it, or to empty it of former apprehensions and opinions, and to shake that believe, with which it had possessed itself before, and then when it is thus melted, to power it into new molds, when it is thus mollified, to stamp and imprint new formes, new images, new opinions in it.” This depiction of rhetoric is certainly at odds with the theological determinations of rhetoric popular among sixteenth-century Reformers such as Melanchthon and Calvin; as illustrated in Chapter 1, Calvin argues for a more subtle divine rhetoric through which men are persuaded of God’s benevolence. Here, Donne renders Christ’s method in a language closer to Calvin’s, without this “battery of eloquence, [with] none of this verball violence”; this, like coming to God through the love of the riches he bestows, is “a false

59 *The Sermons of John Donne*, II: 279.
60 *The Sermons of John Donne*, II: 282.
Method in this art of love.”\textsuperscript{62} Donne is unequivocal in describing the true art in such a way as to challenge the depiction of agency in the Canons of Dort: “The true is, radically to love God for himselfe, and other things for his sake, so far, as he may receive glory in our having, and using them,” a vision of praxis and charity.\textsuperscript{63}

Donne ends his sermon at the Hague with an absolute affirmation of God’s benevolence. While he is clear is his conformity to the Synod of Dort, stating “There is no merit in all that we can doe,” Donne nevertheless breaks with the emphases in the Canons of Dort by asserting that our salvation “is but an addition from [God’s] own goodnesse.”\textsuperscript{64} “Those propositions in nature are not so certaine” as God’s absolute benevolence:

The Earth is at such a time just between the Sunne, and the Moone, therefore the Moone must be Eclipsed, The Moone is at such time just betweene the Earth and the Sunne, therefore the Sunne must be Eclipsed; for upon the Sunne, and those other bodies, God can, and hath sometimes wrought miraculously, and changed the naturall courses of them… But God cannot by any Miracle so worke upon himselfe, as to make himselfe not himselfe, unmercifull, or unjust; And out of his mercy he makes this promise, (Doe this, and thus it shall be with you) and then, of

\textsuperscript{62} The Sermons of John Donne, II: 283.
\textsuperscript{63} The Sermons of John Donne, II: 283. For an apt comparison, see Expostulation XX the Devotions: “The arts and sciences are most properly referred to the head, that is their proper Element and Spheare; But yet the art of prouing, Logique, and the Art of perswading, Rhetorique, are deduced to the hand, and that expressed by a hand contracted into a fist, and this by a hand enlarged, and expanded; and euermore the power of man, and the power of God himselfe is expressed so, All things are in his hand, neither is God so often presented to vs, by names that carry our consideration vpon counsel as vpon the execution of counsel; he is oftner called the Lord of Hosts, than by all other names, that may be referred to the other signification” (Expostulation XX, Devotions, 518-20)
\textsuperscript{64} The Sermons of John Donne, II: 309.
his justice he performes that promise, which was made merely, and onely out of mercy, If we doe it, (though not because we doe it) we shall have eternall life.\textsuperscript{65}

God cannot be other than benevolent, according to his own promise. Against this powerful depiction of cosmic miracles, Donne emphasizes the degree to which even God, for whom all things are possible, cannot “worke upon himselfe, as to make himselfe not himselfe.” His promise is one of mercy, where “If we doe it, (though not because we doe it) we shall have eternall life.” The parenthetical phrase expresses conformity to the Canons of Dort: men are saved by the grace of God, and only by these means, “not because we doe it” but because we are enabled. Nevertheless, Donne glosses this statement by emphasizing God’s benevolence, the terms of which are too often obscured by the order and language of the Canons of Dort.

After preaching his “Fishers of men” sermon before the congregation at the Hague, Donne was awarded a golden medallion commemorating the Synod of Dort—an object which, as Sellin has written, “was hardly a neutral object in the context in which he received it.”\textsuperscript{66} Even if Donne demonstrated nominal conformity with the Canons of Dort, and even if his audience at the Hague understood his sermon as a tacit endorsement of the Synod on behalf of a English ambassador, the sermon itself sets to work another language of Reformed Orthodoxy at odds with the overwhelming emphasis on

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{The Sermons of John Donne}, II: 309.
predestination after Dort. Donne, in his “Fishers of men” sermon, suggests a renewed focus on Christology, one that looks forward several years to the Devotions.

The storied circumstances of John Donne’s Devotions, established as early as 1640 by biographer Izaak Walton, do much to shape our reception of the work. Donne contracted a virus in November 1623 that threatened his life, an illness that took shape in print as the impetus to the “emergent occasions” for meditation collected as the Devotions. Composed once he was out of danger in early December, the Devotions were published in 1624 and have since been read fruitfully as a testimony to God’s mercy as well as for the commonplace concerning Christian health, that God “visits man through

67 According to Walton,

in his fifty fourth year a dangerous sicknesse seized him, which inclined him to a Consumption. But God, as Job thankfully acknowledged, preserved his spirit, and kept his intellectuals as clear and perfect as when that sickness first seized his body... Within a few days, his distempers abated; and as his strength increased, so did his thankfulnesse to Almighty God, testified in his book of Devotions, which he published at his recovery. In which the reader may see, the most secret thoughtes that then possest his soul, Paraphrased and [made] publick; a book that may not unfitly be called a Sacred picture of spirituall extasies, occasioned and applyable to the emergencies of that sicknesse, which being a composition of Meditations, disquisitions and prayers, he writ on his sick-bed; herein imitating the holy Patriarchs, who were wont to build their Altars in that place, where they had received their blessings. This sicksnesse brought him so neer to the gates of death, and he saw the grave so ready to devour him, that he would often say his recovery was supernaturall. But God that restor’d his health continued it to him, till the fifty-ninth year of his life.

illness” and that one, in turn, is right to identify sickness with sin.68 They are rarely read as contributions in ongoing debates regarding the shape of English Calvinism or the province of predestination, election, and assurance in Calvinist theology more broadly conceived.69 To my knowledge, the Devotions have never been placed in conversation with the Canons of Dort. But the structure and content of the Devotions suggest a deliberate engagement with the predestination-centered theology ascendant at Dordrecht five years earlier, particularly insofar as Donne frequently returns to earlier Calvinist concepts and languages in order to pose an alternative theology, a proper soteriology which accounts for salvation in terms of Christ’s death and resurrection. Moreover, Donne works to recuperate Calvin’s own attention to mercy and faith, realized in affective terms that ultimately confirm God’s benevolence; these, rather than election and reprobation, are Donne’s ordinal loci.

The Devotions: Sections XVI, XVII, and XVIII

The earliest editions of the Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions are sprawling books, over six hundred pages in length. They proceed as a series of meditations corresponding to stages in the onset and treatment of a life-threatening illness. After the initial symptoms, as his senses and faculties are impaired (I and II), Donne takes to his bed and awaits the arrival of the physician (III and IV). The physician comes to him and,

68 Goldberg, “The Understanding of Sickness in Donne’s Devotions,” 508. See also Bald, 450-55.
surprised by the extremity of his symptoms, expresses fear (V and VI)—a fear that
compels him to consult with other physicians, including the King’s physican, and to
prescribe medicine only after careful counsel (VII, VIII, IX). Yet the disease persists
(X). Effective cordials prevent it from marring his heart (XI), Pigeons are applied to
draw the ill vapors from his head (XII), but the illness progresses and expresses itself in
spots on Donne’s skin (XIII); the physicians observe that Donne, despite their treatments,
has fallen upon “criticall dayes” (XIV). The patient is unable to sleep, day or night (XV).
The subsequent sections of the Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions (XVI, XVII, and
XVIII) mark a turning point for Donne in his sickness and in his spiritual approach to his
affliction. In a series of meditations, expostulations, and prayers organized around the
tolling of bells at the church adjacent to his sickbed (probably St. Paul’s in London),
Donne is drawn to reflect on the larger circumstances of his illness, the limits of his
human body, and the terms of Christ’s atonement for the sins of humankind. Sections
XVI (“From the bels of the church adiyoyning, I am daily remembred of my buriall in the
funeralls of others”), XVII (“Now, this Bell tolling softly for another, saies to me, Thou
must die”), and XVIII (“The bell rings out, and tells me in him, that I am dead”) speak
implicitly against the transformation of Reformed Orthodoxy at the Synod of Dort by
recuperating, in a sequence of reflections on mortality and the life of the congregation, a
Christological foundation for the Church.\footnote{Devotions, 388, 410, 436.} It is only after his meditation on the ringing of
the church bells that Donne recovers, after the “bell rings out, and tells me in him, that I
am dead,” evincing a progression from illness to health through the paradoxical
meditation on death which signals the tacit prominence of the sequence in the *Devotions*. The bell sequence of the *Devotions* is instructive insofar as it illustrates Donne’s Reformed Orthodox project against the Canons of Dort, against an affirmation of limited atonement conveyed in a language centered on predestination. The *Devotions*, particularly in the sequence on the ringing of the bell, demonstrates a different orthodox approach.

Meditation XVIII begins with a productive conceit, the type of conceit for which Donne, in his lyric poetry, is renowned. As the title declares, as “*bell rings out, and tells me in him, that I am dead,*” Donne affirms that, in this section, “The *Bell* rings out; the *pulse* thereof is changed; the *tolling* was a *faint*, and *intermitting pulse*, vpon one side; this *stronger*, and argues *more* and better *life*” (Meditation XVIII).\(^7\) The distinction he makes between “sides” draws our attention first to the man who is dead. The bell began ringing, in Meditation XVI, to commemorate his death and to call the congregation to his funeral; here, Donne points to that funeral, after “*His soul* is gone out; and as a Man who had a lease of 1000 *yeeres* after the expiration of a short one, or an *inheritance* after the *life* of a Man in a *consumption*, he is now into the possession of his *better estate*” (Meditation XVIII).\(^2\) This man, then, has died and gone to heaven, to God, a transition which Donne expresses in terms of tenure and inheritance, as if he traded a meager lease for “a lease of 1000 *yeeres*,” a paltry living for a substantial inheritance, guaranteeing him ease and well-being. Yet the distinction between “sides” also points immediately to

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\(^7\) *Devotions*, 436.  
\(^2\) *Devotions*, 436-7.
Donne’s health. In terms of his body, it is here, within the *Devotions*, that the course of his illness turns, as he begins moving to recovery (albeit with a fear of relapse). In terms of his soul, it is here that Donne acquires an apt understanding of his mortality and his eminent salvation. This change is evident even in the first line of Meditation XVIII, insofar as the ringing of the bell is rendered as a pulse.

Pulse, of course, speaks specifically to the “emergent occasions” that precipitated the composition of the *Devotions*, to Donne’s illness and the condition of his ailing body. As early as Meditation I, he contemplates the terms of his mortality with explicit reference to his pulse, to the pulse of his blood, coursing through his human body; moreover, Donne calls to God, who “hast imprinted a pulse in our Soule, but we do not examine it; a voice in our conscience, but wee doe not hearken vnto it (Expostulation I).”

In Meditation I, the pulse of the soul immediately becomes an expression of grace and occasions a poignant reflection on salvation and agency. It is not a metaphor, as God actually and effectively works by means of grace: “will God pretend to make a Watch, and leaue out the springe? to make so many various wheels in the faculties of the Soule, and in the organs of the body, and leaue out Grace, that should moue them? Or wil God make a springe, and not wind it vp? Infuse his first grace, & not second it with more, without which, we can no more vse his first grace, when we haue it, then wee could dispose our selues by Nature, to haue it?” (Expostulation I). Thus the pulse of the soul, like the pulse of the body, points to a continuous source of life, God’s grace. God does

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73 *Devotions*, 13-5.
74 *Devotions*, 13-5.
not merely plant grace in man and let happen what will; the image Donne evokes, on the contrary, is of a watch that God winds thoroughly, to set to work and to continue setting to work beyond the initial impulse to motion. The bell rings, and its sound takes shape in Donne’s prose as a pulse; the bell, like the blood and God’s grace, infuses a body with life. The succeeding lines of Meditation XVIII suggest that this “life” is eternal life, the life of the dead man who has departed the world for heaven, but something else is at work. What is this body? Donne, in the pulse of the bell, points to another body, the Body of Christ, the body of the congregation.

This claim requires me to step back, to retrace Donne’s steps between the first tolling of the bells in section XVI and this affirmation in Meditation XVIII, of the life of the congregation. Donne begins Meditation XVI by reducing the grounds of comparison to the material comprising the bells themselves. He relates, after comparing his imprisonment in his sickbed with that of a “Conuenient Author, who writ a Discourse of Bells when hee was Prisoner in Turky,” how “When the Turkes tooke Constantinople, the melted the Bells into Ordnance; I haue heard both Bells and Ordnance, but neuer been so much affected with those, as with these Bells” (Meditation XVI).75 Donne explicitly recognizes the composition and creation of the bells, their status as human products meant (as illustrated in the coming Expostulation XVI) to draw our attention to God. Nevertheless, bells themselves are not enough to move men to devotion. It is only when they direct and affect us, as Donne has “neuer been so much affected” as by the bells in Meditation XVI, that we experience their ringing as anything other than noise, other than 

75 Devotions, 388-9.
a loathsome clang of metal not unlike the revulsion inspired by cannon shot (Ordnance).

Subsequently, Donne points to the difference between the bell that leaves him “so much affected” in his sickness and other Church bells, presumably intended for similar uses. He lists two other locations (both of which, incidentally, operated under less strict Reformed Orthodox consistories than those of the Dutch Reformed Church): “I haue lien neere a steeple, [Antwerp is given in the margin] in which there are said to be more than thirty Bels; And neere another, where there is one so bigge, as that the Clapper is said to weigh more than six hundred pound, [Roan is given in the margin] yet neuer so affected as here” (Meditation XVI).76 Again, Donne remarks upon the singularity of the bell by his sickbed, a bell which leaves him more “affected” than any others; moreover, he gives a precise reason: “Here the Bells can scarse solemnise the funerall of any person, but that I knew him, or knew that hee was my Neighbour” (Meditation XVI).77

Meditation XVI, to this point, proceeds as a series of emendations, as Donne works to be more precise in explaining why, exactly, these bells leave him “so much affected,” rendering him, after all of his other experiences of bells, “neuer so affected as here.” Donne begins by reducing the bells to mere metal, of the same stuff as ordnance; he continues, recognizing the common uses of bells in devotional practices in England and on the Continent; and, eventually, comes to describe how this bell, heard in his sickness, affects him because it directs him to his community, to his neighbors, with whom Donne shares an inevitable mortality. But another emendation follows, wherein

76 Devotions, 389-90.
77 Devotions, 389-90.
Donne points to a less exclusive community than that of his neighborhood, less exclusive than the parish who share and experience the same bell as Donne and who are drawn to observe the same funerals. He continues Meditation XVI by contemplating how, “when these Bells tell me, that now one, and now another is buried, must not I acknowledge, that they haue the correction due to me, and paid the debt that I owe?” (Meditation XVI).  

Donne points to a larger, more inclusive community than his parish, in addressing, in terms of a shared mortality, a human community for whom death will inevitably come and for whom, because of this common ground, any one death is essentially substitutable by any other. The bells are prophetic insofar as they always ring out the inevitability of death, even when their sound does not correspond with the occasion of a funeral. It is inconsequential whom they ring for as their ringing draws our attention to mortality, to the fact that all men are called to death, regardless of their station.

Here, Donne’s reflections on the generic noun “Man” recall earlier iterations of the term in the Devotions. As the bells inspire us to “thinke of our selues, that wee might very well haue beeene that Man; Why might not I haue beeene that Man, that is carried to his graue now?” (Meditation XVI), Donne moves from the specific dead man, for whom the bell rings, to Man in general; he thus looks back to his first Meditation, where he laments the “miserable condition of Man, which was not imprinted by God; who as hee is immortal himselfe, had put a coale, a beame of Immortalitie into vs, which we might haue blowen into a flame, but blew it out, by our first sinne” (Meditation I).  

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78 Devotions, 391.
79 Devotions, 3.
back to his earlier degradation of the Renaissance commonplace, Man “hath [honour] by
being a little world,” (Meditation I), where even “Man, who is the noblest part of the
Earth, melts so away, as if he were a statue, not of Earth, but of Snowe” (Meditation II). In Meditation II, Donne summons a poetic language, derived from Petrarch, in his
description of man. While this suggests the overwhelming force of God’s love, in light of
which man can only melt, Donne also uses a deliberate (and, by the third decade of the
seventeenth century, unfashionable) poetic language to overturn the celebration of man
across poetic genres. In a point of contention that extends across the Devotions, Donne
derides popular depictions of man as a microcosm, demonstrating the limits of such
meditations. Where a poet such as Joost van den Vondel seizes upon man’s exemplarity
and excellence, as “All Man’s nobility [heerlijkheyd], all Man’s magnificence [pracht]
and glory [roeme], is not grass and hay but a field of flowers,” Donne exposes the
arrogance of the claim, the extent to which this and like meditations fall apart under
duress. For Donne, the forms of duress are primary; they complicate meditations such

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80 Devotions, 5-6, 22-3.
81 See Rime sparse, “Poem 30” in Francesco Petrarca, Petrarch’s Lyric Poems: The Rime
sparse and Other Lyrics, ed. and trans. Robert M. Durling (Cambridge, Massachusetts:
82 See Figure 2. The Dutch verse accompanying the emblem, with my translation,
follows:

Twee Weerelden ziet hier, d’een groot en d’ander kleen,
Die wonderlijk te zaem zich draghen over een.
[Here are two worlds, one large and the other small, strange insofar as they are the
same, yet one orders the other]
I Pet. 1.
Al s’Menschen heerlijkheyd, al s’Menschen pracht en roeme,
Is niet als gras en hoey, oft al seen vledsche bloeme.
as Vondel’s as sin, pride, affliction, mortality, and, of course, illness, reduce the figure “Man” to something less than a world. When he does revisit the commonplace, “Let [Man] be a world, and himself will be the land, and misery the sea” (Meditation VIII), the meditation takes shape as a proposition, as a tentative demonstrative tool made explicit by the word “Let.”

Donne signals the limits of the comparison, the degree to which “Let [Man] be a world” may indeed yield “new discoueries” but not the level of understanding such our salvation inevitably demands. For Donne, “Let [Man] be a world” only serves an instrumental purpose. Man, in this generic sense, is an object for meditation without honor or dignity. Donne is quick to complicate such tentative and instrumental terms; “Man, that is a world, is all the things in the world” (Expostulation XVI), but the bell “which rung yesterday, was to conuay him out of the world, in his vaunt, in his soule” (Expostulation XVI).

[All Man’s nobility [heerlijkhed], all Man’s magnificence [pracht] and glory [roeme], is not grass and hay but a field of flowers]

Joost van den Vondel, from “Den gulden winckel konstlievende Nederlanders, gestoffeert met veel treffelijke historische, philosophische, poetische morale ende schriftuerlijke leeringen” [The Golden Store for Art-loving Dutch, with many respectable historical, philosophical, poetic, moral and Scriptural teachings] (1613) in Minne- en zinnebeelden: Een bloemlezing uit de Nederlandse emblematiek, ed. Hans Luijten and Marijke Blankman (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 34-6. Vondel cites I Peter 1:24, “For all flesh is as grasse, and all the glory of man is as the flower of grasse” but does not reflect in any sustained way in the emblem on the second half of the verse: “The grasse withereth, and the flower falleth away, Bu the word of the Lord endureth for euer.” See I Peter 1:24-5 in The Geneva Bible (The Annotated New Testament, 1602 Edition), 118v.

83 Devotions, 175-6.
84 Devotions, 401-2.
With the ringing of the bell, the horizon changes significantly. Even the terms of representation buckle under duress. This confirms his earlier assertion, that man is, at best, a *representation* of God—where “A glasse is not the lesse brittle, because a *Kings*
face is represented in it, nor a King the lesse brittle, because God is represented in him” (Meditation VIII). Sections XVI, XVII, and XVIII of the Devotions test the limits of representation in suggesting another, actual determination of a body, the body of the congregation, the Body of Christ animated by the pulse of the bell.

Thus, by Meditation XVI, Donne has already rendered man inapt as a standard for measure. It is a relative term. As early as Expostulation II, Donne dismisses comparisons between men on the basis that “No man is so little, in respect of the greatest man, as the greatest in respect of God” (Meditation II)—a scale of office or estate which he briefly revives, in Meditation VIII, with reference to the King, but which he ultimately discards. Donne denies the concept “Man” any nobility, any privilege, any stability whatsoever; comparisons between men are merely relative, devoid of real significance. In Meditation XVI, he revisits his earlier statement, that “No man is so little, in respect of the greatest man, as the greatest in respect of God,” in the assertion that “I may lacke much of the good parts of the meanest, but I lacke nothing of the mortality of the weakest; They may haue acquired better abilities than I, but I was borne to as many infirmities as they” (Meditation XVI). Donne establishes in humanity, as in the bells, a more meager and degraded horizon of comparison: mortality.

Donne does not lament human mortality, nor is he only interested in instructing his neighbors on dying well; the Devotions are no mere ars moriendi but rather, in sections XVI, XVII, and XVIII, point to the collocation of the congregation with the

85 Devotions, 177.
86 Devotions, 393 [sic; actually, 27].
Body of Christ. This begins as Donne directs his attention to the bell, an act which compels him to meditate upon the lawfulness of such “helps for religious duties” (Expostulation XVI) as bells: “My God, my God, I doe not expostulate with thee, but with them, who dare doe that: Who dare expostulate with thee, when in the voice of thy Church, thou giuest allowance, to this Ceremony of Bells at funeralls” (Expostulation XVI). In an exegetical turn that recalls Calvin’s demonstration of the continuity between Old and New Testaments, across Hebrew and Christian practices and covenants, Donne cites the sanctioned practice “of thy Militant Church, amongst the Iewes,” whereby God “didst appoint the calling of the assembly in, to bee by Trumpet, and when they were in, then thou gauest them the sound of the Bells, in the garment of thy Priest” (Expostulation XVI). For Christians, the order is reversed—Christians enter the church to the sounds of funeral bells, and receive “further edification, or consummation, by the sound of Trumpets, at the Resurrection” (Expostulation XVI)—but bells are nevertheless given by God to gather together a congregation. Donne thus introduces a scriptural standard for legality here and, in doing so, emphasizes the congregation: “Lord, let not vs breake the Communion of Saints, in that which was intended for the aduancement of it; let not that pull vs asunder from one another, which was intended for the assembling of vs” (Expostulation XVI). This emphasis on communion follows directly from Donne’s 1619 sermon preached at the Hague, where he affirmed, before a Dutch Reformed

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87 *Devotions*, 403, 397.
89 *Devotions*, 399-400.
90 *Devotions*, 400-1.
congregation subject to the Canons of the Synod of Dort, that “The very name of Church implies company; It is Concio, Congregatio, Coetus; It is a Congregation, a Meeting, an assembly.”\textsuperscript{91} Moreover, Donne affirms in Expostulation XVI that the ringing of the bells on three consecutive occasions does more than mark a man’s death: “That which rung yesterday, was to convey him out of the world, in his vaunt, in his soule: that which rung today, was to bring him in his Reare, in his body, to the Church: And this continuing of ringing after his entring, is to bring him to mee in the application” (Expostulation XVI).\textsuperscript{92} The use of “vaunt” and “Reare” liken the man in soul and body to an advancing army, the soul departing first for battle as the front portion of the army (the vaunt) followed by the body, the rear, which follows the vaunt to the church; but insofar as Donne points to the “continuing of ringing after his entring,” however, he draws our attention again to the larger body, to the congregation.

If man is revealed as a limited concept in section XVI, it is Donne’s understanding of the congregation that expands to take its place. Donne expresses moderate sorrow that, from his sickbed, he “could heare the Psalme,” could “ioine with the Congregation in it,” but could not listen to the sermon; nevertheless, I name this admission “moderate” because the “latter bells are a repetition Sermon,” no less effective “remembrances of [his] Mortalitie,” which immediately take the place of the sermon (Expostualtion XVI).\textsuperscript{93} This explicitly recalls his earlier complaint, in Expostulation III, to God: “Thou art in the congregation, & I in a solitude…And, Lord, the zeal of thy

\textsuperscript{91} The Sermons of John Donne, II: 279.
\textsuperscript{92} Devotions, 402.
\textsuperscript{93} Devotions, 402.
house, eats me up, as fast as my fever; it is not a Recusancie, for I would come, but it is an Excommunication, I must not” (Expostulation III). In Expostulation III, Donne thus bemoans his “Excommunication,” his illness preventing him from joining the congregation, on the grounds that God resides in the congregation, and Donne “in a solitude.” Yet Donne’s understanding of “congregation” has clearly changed between sections III and XVI, over the course of a series of pointed meditations that bring him, in Meditation XVI, to contemplate human mortality. What appeared in Expostulation III as an “Excommunication” is simply an inconvenience in Expostulation XVI, stripped entirely of the language of punishment. Between these loci, Donne certainly works to relate the sad conditions of his solitude, exhorting God, in a sense, to “take me by the head, as thou didst Abacuc [Habbakuk], and carrie mee so; By a Chariot, as thou didst Elijah [Elijah], & carrie me so” (Expostulation III). But this tentative exhortation is immediately qualified with an important reflection on Christ, on Christ’s descensus, where God “carriest [Donne] thine own priuate way, the way by which thou carryedst thy Sonne, who first lay vpon the earth, & praid, and then had his Exaltation, as himselfe calls his Crucifying, and first descended into hell, and then had his Ascension” (Expostulation III). Between sections III and XVI, then, Donne figures his affliction in terms of Christ’s Passion, Christ’s humiliation and execution. The Devotions, subsequently, take shape as Donne uses scripture loci related to Christ’s affliction to help

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94 Devotions, 402-3, 51-3.
95 Devotions, 54-5.
96 Devotions, 54-5.
him frame his ailment across a series of meditations, a method which Janel Mueller aptly describes as

poles apart from the Primer and English Protestant prayer books of its type, even when they deal with identical texts. In the Primer, Scripture serves to confer sacred authority on the aid offered the soul: a passage may stand by itself as a commentary on some spiritual need or problem specified in its heading; or, again, verses may increment the supplicatory flow of the prayers, giving them a gravity and resonance like that of the public liturgy. In Donne’s Devotions, on the other hand, Biblical quotations hardly ever constitute a recourse to authority. Instead of lending a note of confirmation or resolution to his own words, the Word of God is interposed questioningly (Donne might have said ‘problematically’) as he labors to understand his crisis of body and soul.97

In section XVI, Donne turns to the body of Christ in a larger sense, the body of the church or congregation of which Christ is the head. Nevertheless, Donne’s reflections on the body of Christ leading up to this turn center on his descent into hell, on his suffering and despair; Mueller’s description of the method of the Devotions is apt insofar as it is in an explicitly Christological language that Donne structures his meditations and, subsequently, his own illness. Christ’s humiliation in particular gives Donne a different perspective on the conditions of his ailment, especially after he recognizes, in Expostulation V, “that the Son of righteousness, thy Son, refused not, nay affected solitariness, lonenesse, many, many times; but at all times he was able to command more than twelue legions of Angels to his servuice” (Expostulation V).98 By Prayer XVI, Donne extends this understanding of Christ’s “lonenesse” to his exemplarity,

98 Devotions, 103-4.
emphasizing the degree to which Christ “affected” solitude in his prayers at Gethsemane and upon the cross, loci that Calvin emphasizes in his treatment of the *descensus* in the *Institutio* and the *Harmoniam Evangelicum* and which give structure to the *Devotions* themselves. The verb “affected” is crucial here. Christ “affected” “loneliness” in the sense that he, as God, had the power to reject a solitary path to atonement; where Christ, in his exemplary obedience, fulfilled the terms of salvation for mankind through his solitary suffering, death and despair—even if at “all times he was able to command more than twelve legions of Angels to his service”—he nonetheless “affected” solitude, where “affected” approaches a sort of pretense or choice: “To assume a false appearance, to put on a pretence of, to counterfeit or pretend.”

But Donne does not suggest that Christ counterfeits or pretends to atone for the sins of humanity. His is clearly an actual sacrifice and, after Calvin’s treatment of the *descensus*, Donne affirms the purchase of Christ’s suffering and humiliation. “Affected,” then, points to his actual solitariness, his sinlessness, which duly sets Christ apart from all of humanity. In this way, Christ is truly alone among men, and “affected” points to his Passion and atonement for sin insofar as the term recalls Christ’s exemplary human affections, his *affectus*, which (again, after Calvin) structure his relationship with God the Father, as faith. Donne’s term “affected” works to express the self-emptying of God’s power, what might seem as a pretence or false appearance of humility but which actually is weakness. The term also points to Christ’s suffering, in the sense that he “affected”—i.e. suffered and underwent—loneliness, as the man without sin and in his experience of despair. Thus,


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where in an intimate address to God, Donne asks that “if this bee the houre of my transmigration, I may die the death of a sinner, drowned in the bloud of thy Sonne” (Prayer XVI), he recalls the affective relationship between Christ and God the Father, Christ’s faith, in a way that gives shape to the Devotions. Here, at the outset of Meditation XVII, Donne revisits this earlier claim, that his sickness keeps him from the congregation, by revising the terms of membership in the congregation entirely. Donne also recognizes how he is able to revise the terms of membership in the congregation: through Christ’s sacrifice, through his exemplary affective comportment to God, his faith.

This is a Christological move where, strictly speaking, Donne seems to skip a step between death in Christ that is at once “a resurrection to a new life” (Prayer XVI) and the life in Christ whereby he is “engrafted into that body, whereof I am a member” (Meditation XVII). Granted, he moves seamlessly from salvation to membership in the congregation because they are inextricable; Donne demonstrates this inextricability throughout the entirety of the Devotions, and across his larger body of work. It is not as if Donne misunderstands the relationship. Nevertheless, it is instructive for us to focus our investigation of the Devotions, and the bell sequence in particular, on the move from Christ’s suffering body, his humiliation and sacrifice through which mankind are redeemed, to the body in which the faithful are grafted, to the body of Christ in the larger sense, where he sits and reigns at and as the head—i.e. the congregation. That step, absent in this sequence in the Devotions, is crystal clear in Calvin’s 1559 Institutio, 100

100 Devotions, 409.
101 Devotions, 409, 411-12.
where “To be Christians under the law of grace does not mean to wander unbridled outside of the law, but to be engrafted \textit{insitos} in Christ, by whose grace we are free of the curse of the law, and by whose Spirit we have the law engraved upon our hearts” (II.viii.57/B 421).\textsuperscript{102} Also, in an absolute affirmation of Christ’s true manhood, the Reformer states that “faith intervenes, to engraft \textit{inserit} us spiritually to the body of Christ” (II.xiii.2/B 478).\textsuperscript{103} Here in the \textit{Institutio} Calvin draws a distinction between Christ’s humanity, which all human beings hold in common, and his Body to which believers alone are grafted: “flesh alone does not make the bond of brotherhood…when we say that Christ was made man that he might make us children of God, this expression does not extend to all men” (II.xiii.2/B 477-8).\textsuperscript{104} Calvin draws a distinction between Christ’s humanity and his Body; he does not, however, present a doctrine of limited atonement. On the contrary, Calvin follows this distinction between Christ’s humanity and his Body, the Body to which the congregation are grafted, with a treatment of John 3:16 that works directly against the invocation of the same passage in the Canons of Dort.\textsuperscript{105} The gap that Donne introduces between Prayer XVI and Meditation XVII is

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\item \textsuperscript{102} “Sub lege gratiae esse Christianos, non est effraenate sine Lege vagary, sed Christo insitos esse, cuius ratia a Legis maledictione liberis sint, et cuius spiritu Legem habeant in cordibus inscriptam” (II.viii.57/ OS III 396).
\item \textsuperscript{103} “quia fides media interponitur, quae nos in Christi corpus spiritualiter inserit” (II.xiii.2/OS III 453).
\item \textsuperscript{104} “Proinde fraternam coniunctionem non facit sola caro…quemadmodum ubi dicimus Christum factum esse hominem ut nos faceret Dei filios, non extenditur haec loquutio ad quoslibet” (II.xiii.2/OS III 452-3).
\item \textsuperscript{105} Where the Evangelist states that “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him may not perish,” Calvin understands that “We see how God’s love holds first place, as the highest cause or origin; how faith in Christ follows this as the second and proximate cause” (II.xvii.2/B 529) [“Videmus ut priorem
neither a lacuna nor a mistake. Throughout the *Devotions*, Donne makes ample reference to Calvin’s treatment of Christ’s suffering as well as the exemplary human faith demonstrated by Christ. Nevertheless, this gap does warrant our present attention as it demands of the reader an explicit knowledge of Reformed Orthodox approaches to the Christology, after Calvin; the following section elaborates, at length, the Christological cues informing Donne’s Reformed Orthodox approach in the *Devotions* as well as the manner in which the work is structured, as a meditation after Christ’s own human prayers and meditations.

**Calvin’s Descensus**

Donne, in moving seamlessly between the death in Christ that is at once “a resurrection to a new life” (Prayer XVI) to the life in Christ whereby he is “engrafted into that body, whereof I am a member” (Meditation XVII), essentially moves from Book II to Book III of the 1559 *Institutio*, an approach which affords us valuable insight into the

locum teneat Dei dilectio, tanquam summa causa vel origo: sequatur fides in Christum, tanquam causa secunda et propior” (II.xvii.2/OS III 510)]. Calvin is determined to make the *ordo docendi* very clear here; God’s love and grace precedes faith in Christ, but *only* this precedes faith in Christ; again, quite different from the arrangement in William Perkins’s visual depiction of the *ordo docendi* in the supplementary table to his *Armilla Aurea* [A Golden Chaine](1590/1), where God’s love is reserved only for the elect and proceeds from predestination. This is made clear in Book II, under the knowledge of Christ the Redeemer and in an extended discussion of his merit as well as his abandonment of himself to humanity, for humanity. Predestination, election, and reprobation follow far behind, after focused treatments of faith and justification that emphasize, above all, Christ’s humanity, sacrifice, and the composition of his Body.
method of the *Devotions* as well as Donne’s discontent with the Canons of Dort. This section attempts to fill in the gaps between Christ’s Incarnation and the body of Christ into which the faithful are grafted, to identify the Scriptural and exegetical traditions and concepts informing Donne’s work in the *Devotions*. It also helps to illustrate how, precisely, Donne structures the *Devotions* in response to the predestination-centered theology of the Canons of Dort. Not only do the *Devotions* draw heavily from Calvin’s earlier treatment of Christology and salvation, they also determine faith and assurance in terms of Christ’s exemplary human patience, in the composition of his affections and passions towards faith. In a sense, all Reformed Orthodox treatments of Christ affirm this, even the Canons of Dort. The difference between Donne and the Dutch Orthodox Church after Dort is one of degree and emphasis, not kind. In a brief treatment of Christ’s death and the redemption of men, the Canons of the Synod of Dort do point to his suffering and despair, where “his death was joined with a feeling of God’s wrath and of the curse, which we had deserved by our sins.” Hence the Canons attend, in part, to one of the most contentious points of Reformed Orthodox exegesis, the extent to which Christ’s torture and death—indeed, his very descent into hell, as given in the Apostolic Creed—was depicted in stark, realistic terms. According to Calvin and his Reformed successors, including Donne, Christ experienced hell insofar as he felt real despair and pain, the cost of effective atonement for human sin. Nevertheless, the Canons of Dort articulate a doctrine of limited atonement; subsequent articles and

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106 *Devotions*, 409, 411-12.
107 Milton, 305.
refutations of Arminian heresies do not deal with Christ’s humanity in any depth, nor do they proceed from an understanding of the Incarnation. Instead, we encounter an overwhelming emphasis on predestination.

In the *Devotions*, however, Donne takes a very different approach, emphasizing, in great detail, the continuity between his own human body and Christ’s. Donne refers explicitly to the Incarnation, thanking God for having “clothed me with thy selfe” by taking human form, “by stripping me of my selfe, and by dulling my bodily senses, to the meats, and eases of this world”; for Donne, the Incarnation is an event that “hast whet, and sharpned my spirituall senses, to the apprehension of thee [God]” (Prayer II). Yet even as the Incarnation takes shape in the *Devotions* as an event with present meaning, one that continues to inform the terms of his conversion by “whetting” and “sharpening” his attention to Christ throughout his affliction, Donne recognizes the historical circumstances of Christ’s life and death as inextricable from the effects of his atonement. These circumstances include Christ’s despair and humiliation, his descent, in memory of which Donne addresses his prayers to God: “Doe this, O Lord, for his sake, who was not the lesse the King of Heaven, for thy suffering him to be crowned with thornes, in this world” (Prayer II). Throughout the *Devotions*, Donne reflects often on the human circumstances, the common flesh and blood, shared between himself and the incarnate Christ. In his sickness, Donne draws inspiration from Christ’s human suffering, from the terms of his atonement for sin; Donne addresses the Father through the exemplary

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108 *Devotions*, 36.
109 *Devotions*, 39-40.
situation of the Son, confirming against despair that “thou carriest me thine own priuate way, the way by which thou carriedst thy Sonne, who first lay vpon the earth, & praid, and then had his Exaltation, as himselfe calls his Crucifying, and first descended into hell, and then had his Ascension” (Expostulation III). The circumstances of the redemption of mankind, the painful details of Christ’s suffering and death, give shape to Donne’s suffering in the Devotions. His is also a descent: “when we fel from thee here, in this world, thou tookst into thy care the reparation of this place…by descending down to assume our nature, in thy Son. So that though our last act be an ascending to glory, (we shall ascend to the place of Angels) yet our first act is to goe the way of thy Sonn, descending, and the way of thy blessed Spirit too, who descended in the Doue” (Expostulation XII). Moreover, Christ’s patient and obedient affliction, the terms of which Donne cannot hope to match, are the source of his assurance, of his unwavering hope and absolute conviction of his election. Christ’s sacrifice, for Donne, is efficacious for him and for all of humanity, for the Body of Christ in an encompassing sense that reconfigures the terms of sickness and health and which challenges the Canons of Dort on the article of limited atonement. Christ’s sacrifice confirms his election: “O Lord, pardon me, me, all those sinnes which thy Sonne Christ Iesus suffered for, who suffered for all the sinnes of all the world; for there is no sinne amongst all those which had not been my sinne, if thou hadst not bee my God, and antidated me a pardon in thy preuenting grace…let thy brazen Serpent, (the contemplation of thy Sonne crucified for me) be

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110 Devotions, 54-5.
111 Devotions, 304-5.
euermore present to me, for my recovery against the sting of the first Serpent” (Prayer X).

Throughout the Devotions, Donne never despairs, nor does he entertain the possibility that he may be reprobate and damned to hell from eternity. Despair is a pestilent passion, one that Christ endured on behalf mankind but which only Christ, in the exemplary order of his affections, was able to overcome. The Devotions is a testament to faith and assurance, where “Thy Sonne himselfe had a sadness in his Soule to death, and hee had a reluctance, a deprecation of death, in the approaches thereof; but hee had his Cordiall too, Yet not my will, but thine bee done. And as thou hast not deliuered vs, thine adopted sonnes, from these infectious tentations, so neither hast thou deliuered vs ouer to them, nor withheld thy Cordials from vs” (Prayer XI). In this sense, Donne, proceeding from faith and Christology to an absolute conviction of God’s benevolence, is assured of his salvation—not by his own means, but by Christ’s sacrifice. His approach to salvation challenges the organization and presentation of articles at Dort by locating Christ—and, in particular, the Incarnation—rather than predestination as the ordinal concept through which to understand Reformed Orthodoxy and the wager of salvation. Donne is ashamed of his sins, and of his all-too-human heart, but revels in the terms of his salvation in Christ: “My heart hath strucke mee when I come to number my sinnes; but that blowe is not to death, because those sinnes are not to death, but my heart liues in

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112 Devotions, 249-51.
113 Devotions, 279-80.
thee” (Expostulation XI).\(^{114}\) On the contrary, Donne consistently points to the continuity between Christ’s body and his own, a likeness which informs the Christological vision of the Devotions as well as Donne’s unwavering assurance of salvation. For Donne, in the depths of his illness,

Euen my spots belong to thy Sonnes body, and are part of that, which he came downe to this earth, to fetch, and challenge, and assume to himselfe. When I open my spots, I doe but present him with that which is His, and till I do so, I detaine, & withhold his right. When therfore thou seest them vpon mee, as His, and seest them by this way of Confession, they shall not appear to me, as the pinches of death, to decline my feare to Hell; for thou hast not left thy holy one in Hell, thy Sonne is not there) but these spots vpon my Breast, and vpon my Soule, shal appeare to mee as the Constellations of the Firmament, to direct my Contemplation to that place, where thy Son is, thy right hand (Expostulation XIII).\(^{115}\)

Foremost, the preceding passage makes no attempt to address the likeness between Donne and Christ in terms of representation. His spots are actually and effectively “part of that [body], which he came downe to this earth” to assume in the Incarnation. Donne, in presenting his body as the body of Christ, as part of the body of Christ, beseeches God the Father to recognize his illness (physical and spiritual, the effect of excessive sin) as redeemed by Christ’s death and descent. This moment in Expostulation XIII certainly looks forward to his contemplation of the ringing of the bell and to the composition of the congregation as the Body of Christ. Yet here, Donne dwells on Christ’s suffering to emphasize the price of atonement, the extent to which

\(^{114}\) Devotions, 275.
\(^{115}\) Devotions, 326-7.
Christ assumed mortal form, “came downe to this earth, to fetch, and challenge, and assume to himselfe” a human body, to atone for sin as the man without sin. Donne recalls Hebrews 4:15, where Paul affirms that “we haue not an hye Priest, which can not be touched with the feling of our infirmities, but was in all things tempted in like sort, yet without sin.”

Through Christ the imperfection of Donne’s body—his spots, the marks of his illness—occasion the contemplation of Christ’s descent and subsequent ascent, of the terms of his despair and his deliverance of men unto salvation. In a remarkable meditation on the Trinity which duly incorporates attention to Christ’s humanity, the spots upon Donne’s body become “Constellations of the Firmament,” redirecting his contemplation from his affliction to his salvation in Christ, in heaven, by the right hand of the Father. Here Donne confesses his sin, his sinful human nature expressed in the marks of his illness, in an attempt to realize his assurance in language. Donne refuses to “decline [his] feare to Hell,” to despair, “for thou hast not left thy holy one in Hell, thy Sonne is not there”; Christ’s suffering is efficacious for the redemption of all mankind, his despair both exemplary and overcome by his sacrifice, and Donne’s due faith takes shape through contemplation of Christ (rather than predestination). This is not a doctrine of limited atonement.

While Donne might have drawn from any number of Christological resources, from any number of exegetical traditions, his treatment of Christ’s descent into hell suggests a sustained engagement with Calvin’s writing on Christ and atonement.

Drawing from Calvin himself to argue against the Canons of Dort is a particularly intelligent strategy, a way of reorienting Reformed Orthodoxy towards Christ according to the work of its most influential and thorough proponent. In Book II, Chapters xii through xvii of the 1559 *Institutio* Calvin offers a particularly thorough treatment of Christ’s nature—of his incarnation, office of mediator (*Mediatoris officium*), and function of redemption (*redemptoris partes*). This material immediately precedes Calvin’s articulation of faith in III.ii (the subject of the previous chapter), emphasizing the degree to which the knowledge of God’s benevolence, so integral to Calvin’s definition of faith, is affirmed beyond doubt in his treatment of Christ’s incarnation and the redemption of mankind. Here, at the end of Book II: “On the Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ, which was revealed first to the Fathers under the Law, and then to us in the Gospel” [*De Cognitione Dei Redemptoris in Christo, quae Patribus sub Lege primum, deinde et nobis in Evangelio patefacta est*] (OS III 228), Calvin emphasizes Christ’s power to move men to faith, particularly where the sinner “will surely experience *afficietur* and feel *sentiet* something of what he owes to God’s mercy” (II.xvi.2/OS III 483). In II.xvi, Calvin renders faith in terms of *affectus*, as man *afficietur* [will be affected by] God’s mercy [*misericordiae Dei*]; *afficietur* is a passive future form of the verb *afficere*. In treating God’s loving act in Christ, his mercy enacted in the incarnation and crucifixion, Calvin asks: “Will the man not then even be more moved [*permovebitur*]...”

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117 “afficietur quidem et sentiet aliqua ex parte quantum debeat misericordiae Dei” (II.xvi.2/OS III 483).
by all these things which so vividly portray the greatness of the calamity from which he has been rescued?” (II.xvi.2/B 505).118

Calvin’s Christology lies at the center of the *Institutio* where it immediately precedes faith in the *ordo docendi*, introducing the reader to the language of *affectus* so integral to faith and assurance in the 1559 text (as illustrated in Chapter 1). In many ways, one might mark Calvin’s Christology in Book II as a meditation on the Latin verb *descendere*, a term which appears across Chapters xii through xvii and which reveals, in its many valences, the scope of Calvin’s understanding of Christ’s incarnation. Insofar as it does this, it also looks forward to Donne’s treatment of the Incarnation in *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* as well as his reconfiguration of affect through meditations on both Christ’s and his own body. Calvin begins Chapter xii by affirming “it was of the greatest importance for us that he who was to be our Mediator be both true God and true man” (II.xii.1/B 464).119 This is a crucial point, emphasizing both God’s mercy and human limitation, where “The situation would surely have been hopeless had the very majesty of God not descended [*descenderet*] to us, since it was not in our power to ascend to him” (II.xvi.1/B 464).120 *Descenedere* describes the incarnation here, as God truly becomes man, without equivocation.121 Moreover, the term is appropriate insofar as

118 “his none eo magis permovebitur quo melius ad vivum repraesentatur quanta e calamitate ereptus fuerit?” (II.xvi.2/OS III 484).
119 “magnopere nostra interfuit, verum esse et Deum et hominem qui Mediator noster futurus esset” (II.xii.1/OS III 437).
120 “Deplorata certe res erat nisi maiestas ipsa Dei ad nos descendere: quando ascendere nostrum non erat” (II.xii.1/OS III 437).
121 See II.xii.5-6 and II.xiii.1-3 for Calvin’s answers to specific challenges and controversies concerning the doctrine of the incarnation. Most of this material is new to
it describes Christ’s prophetic genealogy, revealed in Psalm 132: “What is this promise, ‘From your loins will descend [descendet] one who will remain upon your throne’” (II.xiii.3/B 478). In this sense, descendere points both to Christ’s genealogy, from Abraham and David through to the Virgin Mary, as well as to his “marvelous” [Mirabiliter] incarnation as “the Son of God descended [descendit] from heaven in such a way that, without leaving heaven, he willed to be borne in the virgin’s womb, to go about the earth, and to hang upon the cross: yet he continuously filled the world even as he had done from the beginning!” (II.xiii.4/B 481). Calvin is consistent and clear in affirming Christ’s membership in the Trinity as well as his status as God. Nevertheless, his two substances, man and God, remain discreet and are united in the Incarnation: “What Christ said about himself—‘Before Abraham was, I am’—was far removed [alienum] from his humanity” (II.xiv.2/B 483), as God became man “not by confusion of substance, but

the 1559 Institutio and helps us understand the character of Calvin’s revisions and expansions as efforts to address his opponents as objections to his earlier writings emerged.

122 “Quid promissio ista? Ex lumbis tuis descendet qui manebit in solio tuo” (II.xiii.3/OS III 454).

123 “Mirabiliter enim e caelo descendit Filius Dei, ut caelem tamen non reliqueret: mirabiliter in utero Virginis gestari, in terries versari, et in cruce pendere voluit, ut semper mundum impleret, sicut ab initio” (II.xiii.4/OS III 458). This citation is crucial to what would become known as the extra-calvinisticum, where “Calvin argues that though Christ’s divinity is united to his humanity and is fully present therein, it nonetheless is not contained by that humanity in its finitude, but is ubiquitously present outside (extra) it.” See Stephen Edmonson, Calvin’s Christology (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 211.

124 “Quod de se ipse dicebat Christus, Antequam Abraham fieret, ego sum, longe ab humanitate alienum erat” (II.xiv.2/OS III 459).
by unity of person” (II.xiv.1/B 482). To emphasize the absolute distinction between these two natures, God and man, Calvin draws from Romans 9:5, where “Christ who descended [descendit] from the Jews according to the flesh is God blessed unto the ages” (II.xiv.6/B 490, slightly altered).

In II.xv Calvin foregrounds Christ’s prophetic office, kingship, and priesthood “in order that faith may find a firm basis in salvation in Christ, and thus rest in him” (II.xv.1/B 494). This tripartite division of offices, where Christ figures as prophet, priest and king, is significant insofar as “it supplies and demands that God’s covenant history with Israel be taken as the proper context for doing Christology.” Calvin draws from functions and offices given in the Old Testament and establishes in Christ a strong continuity between Old and New Testament offices (the topics which immediately precede his treatment of Christ’s humanity and divinity in II.xii are the similarities and differences between testaments in Scripture). In other words, Christ fulfills the same covenant that is established between God and Abraham, Moses, and David. II.xv thus foregrounds Christ’s divinity.

As he expands his treatment of Christ’s humanity into succeeding sections of the 
*Institutio*, Calvin incorporates elements from his massive 1555 exegetical project,

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125 “non confusione substantiae, sed unitate persone” (II.xiv.1/OS III 458). This is very clear in the *Institutio* and remains in the text from its earliest iterations in the 1530s across numerous revisions.
126 “Christum qui ex Iudaeis descendit secundum carnem, esse Deum benedictum in secula” (II.xiv.6/OS III 467).
127 “Ergo ut in Christo reperiat fides solidam salutis materiam, atque ita in ipso acquiescat” (II.xv.1/OS III 472).
128 Edmonson, *Calvin’s Christology*, 47.
Commenting on the Passion as depicted in the Gospels, Calvin recognizes the ways in which Christ’s treatment is humiliating to his office, where “For the Son of God to be arrested, bound, and put under the restraints of the flesh, was degrading [turpe].” He exhorts men to experience such passages with sorrow, to reflect “That God’s Son was brought down to that level is a fact no one will really consider without the utmost horror and displeasure with himself and detestation for his own sins...[even where here] also emerges great ground for confidence [fiduciae], that Christ plunged into the depths of disgrace precisely to win, by His abasement, an ascent for us into the heavenly glory.” Calvin renders this explicitly in medical terms, meditating on the death of Christ “So we may be disgusted and ashamed of ourselves, and also affected with a genuine grief, for which we should seek relief [medicinam] with ardour, at the same time as we tremble for fear.” In the Harmonia Evangelica, Calvin

130 Calvin, Harmony, III.163; “Filium Dei capi, vinciri et constringi secundum cernem turpe fuit” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:735).
131 Calvin, Harmony, III.183-4: “Huc vero redactum esse Dei filium nemo rite expendet sine summo horrore, suique displicentia, et destatione suorum scelerum. Sed hinc quoque non vulgaris emergit fiduciae materia, quia ideo in profundum ignominie demersus est Christus, ut nobis adscensum in coelestem gloriam sua deiectione acquireret” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:755).
132 Calvin, Harmony, III.189; “Ita fiet un non modo nos pigeat nostri ac pudeat, sed ut serio dolore vulnerati, quo decet ardore queramus medicinam, et simul confusi trepidemus” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:760).
emphasizes the degree to which human beings shared a body with God during Christ’s tenure on earth. Calvin is quite attentive to the particular details of Christ’s body, not only as Jesus sweated blood in the Gethsemenite passage in Luke but also in his torture and execution. A relatively minor detail such as the application of vinegar at the Crucifixion gives Calvin occasion to reflect on Christ’s body: “I think they are wrong who count vinegar as being among the remaining torments cruelly inflicted on God’s Son. The more probable conjecture is to think that this kind of potion was suited for making the blood flow out, and so was usually given to the criminals that their death might be hastened.” Calvin shifts attention here, however subtly, from Christ’s office to the limits of his human body, where he “did not refuse the wine or vinegar because He was put off by its bitterness, but to show that he was quietly advancing towards death as His Father had lain down, and was not rushing headlong in an impatience of pain.” Where Christ “cried with a loud voice, saying Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” [clamavit Iesus voce magna, dicens: Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? hoc est, Deum meus, cur deseruisti me?], Calvin claims that it is an

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133 Calvin, *Harmony*, III.194; “Porro falluntur meo iudicio, qui inter reliqua tormenta filio Dei crudeler inflicta acetum numerant. Magis probabilis est eorum conjectura, qui putant hoc potionis genus egerendo sanguini aptum fuisse, et ideo maleficis dari solitum, quo mors ipsorum esset celerior” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:765).

134 Calvin, *Harmony*, III.194; “non tam amaritudine offenses vinum vel acetum respuit quam ut ostenderet, se placide secundum patris mandatum ad motem progradi, non autem impatentia doloris praecipitem ruere” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:765).
entirely human act: “There appeared to be more than human vigour in Christ’s cry, but it is certain that intensity of grief forced it from Him.”\textsuperscript{135}

In \textit{Institutio} II.xvi Calvin continues to address Christ’s humanity, in his general capacity as redeemer and, specifically, in his historical fulfillment of this function: namely, in his suffering and death to atone for the sins of mankind. It is thus in II.xvi that we first encounter the historical Jesus, through the meditation on Saint Bernard’s “admonition” [\textit{admonitio}]:

“The name of Jesus is not only light but also food; it is also oil, without which all food of the soul is dry; it is salt, without whose seasoning whatever is set before us is insipid; finally, it is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, rejoicing in the heart, and at the same time medicine”\ldots\ [H]ere we must earnestly ponder how he accomplishes salvation for us. This we must do not only to be persuaded [\textit{persuasi}] that he is its author, but to gain a sufficient and stable support for our faith… No one can descend into himself [\textit{in seipsum descendere}] and seriously consider what he is feeling without feeling God’s wrath and hostility towards him. Accordingly, he must anxiously seek ways and means to appease God—and this demands a satisfaction (II.xvi.1/B 503-4).\textsuperscript{136}

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\textsuperscript{135} Calvin, \textit{Harmony}, III.207; “Quanquam apparuit plus quam humanus vigor in Christi clamore, certum tame nest, vehementia doloris illi fuisse expressum” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:779).
\textsuperscript{136} “non modo lucem sed cibum quoque esse nomen Iesu: oleum etiam esse, sine quo aridus est omnis animae cibus: salem esse, sine cuius conditura insipidum est quicuid proponitur: denique esse mel in ore, in aure melos, in corde iubilum, et simul medicinam…. Sed hic diligenter expendere convenit quomodo nobis ab ipso parta sit salus: ut non modo ipsum eius authorem persuasi simus, sed quae ad stabilem fidei nostrae fulturnam sufficient amplexi…. Quum enim nemo posit in seipsum descendere ac serio reputare quails sit, quin Deum sibi iratum infestumque sentiens, necesse habeat eius placandi modum ac rationem anxie expetere, quod satisfactionem exigit… (II.xvi.1/OS III 482-3).
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As noted earlier, the language here looks proleptically to Calvin’s treatment of faith in III.ii, particularly where attention to Christ and his role as redeemer enables man to “be persuaded” \([\text{persuasi}]\) of Christ’s mercy which, in turn, provides “a sufficient and stable support for our faith” \([\text{stabilem fidei nostrae fulturam sufficient amplexi}]\). Calvin’s use of \textit{amplexi} in particular—from \textit{amplector}, to comprehend, to understand, to embrace in heart, to love, favor, or cherish—points to an affective understanding more enduring than Battles’ s translation, “gain.” This meditation on Christ, taken from Bernard’s \textit{Sermons on the Song of Songs}, places II.xvi in direct relation to III.ii.25 where Calvin cites Bernard again with reference to faith.

But these meditations also sets the stage for the remaining sections of \textit{Institutio} II.xvi, as Calvin investigates Christ’s obedience, execution, and redemption as depicted in the Apostolic Creed. Calvin accepts the Creed, affirming that “we have in it a summary of our faith, full and complete in all details; and containing nothing in it except what has been derived from the pure Word of God” (II.xvi.8/B 513). The Creed reflects Scripture insofar as it gives a summary of Christ’s condemnation under Pontius Pilate, his crucifixion, death, burial, descent into hell, resurrection, and ascension. As Calvin glosses each clause to illustrate beyond doubt that “We see in it that our whole salvation and all its parts are comprehended in Christ” and that “We should therefore take care not to derive the least portion of it from anywhere else” (II.xvi.19/B 527), it is Christ’s descent into hell \((\text{decensus ad infernos})\) which Calvin attends to in most detail in

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\[137 \text{“Potius hoc in symbolo animadvertendum ut plena et numeris omnibus absoluta fidei summa nobis constet, in quam nihil ingeratur nisi ex purissimo Dei verbo petitum”} \]

(II.xvi.8/OS III 492).
Beginning in II.xvi.8, he claims that the doctrine of the *decensus ad infernos* is “a matter of no small moment in bringing about redemption” as well as a “useful and not-to-be-despised mystery of a most important matter” (II.xiv.8/B 512). Moreover, “if it is left out, much of the benefit of Christ’s death will be lost” (II.xiv.8/B 513).

Calvin argues for the importance of the *descensus ad infernos* against exegetes who understand it as repetitive, as merely another way of describing Christ’s burial. But the description of the *decensus ad infernos* given in II.xvi marks a break with the majority of readings of the Creed, Catholic and Protestant, insofar as Calvin roundly rejects the idea that Christ “descended to the souls of the patriarchs who had died under the law, to announce redemption as accomplished and to free them from the prison where they were confined,” to “Limbo” [*limbi*](II.xvi.9/B 514).

This narrative of Christ’s descent is for Calvin merely a story [*fabula*]: “although it is repeated by great authors and even today is earnestly defended as true by many persons, still is nothing but a story. It is childish to enclose the souls of the dead in a prison. What need, then, for Christ’s soul to go down there and release them? (II.xvi.9/B 514).

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138 “Quando autem totam salutis nostrae summam ac singulas etiam partes videmus in Christo comprehensas, cavendum ne vel minimam portionculam alio derivemus” (II.xvi.19/ OS III 507-8).
139 “Nec vero descensum ad infernos omittere convenit, in quo ad redemptionis effectum non parum est momenti… utpote quae rei maximae utile ac minime spernendum mysterium continet” (II.xvi.8/OS III 492).
140 “ut ea praeterita multum ex mortis Christi fructu depereat” (II.xvi.8/OS III 492).
141 “Christus descenderit as animas Patrum qui sub Lege mortui errant, ut nuntium peractae redemptionis perferret, ac erueret eas ex carcere, ubi inclusae tenebantur”
142 “sed hec fibula tametsi magnos authores habet, et hodie quoque a multis serio pro veritate defenditur, nihil tamen quam fibula est. Nam conclusere in carcere mortuorum
Given Calvin’s attention to the *descensus*, the shift in the language of the Canons of Dort from Christological terms to a predestination-centered theology struck Donne as surprising. Donne had come to understand Calvin’s Christology, oriented around Christ’s humanity and true atonement, as central to Reformed Orthodoxy, as crucial to the *Institutio* as well as to Calvin’s most vehement detractors. The Jesuit Controversialist Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), vocal opponent of both Calvin and King James VI and I, located Calvin’s treatment of the *descensus* among his foremost errors—indeed, among the most offensive heresies against the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. In the Preface of his sprawling and exhaustive heresiology, *De Controversiis Christianae Adversus Hujus Temporis Haereticos*, Bellarmine rages against the depiction of Christ’s descent,

> quid de Joanne Calvino, qui in lib. instit. 2. cap. 16. tam serio, tam ex proposito docet, Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum, quod certe piae aures audire recusant, cruciatus gehennae cum damnatis ac reprobis spiritibus aliquando pertulisse? unde etiam exstiterunt postea qui dicerent, Christum in cruce desperasse, atque a deo ad inferos esse damnatum. Quam taetra putas, caligine tenebatur animus ille, qui tantam impietatem cogitare potuit?¹⁴³

₁⁴³ Robert Bellarmine, Praefatio, *De Controversiis Christianae Fidei Adversus Hujus Temporis Haereticos. Roberti Cardinalis Bellarmini Opera Omnia*, Book I, ed. Josephum Giuliano (Neopoli, 1856), 19. My translation follows: “that of John Calvin, who in II.xvi of the *Institutio* [1559 Edition], in all seriousness, teaches what honest ears are certain to refuse to hear, that our Lord Jesus Christ once suffered the torment of hell with the damned and reprobate spirits. From whence others came to claim afterwards, that Christ despaird on the cross, and was condemned by God [a deo] to hell. What foul thoughts, held fast in obscurity by him, who is able to think so impiously?” I thank Paul Stapleton.
Bellarmine continues at length in Liber Quartus, “De Christi Anima,” asserting, against Calvin, that “Omnes patres, qui decensum Christi ad inferos describunt, describunt ut decensum victoris et triumphatoris, non ut rei, nec ullo modo indicat Christum aliquid passum in inferno.” For Donne and his generation, Bellarmine was best known as the man who challenged the King directly over the Oath of Allegience, calling him “an apostate from the Catholic faith.”

Donne himself lambasted Bellarmine in his 1611 tract Conclave Ignati (published that same year in English as Ignatius His Conclave), locating him among Ignatius’s own cohort, a man of “sacrilegious Vow-breaking ambitions” who realized “a new Genius and courage in his new Cardinalship.” For Bellarmine, Calvin’s attention to Christ’s humanity, over his divinity, was abominable, a serious departure from Patristic source material. It is the “vere” [“truly”] of “Christum ad

from the Department of English and Comparative Literature at UNC Chapel Hill for his assistance with Bellarmine’s work.

144 Bellarmine, I.272. My translation follows: “All the Fathers, who described Christ’s descent into hell, have described it as the descent of a vanquisher and conqueror, not as another matter, nor in any manner does anyone [among the Fathers] proclaim that Christ suffered in hell.”

145 See Patterson, King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom, 94, 75-123. See also James Brodrick, Robert Bellarmine: Saint and Scholar (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1961).

146 John Donne, Ignatius His Conclave [in Latin and English], ed. T. S. Healy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 45-7. Incidentally, Donne also articulates the strength of a unified Reformed Orthodoxy, where the Reformed “have this advantage” over the Jesuits and the Parliament in Hell, led by a Satan under the influence of Ignatius: “that they agree within themselves, and are at unity with their neighbor Reformed Churches; whereas our men, which call themselves Catholic there, doe so much differ from the Romane Catholick, that they do not onely preferre Councils, but even the king, before the Pope.” See Ignatius His Conclave, 57.
inferos descendisse vere, ostenditur ex Scripturis,” a point which Bellarmine martials Augustine to confirm, which distinguishes the Roman approach from the Reformed; insofar as Christ truly and literally descends into hell, Bellarmine shifts the emphasis of the article from Christ’s human despair to his supernatural sojourn into hell, from the despair felt on the cross, necessary to atone for the sins of humanity, to the true and literal harrowing of hell through which the souls imprisoned in darkness are set free.147

For Calvin and Donne, however, the Roman Catholic treatment of the descensus ad infernos does not account for God’s humanity realized in Christ, the depth of his grace and mercy, or the terms of Christ’s atonement for human sins. While the description of his crucifixion and death depict his corporeal suffering, “If Christ had died only a bodily death, it would have been ineffectual” (II.xvi.10/B 515).148 The doctrine of the descensus elaborates on this suffering, describing the degree to which “it was expedient at the same time for him to undergo the severity of God’s vengeance, to appease his wrath and satisfy his just judgment. For this reason, he must also grapple hand to hand with the armies of hell and the dread of everlasting death” (II.xvi.10/B 515).149 Calvin uses this opportunity to explore the humanity of Christ’s satisfaction, particularly where he “was put in place of evildoers as surety and pledge—submitting himself even as the accused—to bear and

147 Bellarmine, I.278, 287. My translation follows: “Christ truly descended into hell, as is exhibited in Scripture.” Bellarmine points to Augustine’s Epistle CLXIV, to Evodius. 148 “Nihil actum erat si corporea tantum morte defunctus fuisse Christus” (II.xvi.10/OS III 495). See also Stephen Edmondson’s treatment of Christ’s atonement in Edmondson, Calvin’s Christology, 89-114. 149 “sed opera simul pretium erat ut divinae ultionis severitatem sentiret: quo et irae ipsius intercederet, et satisfaceret iusto iudicio. Unde etiam eum oportuit cum inferorum copiis aeternaeque mortis horrore, quasi consertis minibus, luctari” (II.xvi.10/OS III 495).
suffer all the punishments that they ought to have sustained…with this one exception: ‘He could not be held by the pangs of death’” (II.xvi.10/B 515-6).\footnote{Quibus significant, in locum sceleratorum sponsorem, vadem, adeoque instar rei submissum, qui dependeret ac persolveret omnes, quae ab illis expetendae errant, poenas: uno hoc duntaxat excepto, quod doloribus mortis non poterat detineri” (II.xvi.10/OS III 495).}

Christ’s \textit{decensus ad infernos}, then, describes the extent to which God incarnate felt human depravity and despair, suffering “in his soul the terrible torments of a condemned and forsaken man” (II.xvi.10/B 516).\footnote{In anima cruciatus damnati ac perditi hominis pertulerit” (II.xvi.10/OS III 495).} Faced with death and damnation, Christ experienced human pain in physical and psychological terms, particularly where “no more terrible abyss can be conceived than to feel yourself forsaken and estranged from God; and when you call upon him, not to be heard. It is as if God himself had plotted your ruin” (II.xvi.11/B 516).\footnote{Et certe nulla fingi potest magis formidabilis abyssus, quam sentire te a Deo derelictum et alienatum: et quam invocaveris non exaudiri: perinde acsi in tuam perniciem ipse conspirasset” (II.xvi.11/OS III 496).}

This is Christ’s experience, the experience of human despair that compels God incarnate to cry out “in deep anguish” [\textit{urgente angustia}] “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?,,” the evangelical invocation in Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34 of Psalm 22.

The invocation of Psalm 22 draws the reader immediately to consider faith, as it at once “seemeth to bee the complaint of a man in despaire,” but, “as he calleth him twice his God, & vttereth his groninges into his bosome, it is no dark confession of fayth.”\footnote{John Calvin, \textit{The Psalmes of Dauid and others, with M. John Calvins Commentaries}, trans. Arthur Golding (London: Thomas East and Henry Middleton, for Lucas Harison, and George Byshop, 1571), 78r. Reproduction of the original in the Folger Shakespeare Library.}
Psalm 22, a reflection on despair, is also a treatment of faith through *affectus*. In his commentary on Psalm 22, Calvin emphasizes its importance in pastoral work, as “the godly must needs be exercised with this inner conflict,” between faith and despair; even from the mouth of Christ, we encounter in the words of Psalm 22 a most mundane conflict which appears “as oft as God withdraweth the tokens of his fauor, that whithere soeuer they turn their eies, they may meet with nothing but darknesse of the night.” In addition to his commentaries on the Psalms, Calvin turns to Isaiah 53:3, as Christ “did not only offer His body as the price of our reconciliation with God, but also in His soul He bore our due pains: He was truly made the Man of sorrows, as Isaiah says.”

Christ’s statement, his cry to the Father, expresses real despair; neither “fiction or play-acting…prompts His complaint, that He is forsaken,” that he experiences real abandonment and terror when confronted with the possibility of damnation. The evangelists do not depict Christ’s descent as an actual journey into hell to retrieve the souls of the faithful. His cry from the cross, rather, is the moment in the Gospels where Calvin locates the depth of his despair, his descent into hell. Calvin annotates Christ’s despair with a confrontational interjection, followed by a fundamental statement on faith: “Does it seem strange that a voice of despair fell from Christ’s lips? The solution is easy.

Available through Early English Book Online.

154 Calvin, *The Psalms of Dauid*, 78r.


156 Calvin, *Harmony*, III.208; “Nec vero ficte vel theatrice conqueritur se a patre relictum” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:779).
Although the physical senses [*sensus carnis*] feared death, faith was firm set in his heart; for by it He saw God present, when He complained of His absence.”¹⁵⁷ In this sense, Calvin articulates a fundamental distinction between human faculties, crucial to faith, “between natural sense [*naturae sensum*] and the intelligence of faith [*fidei notitiam*]: so nothing prevents Christ, as far as ordinary sense dictated, taking thought of His estrangement from God, and at the same time, by faith, realizing that God was on His side.”¹⁵⁸

Donne seizes upon this locus in the Gospels and in the *Institutio* to explore the terms of Christ’s descent and its meaning for human faith. Never does he depict Christ’s descent as a physical journey into hell but rather, repeatedly, as suffering, desperation and degradation, where the “*Sonne* himselfe had a *sadnesse in his Soule to death*, and hee had a *reluctation, a deprecation* of death, in the approaches thereof” (Prayer XI).¹⁵⁹ Donne avoids the exact term “despair,” although the formulation “*deprecation of death*” refers directly to his unanswered prayer at Gethsemane, that the be spared humiliation and death, as well as his desperate cry from the cross, the echo of Psalm 22. For Donne, Christ’s invocation of Psalm 22 follows Calvin’s annotations on faith: “*hee had his Cordiall too, Yet not my will, but thine bee done.* And as thou hast not deliuered vs, thine

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¹⁵⁹ *Devotions*, 279-80.
adopter sonnes, from these infectious tentations, so neither hast thou deliuered vs ouer to
them, nor withheld thy Cordials from vs” (Prayer XI).\textsuperscript{160} In the Devotions, Donne
depicts Christ’s cry from the cross as a prayer, as a call for help, even in despair. Hence
Donne, after Calvin, understands Christ’s descent here as a demonstration of faith against
seemingly impossible circumstances, circumstances which speak to the extremity of his
own illness and to his precarious human being: “When thy blessed Sonne cryed out to
thee, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken mee, thou diddest reach out thy hand to
him; but not to deliuer his sad soule, but to receiue his holy soule; neither did hee longer
desire to hold it of thee, but to recommend it to thee. I see thine hand vpon mee now, O
Lord, and I aske not why it comes, what it intends…but a silent, and absolute obedience,
to thy will, euen before I know it, is my Cordiall” (Prayer XI).\textsuperscript{161} Donne, following
Christ, aspires to obedience in his affliction, an obedience which is expressed, seemingly
paradoxically, in Christ’s cry of despair, in an utterance which proceeds from suffering
and affliction but which nevertheless takes shape as a prayer, as an instance of faith.
Donne has faith in Christ and thus is spared the exemplary despair that Christ suffered.
Donne’s treatment of Psalm 22, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?,”
follows directly from Calvin’s exegeses of the locus.

Perhaps the best evidence for this reading, for Donne’s affirmation of Christ’s
despair and impossible faith under such circumstances, is the extent to which the quoted
lines from Psalm 22—i.e. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”—structure

\textsuperscript{160} Devotions, 279-80.
\textsuperscript{161} Devotions, 281-3.
the *Devotions*. Almost every Expostulation, throughout the work, includes the opening line “My God, my God,” a deliberate invocation of Christ’s despair which recalls both the circumstances of his suffering as well as the result: our redemption and salvation. Donne, writing under duress, in the throes of sickness, follows Christ in his faith and suffering. This is particularly the case in Expostulation XVIII, in his contemplation of the bell. He asks, “My *God, my God*, if *Expostulation* bee too bold a word, doe thou *mollifie* it with another; let it be wonder in my selfe; let it bee but *probleme* to others” (Expostulation XVIII)\(^1\); the opening line of Psalm 22 enables Donne to pose problems in a Christological cast, after Christ’s own demonstration of faith in the face of despair, in an utterance approaching faithlessness but nonetheless committed to God’s benevolence. For Donne, following Calvin, Christ’s experience of faith and despair is central to his office as mediator, to his discrete humanity united with his equally discrete divinity. Calvin roundly rejects approaches to Christ’s *descensus* that render his cry from the cross anything but genuine. Where “some would have it that [Christ] was expressing the opinion of others rather than his own feeling” (II.xvi.11/B 517),\(^1\) or where opponents locate in his treatment of Christ “a despair contrary to faith” (II.xvi.12/B 517),\(^1\) Calvin insists on the veracity of the Gospels in depicting Christ’s experience as his own, “for his words clearly were drawn forth from anguish deep within his heart” (II.xvi.11/B 517).\(^1\) Drawing from John 13:21, Calvin affirms that Christ was himself “troubled in spirit”

\(^{1}\) *Devotions*, 449.
\(^{1}\) “Quo denin nonnulli volunt, ex aliorum potius opinione quam ex suo sensu sic loquitum fuisset” (II.xvi.aa/OS III 496).
\(^{1}\) “desperationem…quae fidei contraria sit” (II.xvi.12/OS III 497).
\(^{1}\) “quum ex intimi animi angore deductam fuisset vocem constet” (II.xvi.11/OS 496).
insofar as God descended to humanity in Christ, he deliberately accepted the limitations and weaknesses of human nature. Moreover, Calvin specifies beyond doubt that Christ, although clearly a man without sin, accepted human “weakness pure and free of all vice and stain because he held himself within the bounds of obedience” (II.xvi.12/B 518)—obedience in the sense that true satisfaction requires a human sacrifice to fulfill the terms of salvation from sin and death. The Gospels clearly depict Christ’s human weaknesses as readily as they do his human faith in God, a faith that Calvin, anticipating his treatment of the concept in III.ii, describes in terms of affectus. Christ, although human, was “uncorrupted” by sin and thus “a moderation that restrained excess flourished in all his emotions” (II.xvi.12/B 518). This does not preclude his ability to “be like us in sorrow, fear, and dread” (II.xvi.12/B 518-9) but rather gives us a model of affective faith insofar as these affects [affectibus] are directed toward faith, as Christ’s decensus “arising from the feeling of pain and fear was not contrary to faith” (II.xvi.12/B 519) but rather exemplary of it. In order to atone for the sins of mankind, Christ had to experience the despair that mankind deserved; this is the ambit of his Incarnation. Nevertheless, the divine Christ, “feeling himself, as it were, forsaken by God, did not waver in the least from trust in his goodness. This is proved by that remarkable prayer to

\[turbatus est spiritu], “affected with sadness” [affectus moerore](II.xvi.12/OS III 497); insofar as God descended to humanity in Christ, he deliberately accepted the limitations and weaknesses of human nature. Moreover, Calvin specifies beyond doubt that Christ, although clearly a man without sin, accepted human “weakness pure and free of all vice and stain because he held himself within the bounds of obedience” (II.xvi.12/B 518)—obedience in the sense that true satisfaction requires a human sacrifice to fulfill the terms of salvation from sin and death. The Gospels clearly depict Christ’s human weaknesses as readily as they do his human faith in God, a faith that Calvin, anticipating his treatment of the concept in III.ii, describes in terms of affectus. Christ, although human, was “uncorrupted” by sin and thus “a moderation that restrained excess flourished in all his emotions” (II.xvi.12/B 518). This does not preclude his ability to “be like us in sorrow, fear, and dread” (II.xvi.12/B 518-9) but rather gives us a model of affective faith insofar as these affects [affectibus] are directed toward faith, as Christ’s decensus “arising from the feeling of pain and fear was not contrary to faith” (II.xvi.12/B 519) but rather exemplary of it. In order to atone for the sins of mankind, Christ had to experience the despair that mankind deserved; this is the ambit of his Incarnation. Nevertheless, the divine Christ, “feeling himself, as it were, forsaken by God, did not waver in the least from trust in his goodness. This is proved by that remarkable prayer to

166 “quod infirmitatmen in Christo omni vitio labequ puram et vacuam non agnos cunt: quia se intra obedientiae fines continu it” (II.xvi.12/OS III 498).
167 “At quum integer esset, in cunctis eius affectibus viguit moderation, quae excessum cohiberet” (II.xvi.12/OS III 498).
168 “Unde nobis in dolore, metu et formidine similes esse potuit” (II.xvi.13/OS III 498).
169 “ex doloris et metus sensu quae cum fide non pugnaret” (II.xvi.12/OS III 499).
God in which he cried out in acute agony: ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’” (II.xvi.13/B 519-20). Calvin ends his treatment of the descensus by explaining what seems to be a paradox. Christ’s faith is exemplary but it is ultimately human; the difference between his faith and ours is one of degree, not kind, as “in his perplexity there was no extravagant behavior such as is seen in us when we strive mightily to control ourselves” (II.xvi.12/B 520).

Donne follows this attention to behavior and emotion in the Devotions, repeatedly addressing the difference between Christ’s passions and our own in a way that points to an affective understanding of faith. Donne, recalling Calvin’s use of the Latin term “affectus” in the Institutio, renders the term in English as “affection”; human beings are limited in their affections and in their understanding of affections. This is evident in Scripture, where “God is presented to us under many human affections, as far as infirmities; God is called angry, and sorry, and weary, and heavy; but never a sick God: for then he might die like men, as our gods [kings] do” (Meditation VIII). Christ’s affections, insofar as they were human, are not necessarily otherwise; both Calvin and Donne after him are careful to render Christ’s ability to truly despair. The only difference between Christ and other human beings, albeit a major difference, is Christ’s power of moderation by virtue of the fact of his sinlessness. Thus, a statement such as

170 “quia se quasi derelictum a Deo sentiens, ne tantillum quidem deflexit a bonitatis eius fiducia. Quos docet celebris illa invocation, in qua prae doloris vehementia clamavit, Deus meus, Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me” (II.xvi.12/OS III 499).
171 “In qua tamen perplexitate nulla fuit intemperies, quails in nobis cernitur dum maxime nitimur ad nos domandas” (II.xvi.12/OS III 499).
172 Devotions, 178.
Donne’s “preserue this soule in the faculties thereof, as might shake the assurance which my selfe and others haue had, that because thou hast loued me, thou wouldst loue me to my end, and at my end” (Prayer V) speaks to Christ’s despair as well as to Donne’s more meager affliction. Christ, more temperate and apt to control distempers due to his sinlessness, nonetheless is able to fear such despair, to have circumstances or emergent occasions “shake the assurance” of God’s love from him. Christ’s body, like Donne’s, is unequivocally human, subject to the same infirmities and anxieties. Donne, after Christ himself, felt a fear that affected him physically and mentally, “As the ill affections of the spleene, complicate, and mingle themselues with euery infirmitie of the body, so doth feare insinuat itself in euery action or passion of the mind” (Meditation VI). Such a coincidence, between Christ’s fear and those fears that assail men from within and without, renders Christ’s despair, the subject of his descensus, and the corporeality of his body more immediate to Donne. It makes of Christ a more effective help to faith, a faith that (as for Calvin) is structured in terms of affectus, or affections. Donne, in a passage invoking his descensus, extends this understanding of faith to Christ himself:

Giue me tender and supple, and conformable affections, that as I ioy with them that ioy, and mourne with them that mourne, so I may feare with them that feare. And since thou hast vouchsafed to discover to me, in his feare whom thou hast admitted to be my assistance, in this sickness, that there is danger therein, let me not, O Lord, go about to overcome the sense of that fear, so far, as to pretermite the fitting, and preparing of my selfe, for the worst that may bee feared, the passage out of this life. Many of thy blessed Martyrs, haue passed out of this life, without any showe of feare; But thy most blessed Sonne him selfe did not so. The

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173 Devotions, 112-3.
174 Devotions, 116-7.
Martys [sic] were known to be but men, and therefore it pleased thee, to fill them with thy spirit, and thy power, in that they did more then Men; Thy Son was declared by thee, and by himselfe to be God; and it was requisite, that he should declare himselfe to be Man also, in the weaknesses of man. Let mee not therefore, O my God, bee ashamed of these feares, but let me feele them to determine, where his feare did, in a present submitting of all to thy will (Prayer VI).\textsuperscript{175}

Regarding the character of Christ’s suffering, Calvin notes, specifically, “the kind of emotion with which Christ was tried is worth notice. Matthew says He was affected by grief and sorrow (or trouble of mind), Luke that he was seized with anguish, Mark that He was dismayed.”\textsuperscript{176} Moreover, Christ prays earlier at Gethsemane, an act where “by the very gesture of falling to the ground He testifies to the real intensity of His prayer,” and where “Even bowing the knee as a symbol of honour and reverence is regularly practiced in prayer.”\textsuperscript{177} A Reformed sort of prayer, but prayer nonetheless, Christ’s was not “rehearsed…but the force and onset of grief wrung a cry from Him on the instant, which he at once went on to correct”; Christ, whose “emotions were not turbulent in the way that ours shake pure moderation from our minds,” nonetheless demonstrated his humanity where, “within the capacity of a sane and unspoiled human nature, He was struck with fright and seized with anguish, and so compelled to shift (as it were) between

\begin{footnotes}
\item[175]Devotions, 140-3.
\item[176]Calvin, Harmony, III.148; “Iam ipsa affectuum species, quibus tentatus fuit Christus, notanda est. Dicit Matthaeus tristitia et moerore (vel anxietate) fuisset affectum, Lucas angore constrictum: Marcus addidit expavisse” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:720).
\item[177]Calvin, Harmony, III.149; “Ipso etiam gestu, quum in terram procidit, seriam orandi vehementiam testatus est. Nam etsi genuflexio, tanquam honoris ac reverentiae symbolum, communiter precibus adhiberi solet” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:721).
\end{footnotes}
the violent waves of trial from one prayer to another.”

Hence the character of his prayer, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

Christ, without hope, “cast Himself on the essential power of God,” a power that Calvin glosses specifically as providence, where “By the word beaker or cup there is elsewhere signified God’s providence, which assigns to each a measure of the cross and affliction.”

But Calvin is careful here, naming the “cup” providence and not predestination in an articulation of faith—Christ’s faith, nonetheless—that trusts and affirms, above all things, God’s benevolence. Even in a prayer that appears “to differ from the will of God” \( a \ Dei \ voluntate \ discrepant \), we encounter in Christ’s call at Gethsemane the degree to which God “does not wish us to ask always with exactness and scruple what He has decreed, but allows us to beg from

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178 Calvin, *Harmony*, III.149; “Non fuit igitur haec meditata Christi oratorio, sed vis et impetus doloris subitam ei vocem extorsit, cui statim addita fuit correctio” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:722); and “non fuisse turbulentos Christi affectus, qui more nostro eius animo puram moderationem excuterent: sed quantum ferre potuit sanet et integra hominis natura, metu perculsus et anxietate constrictus fuit, ut necesse foret inter violentos tentationem fluctus alternis votes quasi vacillare” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:721).

179 Calvin, *Harmony*, III.146; from Luke 22:42, “Pater, si vis, transfer poculum hoc a me: verumtamen non mea voluntas, sed tua fiat” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:718). Calvin describes the prayer as such: Christ “prays to be spared death, then holds Himself in check, submits himself to the Father’s command, and corrects and revokes the wish that had suddenly escaped him” (Calvin, *Harmony*, 149-50); “Haec ratio est, cur mortem deprecatus mox sibi fraenum inicitat, patrisque imperio se subiiciens votum illud subito elapsum castiget ac revocet” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:721-2).

180 Calvin, *Harmony*, III.150; “in Dei virtutem se reiicit. Poculi vel calicis nomine alibi dictum est notari Dei providentiam, quae singulis crucis et afflictionum mensuram dispensat” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:722).
Him what our intelligence can grasp as desirable.” ¹⁸¹ In Christ there “exists a remarkable example of balance between the wills of God and of man; they differ from each other without conflict or contradiction…[particularly where Christ’s] human soul had different desires from the hidden purpose of God.” ¹⁸²

But Calvin is careful to emphasize that, though without sin, Christ nonetheless felt the effects of sin, of God’s righteous judgment, in order to atone for the sins of the world. Christ “endured death not only to move from earth to heaven, but rather to take on the curse that we had fallen under and relieve us of it.” ¹⁸³ In other words, “It was not simple horror of death, the passing away from the world, but the sight of the dread tribunal of God that came to Him, the Judge Himself armed with vengeance beyond understanding. Our sins, whose burden was laid on Him, weighed on Him with their vast mass. No wonder if death’s fearful abyss tormented Him grievously, with fear and anguish.” ¹⁸⁴ As Christ’s sinlessness is both exemplary and impossible, so is the measure of his fear and suffering. Calvin attends to Christ’s exemplarity by way of his possible

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¹⁸¹ Calvin, *Harmony*, III.151; “quia [Dei] non exacte semper vel scrupulose a nobis inquiri vult Deus, quid statuerit ipse, sed quod pro sensus nostri captu obtabile est, flagitari a se permittit” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:723).

¹⁸² Calvin, *Harmony*, III.151; “in Christo insigne exsistit symmetriae exemplar inter Dei et hominum voluntates, ut absque conflictu et repugnantia inter se different… Sequitur ergo humanae eius animae suos fuisse affectus ab arcano Dei consilio distinctos” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:723).

¹⁸³ Calvin, *Harmony*, III.148; “Et certe mortem subiit non tantum, ut e terra in coelum migraret, sed potius ut maledictionem, cui eramus obnoxii, in se suscipientis nos ab ea eximeret” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:720).

¹⁸⁴ Calvin, *Harmony*, III.148; “Non ergo mortem horruit simplisticiter, quatenus transitus est e mundo, sed quia formidabili Dei tribunal illi erat ante oculos, iudex ipse incomprehensibili vindicta armatus: peccata vero nostra, quorum onus illi erat impositum, sua ingenti mole eum premebant. Quare nihil mirum, so horribilis exitii abussus metu et anxietate duriter eum cruciavit” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:720).
When he saw the wrath of God before put before Him, as He set Himself before His tribunal, burdened with the sins of the whole world, He was bound to be terrified at the profound abyss of death… Ignorant men rise up at this point and clamour that the action is unworthy, for Christ to have feared to be swallowed up in death. I should like them to answer me, What kind of fear do they think it was that drew out from Christ drops of blood? Such deadly sweat could only have flowed from a dire and unusual horror. If anyone today were to sweat blood, and in such quantity that it fell to the ground in drops, it would be a portent beyond belief, and if this should come from a fear of death we would ascribe it to a feeble, womanly spirit. Those that therefore say that Christ did not pray the Father to snatch Him out of the gulf of death attribute a softness to him that would disgrace even the man in the street… When Christ was struck with the horror of the divine curse His fleshy sense was affected while His faith remained undamaged and unshaken… Besides, people who exempt Him from feeling temptations make Him Victor without a fight. And it is quite forbidden to suppose that He made a pretence, when He complained of mortal sadness in His soul. The Evangelists did not lie when they recorded that he was overcome with sorrow and great fear.\footnote{Calvin, \textit{Harmony}, III.152; “nempe quum iram Dei sibi propositam videret, quatenus ad eius tribunal totius mundi peccatis oneratus se sistebat, necesse illi fuit profundam mortis abyssum exhorrescere… Hic indocti hominess insurgunt, remque indignam esse clamitant, quod veritus sit Christus absorberi a morte. Ego autem ipsos respondere velim, quernam fuisse metum putent, qui guttas sanguineas Christo expressit: nunquam enim nisi a diro et insolito horrore fluxisset mortalis ille sudor. Si quis hodie sudando sanguinem emittat, et quidem tanta copia ut guttae in terram distillent, incredibile portentum erit: si cui hoc contingat mortis timore, pusillo et muliebri animo esse dicemus. Ego qui Christum negant precatum esse, ut eum pater a mortis gurgite eriperet, molitiem illi affingunt vel plebeio homine indignam… quum divinae maledictionis horrore perculsus est Christus, sic tactum fuisse carnis sensu, ut fides illaesa et incolumis maneret… Interim stulte imaginantur sine certamine victorem, qui tentationem sensu eum eximunt. Nec vero putare fas est quidquam eum simulasse, dum conquestus est de mortali animae suae tristitia: nec mentit sunt evangelistae, moestitia fuisse correptum et expavisse narrantes” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:724).}
In his annotations on the Garden of Gethsemene sequence in Matthew 26:36-44, Mark 14:32-40, and Luke 22:39-46, Calvin probes the terms of Christ’s atonement as well as his humanity. Calvin glosses Matthew 26:36, the phrase “Then cometh Jesus” [“Tunc venit Iesus”], by emphasizing Christ’s obedience: “in this passage we gain another indication of his obedience, for He could not have pleased the Father but by a voluntary death.” But this obedience is immediately complicated in his treatment of Matthew 26:37, where Christ “Began to be sorrowful”:

We have already seen the Lord wrestle with the fear of death, but now as He comes hand to hand with temptation, the ordeal is called a beginning of grief and sorrow. We gather that the true test of power only comes in the moment itself, which before was hidden, and the inner emotions pour out. Though God had trained His Son in some preliminary bouts, now at the closer aspect of death He deals a heavier blow and strikes Him with unaccustomed terror. As this seems to be below the dignity of Christ’s divine glory that He was affected with panic and sorrow, many interpreters are vehemently concerned to find a way out. Their efforts were thoughtless and fruitless: if we are ashamed of His fear and sorrow, our redemption will trickle away and be lost.

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186 Calvin, *Harmony*, III.147; “Itaque hoc loco eius obedientia iterum nobis describitur, quia patrem non nisi voluntaria morte placasset” (Harmonia Evangelica, LXXIII:719)

Against detractors such as Bellarmine, Calvin claims, “I boldly speak of this sorrow, because I preach His cross.”

It is through an affirmation of Christ’s sorrow—and, in the Crucifixion, despair—that one realizes his humanity: “Those who pretend the Son of God was immune from human passions do not truly and seriously acknowledge him as a man. When the power of Christ is said to have reposed as it were in concealment for a time [quasi abscondita ad tempus quiesuisse] to allow Him to fulfil [sic] the Redeemer’s role of suffering, this is so far from being an absurdity, that the mystery of our salvation could not have been fulfilled otherwise.”

Confirming his reading by citing Ambrose and Cyril, Calvin draws a key distinction between Christ’s suffering and human suffering—namely, that Christ, unlike the rest of mankind, did not sin: “None of our feelings are free of sin, for they all exceed the limit of proper moderation. Though Christ was troubled by sadness and fear, yet He did not rebel against God, but remained composed in the true rule of restraint… Christ, in His fear and grief was weak, but without any spot [macula] of sin, while our emotions, bubbling out to excess, are sinful.”

It is in this mode, after Calvin, that Donne structures his experience of suffering in the Devotions.

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188 Calvin, Harmony, III.147; “Confidenter ergo tristitiam nominò, quia crucem praedico” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:719).

189 Calvin, Harmony, III.147-8; “Certe qui ab humanis passionibus immunem fingunt Dei filium, vere et serio hominem non agnoscent. Imo quum dicitur divina Christi virtus quasi abscondita as tempus quiesisse, ut partes redemptoris patiendo impleret, adeo in eo nihil est absurdum, ut aliter salutis nostrae mysterium implierit nequiverit” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:719).

190 Calvin, Harmony, III.148; “Nam in nobis ideo nullus vitio affectus caret, quia omnes modum ac rectum temperamentum excedunt: Christus autem trititia et metu sic turbatus fuit, ut tamen adversus Deum non insurgeret: sed maneret compositus ad veram
The Affective Congregation I

“Christ, in His fear and grief was weak, but without any spot [macula] of sin”: here, in Calvin’s treatment of the Gospels, his use of the term “macula” looks forward to Donne’s articulation of the continuity between Christ’s body and his own, where “Euen my spots belong to thy Sonnes body, and are part of that, which he came downe to this earth, to fetch, and challenge, and assume to himselfe.” (Expostulation XIII). Albeit in an exhortation to confession—as Donne affirms the power of confession, where “When I open my spots, I doe but present him with that which is His, and till I do so, I detaine, & withhold his right.” (Expostulation XIII)—we encounter here an approach to the Body of Christ that is informed by Calvin’s exegeses and Institutio, by the foremost Reformed Orthodox treatments of Christology in print. Thus, when we proceed across the gap between Prayer XVI and Meditation XVII in the Devotions, we notice that Donne follows Calvin again in moving to a pointed contemplation on the congregation, on the terms of election but in a language more reminiscent of the Christology that grounds it, of the faithful who are engrafted in the Body of Christ. After attending to human mortality (and the composition and uses of the bells) in section XVI, Donne offers a treatment of the congregation insofar as “The Church is Catholike, vniuersall, so are all her Actions; All that she does, belongs to all. When she baptizes a child, that action concerns mee; for

tempermentiae regulam… Christum in metu et tristitia infirmum fuisse absque ulla vitii macula: nostros autem omnes affectus, quia in excessum ebullient, esse vitiosos” (Harmonia Evangelica LXXIII:720).

191 Devotions, 326-7.
192 Devotions, 326-7.
that child is thereby connected to that Head which is my Head too, and engrafted into that body, whereof I am a member. And when she buries a Man, that action concerns me (Meditation XVII).  

Donne makes the jump from the hope for salvation in Christ in Prayer XVI to the composition of the congregation under one “Head” in Meditation XVII, but Calvin, drawing from Scripture, make this clear in his office as king: “Christ, the God-man, serves as the Church’s head when he is appointed vice-regent by the Father over heaven and earth…in fulfillment of the covenant.” Here, Calvin and Donne draw explicitly from Ephesians 1:22-23, where God the Father “hath made all things subject under his feet, and hath given him over all things to be the head of the Church, Which is the body, even the fulness of him that filleth all in all things.” But while Calvin begins with an explanation of Christ’s kingly office, his authority as head over the Church or congregation which comprises his body, Donne comes to this point rather late in the Devotions, emphasizing Christ’s humanity and sacrifice in a manner that explains his office as king in terms of love and salvation rather than predestination. In Meditation XVII, Donne proceeds to explore the work of the bell in drawing together the congregation in explicitly Christological terms. The same bell that called Donne to the sermon, that was “a repetition Sermon” to him in the solitude of his sickbed, now calls a more general audience: “the Bell that rings to a Sermon, calls not vpon the Preacher onely, but vpon the Congregation to come; so this Bell calls vs all” (Meditation XVII). 

193 Devotions, 411-3.  

194 Edmondson, 136.  


196 Devotions, 413.
Moreover, “If we understand aright the dignitie of this Bell, that tolls for our evening prayer, wee would bee glad to make it ours, by rising early, in that application, that it might be ours, as wel as his, whose indeed it is” (Meditation XVII)\(^{197}\); that the bell calls to all mankind, even to death, does not inspire fear but rather hope, where “wee would bee glad to make it ours” under the assumption of salvation. And Donne, throughout the Devotions, only speaks of salvation. Reprobation does not appear, nor does the term predestination.

Recent studies suggest that Donne avoided discussing such topics to demonstrate conformity, adhering to the 1622 Directions for Preachers which were intended to manage, among other controversial topics, competing approaches to predestination.\(^ {198}\) Nevertheless, where Jeanne Shami asserts that “Fallout from the participation of English divines at the Synod of Dort provides another explanation of the doctrinal disorder the Directions were intended to curb,” particularly where “both learned and unlearned began to conflict in the pulpits on the issues of God’s eternal election, the efficacy of grace, and perseverance ‘with much Noise, and little Profit to the people,’” one aptly surmises that Donne intended the Devotions as a help to faith rather than a simple act of conformity.\(^ {199}\) Even conformity, proceeding from orthodoxy, is productive and generative and it is difficult to imagine the Devotions, which never address predestination, election, or reprobation, as a work defined entirely by this occlusion. Donne does operate in

\(^{197}\) Devotions, 411-3, 414-6.  
\(^{198}\) See Jeanne Shami, John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit (Cambridge; Rochester, New York: D. S. Brewer, 2003).  
\(^{199}\) Shami, 120.
conformity to Jacobean strictures for preaching and publishing, but not solely because they are strictures. The *Devotions*, rather, take explicit issue with the Canons of Dort, with the overwhelming emphasis on predestination. Here they work toward an understanding of the congregation as Christ’s body, a larger body that by Meditation XVIII is endowed with a pulse, the pulse of the bell that calls the congregation together.

This is an inspired conceit in Donne’s description, proceeding from his contemplation of the limitations of the human body and of Christ’s humiliation and degradation as a human being: the bell produces the pulse of the body of Christ, the pulse that draws it together in worship, the pulse that affects the senses and in turn produces faithful affections in Donne, and, in turn, the pulse that moves through the larger body of Christ comprised of the faithful but not limited to the flesh—a body of Christ structured affectively, produced through the affects proper to faith. But, before ascribing the pulse to the congregation in Meditation XVIII, Donne works throughout Section XVII to make this move clear. Before the congregation are brought together explicitly in Christ, engrafted in his body through faith, Donne goes farther to establish the limits of human individuality and its end in the congregation: “No Man is an Iland, intire of itselfe: every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine… Any Mans death diminishes me, because I am inuolued in Mankinde; And therefore neuer send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee” (Meditation XVII). In this often-quoted segment of Meditation XVII, Donne deliberately recalls his earlier proposition “Let [Man] be a world, and himself will be the land, and misery the sea” (Meditation VIII), a meditation that takes

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shape as a tentative demonstrative tool made explicit by the word “Let.” But where the earlier attempts to meditate on the concept “Man” began by establishing it as a land, or as a little world, awash in an encroaching sea of misery, this later depiction takes these as points of departure, as foils. In direct opposition to the proposition “Let [Man] be a world, and himself will be the land,” Donne proclaims in Meditation XVII that “‘No Man is an Iland, intire of itselfe: every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine.” The “land” of the proposition is rendered more inclusive; moreover, it enters the Devotions with by the tolling bell, under the assumption that humans are brought together by a common mortality but also by membership in Christ. When Donne affirms that “Any Mans death diminishes me, because I am inuolued in Mankinde,” he recognizes the extent to which he is implicated in a larger body than his own, in a body that is not limited by mortality but rather confirmed by it.

Nevertheless, this congregation is not comprised of bodies. Calvin is clear in the Institutio, that “faith intervenes, to engraft [inserit] us spiritually to the body of Christ” (II.xiii.2/B 478) and that “flesh alone does not make the bond of brotherhood” (II.xiii.2/B 477-8). The body of Christ is comprised of the faithful and, as faith is an affective relationship between man and God that is irreducible to corporeal determinations of emotion, it is faith as affectus that stands as the basic unit of measure. Here, in the bell meditations, Donne works to draw the distinction between the body and

201 Devotions, 175-6.
202 “quia fides media interponitur, quae nos in Christi corpus spiritualiter inserit” (II.xiii.2/OS III 453).
203 “Proinde fraternamconiunctionem non facit sola caro” (II.xiii.2/OS III 452-3).
affective faith. To begin, in his expostulation on the lawfulness of bells in worship, Donne asserts that “in making vs Christians, [God] diddest not destroy that which wee were before, naturall men, so in the exalting of our religious deuotions now we are Christians, thou hast beene pleased to continue to vs those assistances which did worke upon the affections of naturall men before” (Expostulation XVI). The ringing of the bell works “upon the affections of naturall men before” but ultimately works to draw natural men to Christ, to the contemplation of Christ; in drawing the faithful physically and actually to Church (as the bell signals the assembly of the congregation), it also draws men together in the contemplation and practice of Christianity. Nevertheless, Donne is clear in ascribing agency to God who, “in making vs Christians…diddest not destroy that which wee were before, naturall men” but did so “in the exalting of our religious deuotions” through the operation of natural helps to devotion, such as the bell—means which inform human sensation and thus work to inspire and maintain (“continue”) faith.

Isaiah 38 in Calvin, Lock and the Devotions

In the meditations on the tolling of the bell, Donne turns his attention explicitly to faith, to the affective faith of the Institutio, through a careful treatment of Christology, of Christ’s own faith against despair as well as to the affective composition of the larger body of Christ: the congregation. Nevertheless, Donne’s attention of faith in the Devotions is not simply drawn from the obvious loci regarding Christology. He also attends to more obscure or oblique sources, to emphasize the degree to which faith

204 Devotions, 404-5.
implicates humanity in Christ and Christ in humanity. In Expostulation XVII, for instance, immediately following his famous “No Man is an Iland” passages in Meditation XVII, Donne points to a seemingly obscure reference, where he claims to “heare thy Prophet saying to Ezechias [Hezekiah], Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die, and not liue; Hee makes vs of his familie, and calls this a setting of his house in order, to compose vs to the meditation of death” (Expostulation XVII). Here, in Donne’s invocation of Isaiah 38, faith involves membership in Christ, in the congregation, as well as Christ’s human sacrifice, an ordeal that tried the limits of human reason and affections—indeed, human health. Where Calvin’s investigation of the Body of Christ, made explicit in his description of membership in Christ as an “engrafting” (inserere/insitio), informs Donne’s approach to the “universall” catholic Church and to the affective composition of the congregation, it is his treatment of Isaiah that enables him to write convincingly on affect and health as well as to the limits of individual health against the larger horizon of the congregation. The reference to Isaiah 38 recalls the beginning of the Devotions as Donne locates Hezekiah prominently in the dedication “To the Most Excellent Prince, Prince Charles”: “Examples of Good Kings are Commandements; and Ezechiah writt the Meditations of his Sickness, after his Sickness” These are not passing references; the narrative of Hezekiah’s sickness and prayer in Isaiah 38 gives precedent to the project of the Devotions, just as Calvin’s exegeses of Isaiah help shape Donne’s approach to

205 Devotions, 422.
206 Devotions, “To the Most Excellent Prince, Prince Charles.”
Christology, in and after his own sickness. Nevertheless, by Expostulation XVII, is his most pointed reference to Isaiah, Donne shifts his attention from Hezekiah’s sickness to the way that, through affliction, God “makes vs of his familie, and calls this a setting of his house in order, to compose vs to the meditation of death” (Expostulation XVII).

Here, again, we find the move from the contemplation of mortality and the limits of human health and agency to the life of the congregation, to a larger encompassing body of Christ. But what does this exegetical shift entail? Before answering this question, let us pause briefly to attend to the Reformed Orthodox treatment of Isaiah 38 and of Hezekiah’s Christological affliction.

Hezekiah himself first appears, in the heading of Isaiah 32 in the Geneva Bible, in prophecy: “Behold, a King shal reigne in iustice, & the princes shal rule in iudgement” (Isaiah 32:1). In this capacity, he looks proleptically to Christ in his office as king—an

207 Without dealing extensively with the distinctions between the Devotions and the emergent Jesuit tradition of meditative writing explored at length by Louis L. Martz in his 1954 study The Poetry of Meditation, suffice it to say that I follow Janel M. Mueller when she notes: “Even a cursory reading suggests the inadequacy of an Ignatian model alone to account for what Donne is doing. Throughout the work, but especially in the Expostulations, italics coupled with marginal references point up his many explicit uses of Biblical citations; the typography signals what is to emerge as a basic difference from the Jesuit meditative approach”. Nevertheless, I take a determinately different approach to the structure of the Devotions than Mueller, for whom “A specific prototype for the Devotions is to be found in the series of sermons [Donne] delivered on Psalm 6, one of the Penitential Psalms, a prayer for David’s deliverance from his sins, his sickness, and his enemies… the sermons on Psalm 6 are the last extant known to have been preached before Donne’s serious illness in the fall and winter of the same year, the illness that gave rise to the Devotions.” See Louis L. Martz, The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1954); and Janel M. Mueller, “The Exegesis of Experience,” 2, 8-9.

208 Devotions, 422.

209 The Geneva Bible [1560], 294v.
analogy that explains the dedication to Prince Charles (later King Charles I) and that makes Hezekiah’s fallibility and weakness, prefiguring Christ’s Passion, all the more intriguing to early modern readers. The terms of his sickness direct investigations of Christ’s mortality as well as human corporeality, particularly in an emergent Calvinist exegetical tradition. After God answers his prayer and destroys the armies of his opponents (in Isaiah 37), the faithful king falls ill; the prophet Isaiah subsequently visits Hezekiah, “sicke vnto death,” and counsels the king to “Put thine house in an ordre, for thou shalt dye, and not liue” (Isaiah 38:1). Hezekiah responds accordingly: “I beseche thee, Lord, remember now haue I walked before thee in trueth, & with a perfite heart, and haue done that which is good in thy sight: & Hezekiah wept sore” (Isaiah 38:3). God, in turn, promises to heal Hezekiah, to “add vnto [his] daies fiftene yeres” (Isaiah 38:5) and, as a “signe…that [the] Lord will do this thing, that he hathe spoken” (Isaiah 38:7), miraculously lengthens the day by setting the sun in reverse.

At this moment in the text, the narrative structure changes and we encounter a song of praise, complete with a descriptive title—“The writing of Hezekiah King of Iudah, when he had bene sicke, and was recouered from his sickenes”—at Isaiah 38:9. Hezekiah’s song follows, an example of scriptural verse and, like the Psalms, Lamentations, Job, or Jeremiah, an important locus for divine poetry. Calvin’s sermons

\[\text{210 Ibid., 296v.}\]
\[\text{211 Ibid.}\]
\[\text{212 Ibid. “Behold, I will bring again [the] shadowe of the degrees (whereby it is gone down in the dial of Ahaz by the sunne) ten degrees backeward: so the sune returned by ten degrees, by the [which] degrees it was gone downe” (Isaiah 38:8).}\]
\[\text{213 Ibid.}\]
take shape as a careful reading this, Hezekiah’s poem, a song “of his lamentacion & thankesgiuing [left] to all posteritie, as a monument of his owne infirmitie & th_keful heart for Gods benefites.”\textsuperscript{214} In his attention to faith, Calvin also shapes the Geneva Bible commentary, particularly where “rekened” at 38:13 is glossed with the expositive statement, “Ouer night I thought [that] I shulde liue til morning, but my pangs in the night persuaded me the contrarie: he sheweth the horour, that the faithful haue when they apprehend Gods judgement against their sin.”\textsuperscript{215} In other words, even the faithful feel horror upon the experience of God’s righteous judgment, a sensation that exists despite an absolute conviction of God’s benevolence, the very substance of faith.\textsuperscript{216} In his commentary, Calvin is aware that this might present a contradiction (i.e. why do the faithful fear?) and is eager to show how Hezekiah’s song balances these terms. The reader must be careful as it only “appereth at the first shew that this writing serveth not for any instruction of them that shold rede it, but shold rather be an offense”; one risks misreading Hezekiah’s song, mistaking his right response to Isaiah’s exhortation “Put thine house in an ordre” as “the outrageous passions of a man as it were ravished in minde which so abhorreth death, that he thought all to be lost when god shold take him out of the worlde, and in this we see nothing but the sinne of infidelitie.”\textsuperscript{217} For Calvin, this is not an apt interpretation of the passage. In Hezekiah’s song we should “see that

\textsuperscript{214} Ibid, note f, 296v.
\textsuperscript{215} Ibid, note l, 296v.
\textsuperscript{216} John Stachniewski explores the horror of the faithful in \textit{The Persecutory Imagination}, where reprobate experience defines Puritanism in the seventeenth century. See Stachniewski, \textit{The Persecutory Imagination}, 85-126.
\textsuperscript{217} Anne Locke, “Sermons of John Calvin,” 9-10.
there is no instruction better or more profitable for us than this. For when we shall have
well examined al that is in us, then we shall knowe that the same is also proper unto our
selves." Hezekiah’s song is thus a model of self-examination, wherein men might
“beholde here, as in a loking glasse, our owne wekenes, to the ende that every man may
prepare himselfe against the time when his faith shalbe proved as the fayth of Ezechias
was, and when God shall shew us some tokens of his wrath, so as if then we seme in
maner destroyed, yet we cease not therfore to truste that God will geve to us an end of
our troubles, as he did to this good king.” In this Calvin emphasizes Hezekiah’s piety
in ordering his passions according to faith and in recognizing his humility and weakness
before God. His song, in turn, serves as a model examination by which readers may
“mark then what ought to be the affection of the faithful.”

Calvin’s sermons on Hezekiah’s sickness help Donne structure the Devotions as a
meditative and descriptive process, coming to terms (in language) with a sickness that is
at the same time determined by sin, by man’s fallen nature. Donne begins the Devotions
with an effective description of the “miserable condition of Man, which was not
imprinted by God; who as hee is immortal himselfe, had put a coale, a beame of
Immortalitie into vs, which we might haue blowen into a flame, but blew it out, by our
first sinne” (Meditation I). Men, fallen from their original state, are “pre-afflicted,
super-afflicted with these ielousies and suspitions, and apprehensions of Sicknes, before

218 Ibid., 10.
219 Ibid.
220 Ibid., 12.
221 Devotions, 3.
we can call it a sickness; we are not sure we are ill; one hand aske the other by the pulse, and our eye askes our own vine, how we do” (Meditation I). Here, in Meditation I, the illness is only known through “ielousies and suspitions, and apprehensions”—sensations which effect the body but which nonetheless challenge the human ability to understand them, to determine their true causes.

Donne’s earliest descriptions of the sickness, then, explicitly recall Calvin’s sermons on Isaiah 38 where Hezekiah “addeth that he chattered as a Crane or as a swallowe, and that he mourned like a Dove… Wherein he meaneth that anguishe held him in locked in such sorte, that he had not so muche as a word fre to expresse hys passyons.” Donne, after Hezekiah, is exhorted to “Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die, and not liue,” not by the prophet Isaiah but by the occasion of his illness, by “The first alteration, The first grudging of the sicknesse” (Meditation I) that sets the Devotions to work. The process, spanning twenty three meditations, expostulations, and prayers—the entirety of the Devotions—takes shape as a matter of describing the course of the illness, bodily and spiritually (a division which Donne licenses again and again in his book), in language. The Devotions do not begin with an accurate description of the illness; they begin, rather, by exploring the difficulty of understanding the causes and effects of disease, by demonstrating the extent to which this difficulty sheds due light on the “Variable, and therfore miserable condition of Man” (Meditation I).

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222 Devotions, 4.
224 Devotions, 1.
225 Devotions, 1.
description follows directly from Calvin’s earlier depiction of Hezekiah’s illness. Where the King laments and prays, in Isaiah 38:14, that “Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes were lift vp on hie: ô Lord, it hath oppressed me, comfort me,” Calvin’s exegesis proceeds to describe the depths of his distress: “If a man crye and lament, and make his complaints, and declare his evyll, it is then to be sayde that he is sore troubled: but when a man is so striken down that he can not declare what he ayleth, when he stammereth so in him selfe, that he can not draw forth one onely worde to declare howe vehement his passyon is: when he nowe sygheth, nowe bryngeth forth halfe a worde, and the rest kepe in, as if one had his throte locked up: thys is a greate extremitie.”

Donne begins from such a “greate extremitie.” For Donne, the early reference to Hezekiah signals attention to method, a means by which his ordeal might begin to make sense to him and his readers. By 1624, Hezekiah certainly ranked among the chief scriptural resources on health and piety in the Reformed tradition. Beginning with Calvin’s treatment in the 1550s and continuing through Lock’s 1560 edition to Donne’s Devotions, Isaiah 38 becomes an important point of departure toward detailed investigations of corporeality and faith. Moreover, for all three writers, Isaiah 38 is a signal text on Christ, on his offices as king and mediator and his status as human and divine. Calvin is careful to foreground Christ’s role as mediator throughout his sermons and commentaries on Isaiah, a prophetic text from the Hebrew Testament. Isaiah was clearly an important Christological text for Calvin who preached extensively from the book “on weekdays at the morning services from July 16, 1556, until September 4,

1559,” a project undertaken as he edited the *Institutio* for publication in 1559. By the end of his first sermon on Isaiah 38, as he dwells at length on Hezekiah’s lament “that he shall come to the gates of the grave, that he shall se no more the lyving,” Calvin affirms that when we see that God is juste in punisshynge us for oure synnes, let us come wyth head bowed downe, that we may be releved by hys mercye: and let us have no other confidence, nor truste of salvation, but in thys that pleaseth him in the name of oure savioure Jesus Christe, to receave us to mercye, for as muche as in us there is nothyng but cursednes.

This is hardly anomalous, for Calvin to render a passage from Isaiah in Christological and soteriological terms. Isaiah is laden with visions of Christ, among the most important references to the Messiah in the Old Testament. Isaiah 7:14, for instance, promises that “the virgine shal conceiue and beare a sonne, and she shal call his name Immanu-el,” just as 9:6 states that “vnto us a Childe is borne, & vnto us a sonne is giuen: & the gouernement is vpon his shulder, & he shal call his name Wonderful, Counselder, The mightie God, The everlasting Father, The prince of peace”—passages that look forward to Christ’s incarnation. Moreover, we encounter key references to mercy and salvation in Isaiah, from the promise of resurrection in Chapter 26 to the messianic vision

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228 Ibid., 21.

229 Isaiah 7:14, 1560 *Geveva Bible*, 285r, 286r. See also 11:1 on 287v.
of 30:18, where the “Lord waite, that he may haue mercy vpon you, and therefore wil he be exalted, that he may haue compassion vpon you: for the Lord is the God of judgement. Blessed are they that waite for him.”

Isaiah 42 looks proleptically to Christ’s humility and obedience, where God’s “servant,” his “elect,” he who “shal bring forthe judgement to the Gentiles” is promised: “He shal not crye, nor lift vp, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street,” a prophecy which does not preclude his suffering on the cross but rather addresses his eminent arrival, without “pompe and noise, as earthlie princes.”

Calvin’s treatment of Isaiah 52-53 stands out among his most compelling meditations on Christ’s office as mediator, particularly where he reads Isaiah 53:6 as “a beautiful antithesis” looking forward to membership in Christ. Where the text states that “All we like shepe haue gone astraie: we haue turned euerie one to his owne way, and the Lord hathe layed vpon him the iniquitie of vs all,” Calvin discovers hope and reconciliation for mankind through Christ’s redemption: “In ourselves we are scattered: in Christ we are gathered together.”

Ann Lock follows Calvin’s reading of Isaiah by extending his detailed exegeses of Christological loci to Hezekiah’s recovery itself. In the preface to the Sermons of John Calvin, Upon the Songe that Ezechias made after he had bene sicke, and afflicted by the hand of God, conteyned in the 38. Chapiter of Esay (1560), Lock imagines her translation as a salve, conveying that which “God the heavenly Physitian hath taught, his most

230 Ibid., 293r, 291r-292v. See also 49:6 on 300r.
231 Ibid., 297r, note e on 297r.
232 John Calvin, Sermons on Isaiah’s Prophecy, Parker, 66.
233 Isaiah 53:6, 1560 Geveva Bible, 302v, and John Calvin, Sermons on Isaiah’s Prophecy, Parker, 66.
excellent Apothecarie master John Calvine hath compounded, and I your graces most 
bounden and humble have put into an Englishe box,” “good and sufficient medicines” 
administered to “trewe belevyng Christians.”234 Lock begins her translation with a 
meditation on Hezekiah’s [Ezachias] illness and despair, recognizing the degree to which 
Isaiah 38 is an important scriptural locus with regard to health and medicine as well as 
faith.235 Affirming God’s benevolence as the basis of faith and, in an exacting medical 
vocabulary, Christ’s vocation as “heavenly Physitian,” Lock frames her translation of 
Calvin’s sermons with a prose meditation on sin and physic.236 Here in the preface, her 
dedicatory letter to the “Right Honorable, and Christian Princesse” Katherine, Duchess of 
Suffolk, “we se the heavenly Physician anoint him with the merciful Samaritans oyle, 
purge the oppressing humors with true repentaunce, strengthen his stomach with the 
holsome conserve of Gods eternall decree, and expel his disease, and set on foote with 
assured faith of Gods mercy, and staieng his yet unstedy pace and foltring legges with the 
swete promises of Gods almyghtye goodnes.”237 In this sense, Lock points to the 
connections between “assured faith” and “Gods almyghtye goodnes” where, as illustrated 
above, we encounter the fundamental affective relationship between man and God. 
Nevertheless, Lock is also particularly insightful in drawing the affective language of

234 “Sermons of John Calvin, Upon the Songe that Ezechias made after he had bene sicke, 
and afflicted by the hand of God, conteyned in the 38. Chapter of Esay” [1560], *The 
235 For my treatment of Anne Lock’s meditations on faith see Chapter 1. 
236 As well as her later poetic meditation on Psalm 51, explored at length above in 
Chapter 1. 
faith together with discourses of health and the body—in this case, in the function of the sermon cycle and poetic meditation as “not only the medicine, but also an example of the nature of the disease, and the meane how to use and apply the medicine to them that be so diseased.” Albeit limited in large part to the preface of Lock’s translation, we encounter in the *Sermons of John Calvin, Upon the Songe that Ezechias made...* a remarkable convergence of concepts—namely, of Calvin’s affective determination of faith with an exemplary description of the humoral body, in sickness and health, subject to different sorts of passions in a markedly different language, with Christ at its center. Here Lock, poet and translator, looks proleptically to the lamentations and celebrations of a later Hezekiah, Donne’s *Devotions*.

Donne’s work reflects Lock’s influence, particularly her translation of Calvin’s Sermons on Isaiah 38. Lock, under her married name Anne Prowse, translated and augmented John Taffin’s *Of the markes of the children of God, and of their comforts and afflictions* for publication in 1590, a text dedicated to the “faithfull of the Low Countrie” which exercised considerable influence over Protestant communities in England towards the end of Elizabeth’s reign. Textual evidence strongly suggests that Donne was familiar with Calvin’s exegeses of Isaiah, if not specifically with Lock’s translation of Isaiah 38. Two sermons, both preached within five years of his recovery in 1623, testify to this knowledge: the first given at St. Paul’s on Christmas Day, 1624, on Isaiah 7:14, 239

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238 Ibid., 7.
and another preached to King Charles I at Whitehall on April 15, 1628, on Isaiah 32.8. Both sermons cite Calvin specifically, his name appearing in the margin. The 1624 sermon on Isaiah 7:4 makes explicit reference to Calvin’s writing on faith, where “A Regenerate man is not made of Faith alone, but of faith and Reason; and Signes, externall things, assist us all” and where “It is truly and wisely said, *Sic habenda fides verbo Dei, ut subsidia minime contemnamus.*” In the 1628 sermon on Isaiah 32:8 Donne cites Calvin again, this time concerning competing Reformation interpretations of Hezekiah. Donne, following both Calvin and the 1560 Geneva Bible description of Isaiah 32, where “The conditions of Good rulers and officers described by the gouernement of Hezekiah, who was the figure of Christ,” explores the relationships between “civil” and spiritual interpretations of scripture and the meaning of the virtue “liberality.”

Hezekiah’s sickness and recovery give structural and conceptual shape to the *Devotions.* According to Frost, “Hezekiah was traditionally representative of the Christian in affliction, and Isaiah’s injunction to the king, ‘Set thine house in order; for

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241 Donne, Sermon 8, VI, 175. Albeit these are strange uses of the *Institutio* in defense of “subsidiary helps,” those “other Sacramentall, and Rituall, and Ceremoniall things, which assist the working of the Sacraments, thought they infuse no power into the Sacraments.” Saint Bernard, in his explanation of faith in conjunction with reason, also plays a prominent role in the Christmas sermon, a detail that follows directly from Calvin’s own Bernardine investigation of faith in *Institutio* III.ii. Donne, Sermon 8, VI, 168. See also *Institutio* III.ii.25.


243 Isaiah 32, 1560 *Geneva Bible*, 294v; Donne, Sermon 10, VIII, 238-9, 240.
thou shalt die, and not live’ (2 Kings 20.1), quoted by Donne in Expostulation 17 and
applied to his own case, was a common starting point in the ars moriendi tradition.”
Moreover, Isaiah 38 had particular liturgical and pastoral significance, as “The prayer of
Hezekiah (Isaiah 38.3; 2 Kings 20.3) was advocated for the sick, and his hymn for the
safely recovered.” In the Devotions, both Hezekiah and Charles point to Christ in his
kingly office; for Donne, moreover, the narrative of Hezekiah’s faith and illness is
inextricable from Christ’s incarnation, Passion, and resurrection, all promised in Isaiah.
The depiction of Hezekiah’s suffering looks forward to Christ’s suffering, an association
which gives due shape to the meditations on the human body in the Devotions.

But, after all of this, Donne’s treatment of Hezekiah’s sickness in Expostulation
XVII speaks more to the health of the congregation than the individual. In the Devotions,
by section XVII, Donne has already addressed faith through his depiction of Christ’s
affliction; he recalls Hezekiah’s recovery to affirm the life of the congregation, not the
faith of the individual. Where Donne claims to “heare thy Prophet saying to Ezechias
[Hezekiah], Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die, and not liue,” this citation supports
a more seemingly oblique claim, that “Hee makes vs of his familie, and calls this a setting
of his house in order, to compose vs to the meditation of death” (Expostulation XVII).246
The house, in this sense, is not merely an expression for “our liuing bodies,”
“consecrated” by God as “Temples of the holy Ghost” (Prayer XVI) as depicted in Prayer


245 Ibid., 57.
246 Devotions, 422.
XVI but also for the “Catholike” (Meditation XVII) church to which we are called by the ringing of the bell. The horizon is no longer the health of the body but rather the health of the congregation, the congregation who are called, as a “familie,” to set itself in order and do compose itself affectively to perfect faith in Christ. This citation from Isaiah 38, appearing in the text as an exhortation, occasions renewed attention in Prayer XVII to the affections and to the work of faith. Donne “cannot be afraid to come, And therefore, into thy hands, O my God, I commend my spirit; A surrender, which I know thou wilt accept, whether I liue or die (Prayer XVII); here, Donne invokes Christ’s last words from the Gospel of Luke, followed by Matthew and Mark, where “When thy Sonne cried out vpon the Crosse, My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me: he spake not so much in his owne Person, as in the person of the Church, and of his afflicted members, who in deep distresses might feare thy forsaking (Prayer XVII). It is quite significant that the Son speaks here “in the person of the Church, and of his afflicted members, who in deep distresses might feare thy forsaking,” and not in such a way that suggests his own allfiction. Donne thus uses this moment from the gospels for a different purpose than before. Where Christ’s suffering had previously structured his own affliction, his own illness and resistance to despair, Donne martials Isaiah 38 and Psalm 22, the latter from the mouth of Christ, to address the faith of the congregation, of the larger body of Christ. Here, Donne is merely another member: “This patient, O most blessed God, is one of them; In his behalfe, and in his name, heare thy Sonne crying to

247 Devotions, 406, 411.
248 Devotions, 430, 434-5.
thee, *My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?* and forsake him not; but with thy *left hand* lay his *body* in the *grau*e, (if that bee thy *determination* vpon him) and with thy *right hand* receiue his *soule* into thy *Kingdome*, and vnite *him & vs* in one *Comunion of Saints* (Prayer XVII). By the end of the second section on the bell, Donne has moved from the contemplation of mortality, through which all men are substitutable, to a profound mediation on the congregation. This is even evident in his shift from the first to third person across the passage; it begins “I cannot be afraid to *come*, And therefore, *into thy hands*, O my *God*, I commend my *spirit*” but, following the direct invocation of Psalm 22, it is not “I” but rather “This *patient*” who “is one of *them*.” The passage continues to ask God, in the collective voice of the congregation, speaking liturgically, to “heare thy *Sonne* crying to thee, *My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?* and forsake him not; but with thy *left hand* lay his *body* in the *grau*e, (if that bee thy *determination* vpon him) and with thy *right hand* receiue his *soule* into thy *Kingdome*, and vnite *him & vs* in one *Comunion of Saints*.” Section XVII ends in the voice of the congregation, in prayer to God, asking that he “receiue [Christ’s] *soule* into thy *Kingdome*, and vnite *him & vs* in one *Comunion of Saints*.” It is a prayer from the congregation for the maintenance of the congregation. Where, immediately after, “The *Bell rings out*” in Meditation XVIII, “the *pulse* thereof is changed; the *tolling* was a *faint*, and *intermitting pulse*, vpon one side; this *stronger*, and argues *more and better life*” (Meditation XVIII), Donne testifies to the life of the congregation and to the fulfillment of its prayer.250 The pulse of the bell is

249 *Devotions*, 430, 434-5.
250 *Devotions*, 436.
dually the pulse of the living congregation, of “him & vs [united] in one Comunion of Saints.”

The Affective Congregation II

In her reading of Calvinist depictions of the death of Christ, Debora Kuller Shuger emphasizes the extent to which Calvin “reasons that since even Christ had to struggle against his fear of death, ‘how carefully ought we to repress the violence of our feelings, which are always inconsiderate, and rash, and full of rebellion?’ In many of the Calvinist passion narratives, self-control and cognate virtues like moderation, patience, and submission virtually displace caritas as the ethical substance of the Crucifixion.”

Shuger’s reading is insightful, particularly where she identifies the affective resources of Calvinism, the degree to which Calvinism affords believers a model of exemplary faith (and order of the passions) in Christ. Christ exhibits exceptional control over his passions and affections, a model which recalls numerous Patristic and Medieval versions of the Passion and its effects on human affections, as well as early modern Catholic descriptions of Christ’s affective ordeal no less intricate than Calvin’s. Such references to Christ’s

251 Deborah Kuller Shuger, The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity (Berkeley, California; Los Angeles, California; London: University of California Press, 1994), 106.
individual mastery over his passions are common across confessions. But Donne, after Calvin, offers an alternative to other early modern versions of faith and Christology insofar as the *Devotions* does not ask readers to comport themselves after Christ’s example. On the contrary, Donne, after Calvin, investigates Christ’s abjection, humiliation, and desperation across a series of meditations emerging from his own illness and incontinence. The individual body is not the horizon of the *Devotions*; Donne, like Calvin, refuses the limits of human bodies and human affects. Thus the work does not merely call for readers to follow Christ’s example but rather looks to the constitution of new bodies realized in Christ’s death and resurrection. I do not argue the novelty of either Calvin’s or Donne’s approach but, rather, emphasize the challenge these orthodox languages and concepts pose to the version of Reformed Orthodoxy in the Canons of Dort.

Meditation XVIII begins by suggesting that the congregation, called by the bell in memory of the unnamed man’s funeral, is endowed with life in Christ, with a pulse, as a living human body: “The Bell rings out, the pulse thereof is changed; the tolling was a faint, and intermitting pulse, vpon one side; this stronger, and argues more and better life” (Meditation XVIII).253 Donne affirms this in a voice that, immediately prior, in Prayer XVII, arrogated the voice of the congregation, as a congregation prays that God “


253 *Devotions*, 436.
lay his body in the graue, (if that bee thy determination vpon him) and with thy right hand receiue his soule into thy Kingdom, and vnite him & vs in one Comunion of Saints (Prayer XVII). Following this, in Meditation XVIII, Donne asserts his assurance that his prayer (in the prayer of the congregation) has been heard: that “so I doe charitably, so I do faithfully beleeue, that the soule is gone to euerlasting rest, and ioy, and glory” (Meditation XVIII). It is faith that takes precedence here, a faith that is at once an absolute persuasion of God’s benevolence, over his earlier preoccupation with mortality and with the limits of the single human body. Meditation XVII confirms this turn, as “If I will ask meere Philosophers, what the soule is, I shall finde amongst them, that will tell me, it is nothing, but the temperament and marmony, and iust and equall composition of the Elements in the body, which produces all those faculties which we ascribe to the soule” (Meditation XVIII). Donne continues to list several competing approaches to the composition of the soul and its state in death, including a Mortalist position, but, ultimately, such investigations yield only speculative knowledge. Against this Donne affirms, in a reference to Augustine, the importance and distinction of faith:

*S. Augustine studied the Nature of the soule, as much as any thing, but the saluation of the soule; and he sent an expresse Messenger to Saint Hierome, to consult of some things concerning the soule: But he satisfies himselfe with this: Let the departure of my soule to saluation be evident to my faith, and I care the lesse, how darke the entrance of my soule, into my body, bee to my reason. It is the going out, more than the comming in, that concernes vs* (Meditation XVIII).

254 Devotions, 430, 434-5.
255 Devotions, 444.
256 Devotions, 437-8.
257 Devotions, 441-3.
Donne, invoking Augustine, invests his energy in contemplating how “the departure of my soule to salvation be evident to my faith,” pointing again to the location of faith in an ordo docendi that affirms God’s benevolence as its source. Donne continues: “This soule, this bell tells me is gone out; Whither? Who shall tell mee that? I know not who it is; much lesse what he was; The condition of the Man, and the course of his life, which should tell mee whither hee is gone, I know not…But yet I haue one nearer mee than all these; mine owne Charity; I aske that; & that tells me, He is gone to everlasting rest, and joy, and glory” (Meditation XVIII). Here, against Shuger’s assertion that “moderation, patience, and submission virtually displace caritas as the ethical substance of the Crucifixion,” Donne relocates faith and charity, following from a conviction of God’s benevolence, as his primary concerns.

Faith and charity take prominence over questions concerning whither and how the soul departed from the man, and certainly over questions regarding his fate; for Donne, Meditation XVIII takes shape here as a salvo against the predestination-centered theology of the Canons of Dort which begins by concerning itself with such matters, and makes little of mercy. Donne, on the contrary, cites his education in the congregation, in the occasion of the ringing bell. Of the dead man, he claims to “owe him a good opinion; it is but thankfull charity in mee, because I receiued benefit and instruction from him when

258 Devotions, 441-3.
259 Shuger, The Renaissance Bible, 106.
his Bell told” (Meditation XVIII). Charity follows from faith which, in Donne’s investigations in the Devotions, duly follows from his meditation on the bell’s tolling, pointing him to the pulse of the congregation. He makes this progression all the more explicit in Meditation XVIII as he proceeds from his sure belief in the dead man’s election in Christ, through whom men are saved and reorganized in charity and love, to another reflection on the body. Here Donne uses the same terms as earlier in the Devotions, as the body, “all the parts built vp, and knit by a louely soule, now but a statue of clay, and now, these limbs melted off, as if that clay were but snow, and now, the whole house is but a handful of sand, so much dust, and but a pecke of Rubbidge” (Meditation XVIII). He deliberately recalls the Renaissance commonplace, Man “hath [honour] by being a little world,” (Meditation I), which is so frutfull for him eaerlier, as well as the Petrarchan language of Meditation II: “Man, who is the noblest part of the Earth, melts so away, as if he were a statue, not of Earth, but of Snowe” (Meditation II). Moreover, as he reflects upon he “who, as this Bell tells me, were some excellent Artificer, who comes to him for a clocke, or for a garment now? or for counsaile, if hee were a Lawyer? If a Magistrate, for iustice?” (Meditation XVIII), Donne revisits the objects and occasions for meditation

260 Devotions, 443-4.
261 Devotions, 444.
262 Devotions, 446-7.
263 Devotions, 5-6, 22-3.
prior to the tolling of the bell in section XVI; he recalls the watch in Expostulation I, the
garment of flesh for Christ in Prayer II, the counsel of physicians in section IX, and the
magistracy of sections VIII and X, but only momentarily, quickly returning to faith, to
what appears as the inevitable salvation of the man for whom the bell tolls. Donne is still
preoccupied with death, but only insofar as “the death of others, should catechise vs to
death” (Expostulation XVIII).264 His emphasis is now on the congregation, the
brotherhood for whom Christ’s affliction and sacrifice have guaranteed their salvation,
beyond doubt. Thus Donne poses Christ’s saving work in Expostulation XVIII, the work
of “Thy Sonne Christ Iesus is the first begotten of the dead; he rises first, the eldest
brother, and he is my Master in this science of death” (Expostulation XVIII), as
transformative; in Prayer XVII, he celebrates “a new occasion of thanks, and a new
occasion of prayer…from the ringing of this bell…for euen that voice, that I must die
now, is not the voice of a Iudge, that speaks by way of condemnation, but of a Physitian,
that…presentest mee death as the cure of my disease, not as the exaltation of it (Prayer
XVIII).265

In the sections following his meditations on the bell, Donne consistently affirms a
version of Reformed Orthodoxy that argues, against the Canons of Dort, that “sometimes
we are too curious of the instrument, by what man God speakes; but thou speakest
loudest, when thou speakest to the heart” (Expostulation XXI).266 Here, after his
sustained reflection on the transition from the limits of the body (including death) to the

264 *Devotions*, 456.
265 *Devotions*, 456, 462-3.
266 *Devotions*, 555.
congregation, Donne is clear in his prayers to God, to “continue to mee the bread of life; the spirituall bread of life, in a faithfull assurance in thee” (Prayer XXI). Moreover, he considers the lessons learned over the course of his illness, particularly the degree to which his reflections on salvation and faith in Christ instruct him to reconfigure his approach to the human body as well as to its limited health and affliction. The physician, as given in Prayer XVIII, is hardly a natural philosopher but rather God the Father, through Christ, for “What Hypocrates, what Galen, could shew mee that in my body?” (Expostulation XXII). He works to make this explicit in Exposition XXIII, in celebration of his health: “My God, my God, my God, thou mightie Father, who hast beene my Physitian; Thou glorious Sonne, who hast beene my Physicke; Thou blessed Spirit, who hast prepared and applied all to mee, shall I alone be able to ouerthrow the worke of all you, and relapse into those spirituall sicknesses, from which your infinite mercies haue withdrawne me?” (Expostulation XXIII). Moreover, at the end of the Devotions, Donne poses his experience, his illness, as a “Correction [that] hath brought mee to such a participation of thy selfe (thy selfe, O my God, cannot bee parted) to such an intire possession of thee, as that I durst deliuer my selfe ouer to thee this Minute, If this Minute thou wouldst accept my dissolution” (Prayer XXIII). By invoking his “participation” in God Donne points precisely to his involvement in the congregation, in the larger body of Christ in which Christ himself sits at the head. It is here, in his

267 Devotions, 566.
268 Devotions, 580-1.
269 Devotions, 606.
270 Devotions, 627-9.
capacity as (and unaltering belief in) a member of the elect, engrafted in the body of Christ, that Donne prays for the perseverance that comes naturally to God: “preserue me, O my God the God of constancie, and perseverance, in this state, from all relapses into those sinnes, which haue indic’d thy former Judgements vpon me. But because, by too lamentable Experience, I know how slippery my customs of sinne, haue made my wayes of sinne, I presume to adde this petition too, That if my infirmitie ouertake mee, thou forsake mee not” (Prayer XXIII). Here, at the end of the Devotions, as at the end of the bell sequence in Prayer XVIII, Donne invokes a language and a set of concepts which locate him well within a Reformed Orthodox tradition but, nevertheless, at odds with the emphases in the Canons of Dort.

Reformed Affect and the Body of Christ

As Donne’s Devotions are often cited among the most provocative and informative depictions of illness during the seventeenth century, so is Dutch painter Gabriel Metsu’s (1629-1667) celebrated work Het zieke kind [The Sick Child](1660). Scholars have long suggested that the painting, which now hangs in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, dates from Metsu’s Amsterdam period, where he lived and worked from 1657 until his death in 1667—a period which coincides with “the harshest years of the Amsterdam plague epidemic.” In this sense, “Metsu’s secular scene presents a likely

\[271\] Devotions, 627-9.
\[272\] See Figure II.
scenario from any number of homes in which parents, who had little understanding of how the illness was transmitted or avoided, cared for children who were particularly vulnerable." The image itself is striking. A woman—we presume, a mother—sits against a brightly lighted back wall. At her right hand, in brilliant detail, is a cup and pestle, in which one might imagine a salve or medicine of some sort, to be applied to the child that reposes in the woman’s lap. The child is deathly pale, particularly against the vibrant blue and red garments covering the woman’s lap, garments over which the child’s legs dangle lifelessly. It is not immediately clear whether the child is male or female, although hanging on the chair to its left are types of cap and coat generally worn by boys.

274 Hedquist, 169.
Figure 3: Gabriel Metsu, *Het zieke kind* [The sick child] (1660). Reproduced with permission from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
While the child’s gaze drifts somewhere into the distance, in a look that suggests resignation, the woman looks attentively to the body in her arms—her own face pale against both her stark black cap and the white smock about her neck and shoulders, her left arm propping the child up, her ringed right hand clutching its arm with a tenderness that makes it easy to imagine her gently stroking its feverish body with her thumb, suggesting that the affliction will soon pass. The composition of the child’s face betrays the severity of the illness, its dark eyes and lifeless stare firmly set against a sickly complexion.

Robinson describes the image, where “The child’s turning his eyes away, his lassitude in the midst of this perfectly composed, perfectly balanced composition, adds to the sense of finality, distance, and disengagement.” This is not only true of the composition but of the occasion it depicts: it is certainly bleak. Nevertheless, there is hope; the child rests in the arms of the woman in a position that recalls the severity of Michelangelo’s Pietà (1499) folded into the domestic scene of Gerard David’s Virgin and Child with the Milk Soup (1515), where the mother and son go about their daily business under the eminent sign of the Passion. According to Hedquist, the child’s pose and exposed legs cite “a number of Renaissance and Baroque representations of Christ as an infant in the lap of the Virgin Mary at the nativity and as an adult at the

275 Robinson, 62.
lamentation…[where] in seventeenth-century Dutch painting, nudity or partial nudity is
often a convention for a depiction of a deceased child or a Classical or religious infant,
such as Hercules, Ganymede, or Christ [and where, with] the peculiar pose of the child
with his exposed legs, Metsu followed established pictorial precedents for the depiction
of Christ in the lap of his mother, Mary, at the beginning and end of his life.”

Moreover, Metsu makes the Passion even more explicit in Het zieke kind, as a painting of
the Crucifixion hangs on the wall behind the woman and child, above the child’s head.
While it is difficult to discern, the painting-within-the-painting echoes Metsu’s depiction
of the event in his own Crucifixion (1654), where “Christ is silhouetted against a dark,
empty background and elevated above the mourners, John the Evangelist, the Virgin
Mary, and Mary Magdalene, in a devotional image that avoids any narrative
distractions.” Save for the two figures in the foreground, the painting of the
Crucifixion scene occupies the most prominent place in Het zieke kind: “Except for the
depiction of Christ’s crucifixion on the back wall, all the other objects surrounding the
woman and child are abruptly cut off by the frame, which heightens the proximity and
intimacy of the foreground figures, and accentuates the scene of Golgotha.”

Tracking the confessional circles Metsu traveled in as well as the pictoral
devotional works he was familiar with, Hedquist locates his work in a Roman Catholic

277 Hedquist, 162
278 Robinson, 189; Hedquist, 173.
279 Hedquist, 162.
tradition and, in turn, identifies Metsu as a Catholic.\textsuperscript{280} While Hedquist’s evidence of Metsu’s own Catholicism is compelling, the painting itself does not confirm this; it is not explicitly Roman Catholic in any sense. When placed in conversation with other confessions and approaches to the Passion it points to many of the same Reformed Orthodox determinations of faith and the body of Christ as the \textit{Devotions}. A close reading of the painting enables us to approach the \textit{Devotions} yet again with an eye to faith, affect, and the congregation, but with a new understanding of what Donne’s return to Christology meant for medicine and philosophy as well as for Reformed Orthodoxy.

\textit{Het zieke kind}, like the \textit{Devotions}, asks us to first consider the status of the ailing human body and, in a powerful affective analogy, the body of the suffering incarnate Christ. The collation of the child in repose and the Crucifixion in \textit{Het zieke kind} points first to the Incarnation and to the weakness of the body and, second, to the status of sickness as an apt contemplative object; Metsu, after Donne, seems to affirm that the Incarnation “clothd me with thy selfe, by stripping me of my selfe, and by dulling my bodily senses, to the meats, and eases of this world, hast whet, and sharpned my spirituall senses, to the apprehension of thee” (Prayer II).\textsuperscript{281} But the painting also inspires fear, especially as the forceful image of the sick child draws our attention to the body, to an

\textsuperscript{280} According to Hedquist, “The distinctive Roman Catholic iconographic features found in several works by Metsu are, in part, the result of the painter’s complex relationship with the leading artistic, literary, and religious figures of the seventeenth-century Roman Catholic community in tolerant Amsterdam. Included in this circle were painters, such as Jan Baptist Weenix, Adriaen van der Velde, and Karel Dujardin; poets, such as Joost van den Vondel and Jan Vos; and Roman Catholic priests, such as the Jesuit, Simon Kleyn, and the secular priest, Father Leonardus Marius, the leader of Amsterdam catholicism at the Begijnhof.” See Hedquist, 159.

\textsuperscript{281} \textit{Devotions}, 36.
early modern body that, in a Galenic diagnostic vocabulary, understands the bodily
humors and emotions as inextricable. According to Paster, “the bodily humors and the
emotion they sustain and move the body to express in action can be lexically
distinguished but not functionally separated.”

Hence, as Donne confirms in the
Devotions, faith and assurance are tied to the physiological dimensions of the body, its
operations, expressions, and imbalances. Donne, in turn, understands his illness as more
than metaphorical; “As the ill affections of the spleene, complicate, and mingle themselus
with euery infirmitie of the body, so doth feare insinuat itself in euery action or passion
of the mind” (Meditation VI).

The functioning of his body is inextricable from the
state of his emotions.

Donne’s knowledge of medicine and humoralism is notable. His Conclave Ignati
suggests an investment in Galenic approaches to the body, particularly in his
consignment of Paracelsus (with Machiavelli, Columbus, Copernicus, and, of course,
Ignatius of Loyola) to hell due to his demand that “al remedies might be dangerously
drawne from my uncertaine, ragged, and unperfect experiments, in triall whereof…many
men have been made carkases.”

Moreover, throughout the Devotions, as Donne
couples his contemplation of Christ with the physiological situation of his affliction, he
grounds his understanding of the natural body in a declaredly Galenic language. This is

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282 Gail Kern Paster, Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakesperean Stage
C. Schoenfeldt, Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness
in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge
University Press, 1999), 1-39.

283 Devotions, 116-7.

284 Donne, Ignatius His Conclave, 18-25.
true of his use of the term “affections.” Donne prays that God “Giue me tender and supple, and conformable affections, that as I ioy with them that ioy, and mourn with them that mourn, so I may feare with them that feare” immediately prior to his treatment of the descensus (in a Reformed Orthodox idiom that emphasizes Christ’s torture and despair)(Prayer VI). Yet Donne, like Calvin, never confuses or conflates the affective language of faith with the terms and limits of the human passions; passio and affectus are separate concepts. Instead, the meditation on the bell marks a turning point for Donne within the Devotions, from one body to another, from limited human passions (even rendered in English as “affections”) to an affective understanding of faith.

The distinction between affections in a humoral or Galenic sense and the Reformed Orthodox version of affective faith is difficult to see at first, considering the degree to which early modern writers use “passions” and “affections” synonymously in English. Thomas Wright, for instance, determines “What we understand by Passions and Affections” without distinction between the two, where “Those actions then which are common with vs, and beasts, we call Passions, and Affections, or perturbations of the mind…a sensual motion of our appetitiue faculty, through imagination, of some good or il thing…when these affections are stirring in our minds, they alter the humours of our bodies, causing some passion or alteration in them.” Yet Donne moves seamlessly

285 Devotions, 140-3.
286 Wright, 8. Wright’s declaredly Roman Catholic text is often taken as prescriptive, as a valueless depiction of early modern thought on the passions, where “affects are by definition bodily states—psychophysiological responses to perceived changes in the environment” (Paster, 154). But his description is certainly biased, a quality which is made clear in the fifth book of The Passions of the Minde in Generall, as the genre of the
from one definition to the other after Meditation XVI, where he is “affected” physically by the bell but ultimately moved to faith in a way that complicates humoral approaches such as Wright’s, especially in the section of *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* titled “How Passions are moued with musick and instruments.” In Wright’s approach, sound has an almost magical effect over its hearers, driving devils from hosts, moving mules by way of bells, but in any case operating upon the passions or affections but not necessarily reason. As early as Book I, Wright establishes the relationship between affections and reason as such: “albeit these passions inhabit the confines both of sense and reason, yet they keep not equall friendship with both; for passions and sense are like two naughty seruants, who oft-times beare more loue to another, then they are obedient to their Master.” For Donne, however, reason is inextricable from affection insofar as he begins, in faith, from the understanding that God is benevolent—the basis of reason as well as faith in Reformed Orthodoxy. And how are human senses and passions comported to reason? Through the apt and proper contemplation of Christ’s *descensus*, where the extremity of his experience of pain and despair confirms, in reason, the

treatise shifts from medical or scientific investigation of the passions and affects to an intimate address to God (under the heading “Motiues to Loue”); see Wright, 193. Wright operates under different assumptions about grace, faith, and agency as his Reformed Orthodox contemporaries, particularly with reference to Christ’s *descensus*; he never depicts Christ’s passions, nor does he treat him in his human weakness and despair. Donne, in contrast, locates Christ’s humanity at the center of the *Devotions* in a manner that recalls Calvin’s own attention to Christ in the *Institutio* and in the *Harmoniam Evangelicum*.

287 See Wright, 159.
288 Wright, 8.
primacy of God’s love for mankind. Calvin, at the end of Book II of the *Institutio* suggests that Christ’s power to move men to faith takes shape in affective terms, particularly where one “will surely experience [*afficietur*] and feel [*sentiet*] something of what he owes to God’s mercy” (II.xvi.2/B 505). As I established above, Calvin renders faith in terms of affect, as man *afficietur*—that is, “will be affected by,” from the verb *afficere*—God’s mercy (*misericordia Dei*). Moreover, in his attention to Christ’s suffering and despair, afflictions of the body and the heart which he overcame to the benefit of mankind, Calvin asks: “Will the man not then even be more moved [*permovebitur*] by all these things which so vividly portray the greatness of the calamity from which he has been rescued?” (II.xvi.2/B 505). This “movement” speaks to reason, to the heart and the mind, as well as to faith; the elect, in which camp Donne clearly locates himself across the *Devotions*, express their relation to God affectively, as something more than mere feeling—and, by extension, as something more than a humoral determination of “affection.” Hence, the bell moves Donne to faith insofar as it initially confirms and continues to exceed his reason. It generates no magical effect over his senses, as in Wright’s description of sound and its properties over the passions and affections; it does, however, lead reason beyond its natural limits and affirm God’s benevolence in terms of *affectus*.

289 “*afficietur quidem et sentiet aliqua ex parte quantum debat misericordiae Dei*” (II.xvi.2/OS III 483).

290 “*his none eo magis permovebitur quo melius ad vivum repraesentatur quanta e calamitate ereptus fuerit?*” (II.xvi.2/OS III 484). 239
In Expostulation XVI, Donne traces this distinction in time, moving from the passions to *affectus* in his depiction of conversion. God, “in making vs *Christians*…diddest not destroy that which wee were before, *naturall men*, so in the exalting of our religious deuotions now we are *Christians*…hast beene pleased to continue to vs those *assistances* which did worke upon the affections of *naturall men* before” (Expostulation XVI).\(^{291}\) Donne draws a distinction between the “affections of *naturall men*” and the “religious deuotions” of Christians, between “affections” in a sense that is synonymous with “passions” and the *affectus* proper to Reformed Orthodox faith. Donne’s Expostulation XVI, on the ringing of the bell which left him “yet neuer so affected as here” (Meditation XVI), understands the bell as working upon his natural faculties (the province of Thomas Wright’s study) as well as his faith.\(^{292}\) The meditations on the bell affirm the difference between natural and supernatural affections. Donne speaks to a God “who art *all*” and who “art made of no *substances*” which the natural human mind can apprehend; in turn, “the *ioyes & glory* which are with thee, are made of none of these *circumstances*.” They are, rather, “*Essentiall ioy, and glory Essentiall*” (Expostulation XVII).\(^{293}\) Just as Donne depicts God as inconceivable in human language or sense, only “presented to vs vnder many human affections,” (Meditation VIII), he looks forward to a supernatural field of affects, “*Essentiall ioy, and glory Essentiall*,” heretofore unknown to human sensation.\(^{294}\) He emphasizes this distinction again, after

\(^{291}\) *Devotions*, 404-5.
\(^{292}\) *Devotions*, 389-90.
\(^{293}\) *Devotions*, 425-7.
\(^{294}\) *Devotions*, 178.
his contemplation of the bell, in the rhetorical question “What *Hypocrates*, what *Galen*, could shew mee that in my *body*? It lies deeper than so; it lies in my *soule*” (Expostulation XXII). Galen remains a formidable physician, able to describe natural processes and the operation of the human body; what has changed, over the course of the meditations on the bell in the *Devotions*, is the status of the body itself. It is here, in Expostulation XXII, a body that Donne refers to comfortably as his own, “my *body,*” but it points nevertheless to the body of Christ, comprised affectively of the elect, irreducible to any one individual believer. Of this Donne is clear, that “No Man is an Iland, intire of itselfe: euery man is a peece of the *Continent*, a part of the *maine*… Any Mans *death* diminishes me, because I am inuolued in *Mankinde*; And therefore neuer send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; It tolls for *thee*” (Meditation XVII).

He is involved in mankind through Christ, through the Incarnation, in corporeal terms but also in affective terms, through faith.

Metsu’s inclusion of the Crucifixion painting in *Het zieke kind* demands that we attend to faith as well as to the sick body of the child, that we contemplate Christ’s *descensus*. For Calvin, Donne, and Metsu, affect and faith are not reducible to the body, as many writers (from Wright to Paster, early modern to postmodern) seem to suggest. On the contrary, Reformed Orthodox determinations of affective faith challenge the limits of the human body. Insofar as *affectus* develops in tandem with grace and faith and complicates our understanding of human agency (as explored in Chapter 1), *affectus*  

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also generates a new horizon for the organization of bodies, the body of Christ, the body of the elect in faith that precedes and, in turn, transcends the ordinary limits of human corporeality. “The Bell rings out, the pulse thereof is changed; the tolling was a faint, and intermitting pulse, vpon one side; this stronger, and argues more and better life” (Meditation XVIII)\textsuperscript{297}: the pulse of the bell signals the life of the body of Christ, of the congregation, just as an affective understanding of faith reconfigures the figures of the painting into a larger assemblage, the body of Christ, irreducible to the child, the woman, or the scene depicted in the painting-within-the-painting, of the Crucifixion. Donne, and every other human being, suffer until death under the mark of sin, but their affective relationships with God exceed their frail bodies and capricious passions. The sick child is not limited to its body but, in fidelity to Christ, engrafted affectively in Christ’s larger body, in the congregation.

The Canons of Dort privilege predestination over Christology and, in doing so, limit attention to the congregation to speculation concerning election. Donne, in reaction, attends to the congregation explicitly in a language of faith and affect, all of which come together in the Reformed Orthodox treatment of Christ’s Descensus. The Devotions, in this sense, are misread when scoured for information on medicine and health, when reduced to a depiction of the lived experience of Donne’s illness. The pulse of the bell confirms another life in another body, a pulse that exceeds his own.

\textsuperscript{297} Devotions, 436.
Chapter 3—Spinoza’s Affective Physics and Reformed Orthodoxy

“nobody as yet has determined the limits of the body’s capabilities: that is, nobody as yet has learned from experience what the body can and cannot do”

Baruch Spinoza, *Ethica* III P2 Schol

Spinoza and Reformed Orthodoxy

Baruch de Spinoza owned a Spanish edition of Jean Calvin’s 1559 *Institutio*. Printed in 1597, Cypriano de Valera’s translation of the Latin text was one of the most prominent theological books in Spinoza’s collection. Save for several notable editions

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1 “quid Corpus possit, nemo hucusque determinavit, hoc est, neminem huc usque experientia docuit, quid Corpus ex solis legibus Naturae, quatenus corporea tantum consideratur, possit agere, et quid non possit, nisi a Mente determinetur… Unde sequitur, cum homines dicunt, hanc vel illam actionem Corporis oriri a Mente, quae imperium in Corpus habet, eos nescire, quid dicant, nec aliud agere, quam speciosis verbis fateri, se yeram illius actionis causam absque admiratione ignorare” (*Ethica* O I.121-2).


of the Bible⁴ and a number of key textbooks on Hebrew grammar and exegesis (owing, no doubt, to his training among the Amsterdam Sephardi),⁵ early modern theology is not well represented in Spinoza’s library. He did own Hugo Grotius’ important anti-Socinian treatise, the 1617 *Defensio Fidei catholicae de satisfactione Christi*, as well as Desiderius Erasmus’ 1540 edition of Flavius Josephus’ *Antiquitatem Judaicarum libri XX*.⁶ Moreover, he owned an edition of the works of Augustine, the 1537 *Opera Omnia* edited by Johannes Piscatorius.⁷ Given this relatively sparse catalog of Christian theological resources, Calvin’s name stands out. So do Calvinist concepts and controversies; in addition to the *Institutio*, Spinoza owned Joannes a Bononia’s *De aeterna Dei prædestinacione et reprobatione sententia*—a text licensed [ex officina] for publication at the Catholic University in Leuven that responded to debates between Calvin and his interlocutors, after Calvin’s own *De aerterna Dei praedestinatione* (1552). It is important to note that the printed inventory of Spinoza’s library is not exhaustive, that any number of his books may have changed hands before it was written and printed, and

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⁶ See *Catalogus van de Bibliotheek der Vereniging het Spinozahuis te Rijnsburg*, 23-4.
⁷ Ibid., 19.
that he was likely to have borrowed books from friends in Amsterdam, Rijnsburg, Leiden, Voorburg and the Hague. Nevertheless, the existing record is instructive insofar as it licenses one to take seriously the ambit of this chapter: Spinoza as a careful reader of Calvin and of Reformed Orthodoxy.

This chapter demonstrates that Calvin’s determination of *affectus* in the 1559 *Institutio* bore considerable influence on Spinoza as he composed his *Ethica*, published posthumously in 1677. Beginning with a thorough investigation of Spinoza’s use of *affectus*, together with the complementary terms *afficio* and *affectio*, I discover the definition of *affectus* in the *Ethica* as an experience of necessity that affects the body and the mind and, in turn, is constitutive of both. An *affectus* is a fundamental and constructive experience that is, duly, constitutive of “experience” itself insofar as it is related to substance in Spinoza’s ambitious ontological project. An *affectus* is also understood as such, adequately, when conceived as active and productive and as involving human agency in that production. Moreover, Spinoza gives us what I have termed an “affective physics” where he defines *affectus* as a primary relation between

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9 The full Latin title is *Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata et in quinque partes distincta, in quibus agitur I. De Deo. II. De Natura et Origine Mentis. III. De Origine et Natura Affectuum. IV. De Servitute Humana, seu de Affectuum Viribus. V. De Potentia Intellectus, seu de Libertate Humana*, rendered into English as *The Ethics Demonstrated in Geometrical Order, in Five Distinct Parts, in which are treated I. God II. the Nature and Origin of the Mind III. The Origin and Nature of the Affectuum IV. Human Bondage, or the Power of the Affectuum V. The Power of the Intellect, or Human Freedom*. Hereafter I cite this text as the *Ethica*.

bodies, as “the affections of the body by which the body’s power of activity is increased or diminished, assisted or checked, together with the ideas of these affections. Thus, if we can be the adequate cause of one of these affections, then by Affectum I understand activity, otherwise passivity” (III Def3/M 278). This definition is inextricable, in the *Ethica*, from a detailed diagram of causality in which human beings can understand themselves as active, as adequate causes, through the exercise of reason, even where Spinoza affirms that all events are predetermined and necessary. In this sense Spinoza, like Calvin, uses affectus to emphasize human agency in the face of necessity—which, for Calvin, takes shape prior to predestination in the ordo docendi of the *Institutio*, where affectus is constitutive of the relationship between man and God as well as faith as it comports human hearts and minds to God. Both Spinoza and Calvin use affectus to describe the experience of necessity and agency as well as the demands this makes on the intellect in its relationship to an infinite and absolute God.

Spinoza was neither Reformed Orthodox nor Christian; he drew much, however, from theological resources. While historians have heretofore emphasized Spinoza’s early Judaism and the terms of his excommunication, as well as his contact with heterodox forms of Christianity—including Mennonites, Quakers, Socinians, and Collegiants—no

\footnote{“Per Affectum intelligo Corporis affectiones, quibus ipsius Corporis agendi potentia augetur vel minuitur, juvatur vel coercetur, et simul harum affectionum ideas. Si itaque alicuius harum affectionum adaequata possimus esse causa, tum per Affectum actionem intelligo; alias passionem” (*Ethica* O I.119).}
\footnote{See Chapter 1.}
\footnote{Richard H. Popkin and Michael A. Signer famously attribute the Hebrew translation of Quaker Margaret Fell’s *A Loving Salutation to the Seed of Abraham among the Jews, wherever they are scattered up and down upon the Face of the Earth* (1656) to Spinoza;
previous study has traced Spinoza’s debts to Reformed Orthodoxy or to Calvin in particular. Historians tend to allow the hostile reception of Spinozism to obscure this. Jonathan Israel, for instance, assumes that Spinoza was “perfectly aware of the radical implications of his ideas and the violent reaction they were likely to provoke” and that “his philosophy stood in total contradiction to the tenets of Judaism and all forms of Christianity, as well as Cartesianism and the mainstream of the western philosophical tradition since the end of antiquity, [and thus] it was obvious that his philosophy could only be propagated clandestinely.”14 Antonio Negri seems less reticent to locate Spinoza’s philosophy in relation to Dutch Reformed Orthodoxy, affirming that “the religious form of Spinoza’s thought pertains to the form of the Dutch culture at the apex

See Spinoza’s Earliest Publication? The Hebrew Translation of Margaret Fell’s A Loving Salutation to the Seed of Abraham among the Jews, wherever they are scattered up and down upon the Face of the Earth, ed. Richard H. Popkin and Michael A. Signer (Assen/Maastricht; and Wolfeboro, New Hampshire: Van Gorcum, 1987). While I tend to agree with Steven Nadler’s assertion that Spinoza probably was not the translator of the tract, I think that Popkin/Signer thesis deserves more attention insofar as biographical information alone does not tell us much about the conversation between Quaker theology and Spinoza’s earliest writing, particularly the Korte Verhandeling. See Nadler, Spinoza, 158-62. See also Leszek Kolakowski, Chrétiens sans Église: La Conscience religieuse et le lien confessionnel au XVIIe siècle, trans. Anna Posner (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1969). Kolakowski’s study of heterodox varieties of Christianity in France and the Low Countries during the seventeenth century was originally published in Polish in 1965, then translated into French in 1969 for the Bibliothèque de Philosophie collection, edited by Jean-Paul Sartre and Pierre Verstraeten. Despite its importance, it has not yet been translated into English.

of its revolutionary process” and that this “religiousness overdetermines the material specificity of the revolutionary process as Spinoza reads it. It is several things at once: a refined theological rationalism, a widely held popular belief, and an open debate.”¹⁵ For Negri, however, this is indicative of the early Spinoza. Insofar as he is involved in “an open debate” in a Calvinist milieu, he is an “apologist” for capitalism. Negri’s version of the Ethica, which “cannot be read in any way as a unitary work, considering the interruption of the Theologico-Political Treatise,” is thus split between the utopian model of organization in the first two Parts (what Negri calls Spinoza’s “First Foundation”), which corresponds with the emergent seventeenth-century logic of finance proper to Dutch capitalism, and the dis-utopian description of power in the latter three Parts (the “Second Foundation”), between pious and impious Spinozas.¹⁶

My investigation of affectus (with its cognates, afficio and affectio) in the Ethica demonstrates a consistent and uninterrupted language across all five Parts which proceeds from ontology to the experience of ontology in an idiom derived from Calvin himself. Israel and Negri are important interlocutors who both give nuanced versions of Spinoza’s engagement with theology, even if they risk obscuring the continuities between Spinozism and Reformed Orthodoxy. Most other commentaries on the Ethica or the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus (1670)¹⁷ tend to err in less complex ways, asserting in

¹⁶ See Negri, Savage Anomaly, 15, 91, 69.
¹⁷ Citations in English of the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus follow from the recent Michael Silverthorne and Jonathan Israel translation; see Benedict de Spinoza,
polarizing terms how “Spinoza’s arguments with theologians were directed toward many of his contemporaries, both friend (Ludwig [Lodowick] Meyer [and the Collegiant audience]) and foe (Calvinist establishment, rabbis).” But attention to affectus in the *Ethica* tells a different story, one which reveals to us a Spinozism in conversation with Calvinism.

Spinoza points to this engagement with Reformed Orthodoxy in Chapter XX of his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, demonstrating familiarity with terms and concepts that were central to seventeenth-century Calvinian traditions. This is evident in his description of Dutch Reformed Orthodoxy, in the language of his scathing critique. In what first appears as a celebration of Amsterdam under the liberal watch of the Regents, in the years before the murder of the De Witt brothers at the Hague and the Stadhouderate of William III, Spinoza names it as

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a fine example of a city which enjoys the fruits of this liberty, with its great growth being the admiration of all nations. In this flourishing republic, this superb city, people of every sect and nation [nationis et sectae] live together in the greatest harmony. Before they make a loan to someone, they just want to know whether he is rich or poor and whether he is known to behave with good faith or deceitfully. For the rest, religion or sect does not come into it [Religio vel secta nihil eos mover] because this does not help to win or lose [justificandam vel damnandam] a case before a court, and no sect is so hugely resented by others that its members (provided they harm no one and give each man his due and live honestly) are not defended by the public authority and under the protection of the magistracy (SI 257).

The terms of this “celebration” are conspicuous; I follow Steven Nadler in reading this fragment as “a brilliant example of cutting irony,” although I push this claim farther in light of its location with the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus. Spinoza draws our attention to the citizens of Amsterdam in their capacity to tolerate “all people, of whatever sect and nation” [omnes, cujuscunque nationis et sectae, homines]. Through this late use (in Chapter XX) of term “sect,” however, Spinoza recalls the prominent “sectarians” [Sectarios] of Chapter XIV who “certainly accommodate the words of the Bible to their own beliefs” [quod scilicet verba Scriptuae suis opinionibus accommodant]

20 “Urbs Amstelodamum exemplo sit, quae tanto cum suo incremento, et omnium nationum admiratione, hujus libertatis fructus experitur; in hac enim florentissima republica et urbe praesantissima omnes, cujuscunque nationis et sectae, homines summa cum concordia vivunt, et ut alci bona sua credant, id tantum scire curant, nam dives an pauper sit, et num bona fide an dolo solitus sit agere. Caeterum Religio vel secta nihil eos movet, quia haec coram judice ad justificandam val damnandam causam nihil juvat; et nulla omnino tam odiosa secta est, cujus sectarii (modo nemenem laedant, et suum unicuique tribuant, honesteque vivant) publica magistratuum authoritate et praesidio non protegentur” (Theologico-Political Treatise O II.171-2).

21 Nadler, Spinoza, 286. Actually, Nadler notes that “This is either a brilliant example of cutting irony, particularly when read in light of the city’s treatment of [Adriaan] Koerbagh, or an attempt to coopt the regents, to persuade them to look kindly upon his work and even see him as an articulate defender of their cause—a cause which they themselves may temporarily have forgotten.”
but who “refuse to grant the same liberty to others” [hanc eandem libertatem reliquis nolunt concedere] (SI 178-9, with my emendations). He suggests that these sectarians are none other than the Dutch Reformed Orthodox who “persecute all who do not think as they do as if they were enemies of God, even though they may be the most honorable of men and dedicated to true virtue while they esteem those who agree with them as the elect of God [Dei electos], even if they are the most violent of men” (SI 178-9); Spinoza marks this with his critical reference to the Dei electos, the elect of God, who are less concerned with piety or virtue than with power. He looks forward here, within the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, to his mock-celebration of Amsterdam, where “religion or sect do nothing to move or influence” [Religio vel secta nihil eos movet] the tolerant citizens “because this does nothing to help in winning or losing a case before a judge” [quia haec coram judice ad justificandam vel damnandam causam nihil juvat](SI 257, with my emendations). Like the Dei electos of Chapter XIV—the Calvinist sectarians who are more interested in power than piety—the citizens of Amsterdam “celebrated” in Chapter XX are too preoccupied with the business of mere jurisprudence to attend to real matters of justice or virtue. But the Silverthorne/Israel translation loses the rhetorical thrust of this mock panegyric, where Spinoza notes that neither religion nor sect help one to “justificandam vel damnandam,” to be made just or to be damned to loss, before a

22 Theologico-Political Treatise O II.107.
23 “qui cum iisden non sentiunt, quanquam honestissimi et verae virtutis obtemperantes sint, tanquam Dei hostes tamen persequantur, et contra eos, qui iis assentantur, quamvis impotentissimi animi sint, tamen tanquam Dei electos diligunt” (Theologico-Political Treatise O II.107).
24 Theologico-Political Treatise O II.171-2
judge or court [judice], using a weighted theological language invoking justification, damnation, election, reprobation, and predestination. It is not merely a matter of winning or losing but rather election and reprobation. The gerundive forms of justifico and damno are very strong here; they emphasize, with nihil, that there is nothing in this sectarian understanding of religion that can aid one in their attempt to be made just or to avoid damnation before a judge.

This is not only a clever indictment of Reformed Orthodox approaches to religion, where their sectarian version of religion itself is inadequate, but also a comment on this sect’s monopoly of political power. Spinoza claims that “no sect is so hugely resented by others that its members (provided they harm no one and give each man his due and live honestly) are not defended by the public authority and under the protection of the magistracy.” He continues, however, to reprise, in short, the history of seventeenth-century Reformed Orthodoxy in the Netherlands, accounting for the contest between Remonstrant and Contra-Remonstrant approaches to Calvinism and thus for the historical conditions precipitating the situation in mid-century Amsterdam: “when the controversy about religion between the Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants began to agitate office-holders and the Dutch provincial assemblies earlier this century, it led after a time to a complete split” (SI 257-8). Spinoza seems to set this apart from his treatment of Amsterdam through the use of a transton, Contra. However, when considered in light of his earlier determination of the Dutch Calvinists as sectarians, arrogating scriptural

25 “Contra, cum olim Remonstrantium et Contraremonstrantium controversia de Religione a Politicis et Ordinibus Provinciarum agitari incepit, tandem in schisma abit” (Theologico-Political Treatise O II.172).
authority entirely to themselves, it is clear that the terms of this “schism”—i.e. the contest settled at the Synod of Dort in 1618/19—established the precise conditions of the “tolerance” he celebrates in Amsterdam. This is revealed in his description, where “This schism demonstrated in all sorts of ways that decrees [leges] designed to regulate religion which were intended to put an end to disputes [dirimendas scilicet controversias], actually have quite the opposite effect, stirring people up rather than disciplining them while other men deem themselves authorized by such laws to arrogate a boundless license to themselves” (SI 257-8)\(^2\); here he emphasizes the ongoing nature of the disputes which, despite laws intended to put an end to such controversies [dirimendas scilicet controversias], perpetuate these contests indefinitely. This is the Amsterdam that Spinoza appears to celebrate; the Amsterdam that he left in the early 1660s after his excommunication from the Sephardi community; the Amsterdam under the government of the Reformed Orthodox Regents that imprisoned his associate Adriaan Koerboagh for the publication and distribution of Een Ligt schynende in duystere plaatsen, om te verligten de voornaamste saaken der Godsgeleerdtheyd en Godsdienst [A Light Shining in Dark Places, to Shed Light on Matters of Theology and Religion](1668).\(^2\)

This, no doubt, weighed heavily on Spinoza as he published, anonymously, his Tractatus

\(^2\) “et multis tum exemplis constitit, leges, quae de Religione conduntur, dirimendas scilicet controversias, homines magis irritare quam corrigere, alios deinde infinitam ex iisdem licentiam sumere” (Theologico-Political Treatise O II.172).

\(^2\) See Israel, Radical Enlightenment, 185-96; Wim Klever, Mannen rond Spinoza (1650-1700): Presentatie van een emanciperende generatie (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 1997), 87-106.
Theologico-Politicus, in which he stages an important confrontation with the terms of Dutch Reformed Orthodoxy in the 1660s, in the wake of the Synod of Dort/Dordrecht. 28

In the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus Spinoza pronounces new definitions of sect and schism alike, in an almost Miltonic voice: “such schisms do not arise from an intense passion for truth (which is the fount and origin of amity and gentleness), but from a great lust for power [magna libidine regnandi]. It is plainer than the noonday sun that the real schismatics are those that condemn other men’s books [aliorum scripta damnant] and subversively instigate the insolent mob against their authors, rather than the authors themselves, who for the most part write only for the learned and consider reason alone as their ally” (SI 258). 29 While the Dutch Reformed Orthodox are among his targets in the


28 On the legacy of the Synod of Dort in Holland and the terms of the Nadere Reformatie, the intensification of Reformed Orthodoxy in the Netherlands against Cartesianism into the 1660s and 70s, see Andrew Fix, Fallen Angels: Balthasar Bekker, Spirit Belief, and Confessionalism in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic (Dordrecht; Boston, Massachusetts; and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 19: “In the first few decades after Dordrecht, the confessional party within the church was without serious opposition, and thus the vigor of the party and the church it dominated began to wane. But the vitality of the confessional party was soon restored by the appearance of a dynamic new element in Reformed religious life… After the Synod of Dordrecht, a group of Reformed clergy influenced by Puritanism began to assume a leadership role within the church by advocating renewed moral and doctrinal rigor. Led by such men as Willem Teellinck, Jacobus Koelman, William Ames, and Gisbertus Voetius, this movement called for a spiritual regeneration of the church and for the purification of Reformed religious life…called the Nadere Reformatie of “Further Reformation” because its advocates called for a second Reformation to follow upon and complete the work of the first.”

29 “praeterea schismata non oriri ex magno veritatis studio (fonte scilicet comitatis et mansuetudinis), sed ex magna libidine regnandi. Ex quibus luce meridiana clarius constat, eos potius schismaticos esse, qui aliorum scripta damnant, et vulgum petulantem in scriptores seditiose instigant, quam scriptores ipsi, qui plerumque doctis tantum scribunt, et solam Rationem in auxilium vocant” (Theologico-Political Treatise O II.172).
The Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, however, they are also among his chief interlocutors.

Spinoza’s argument is organized with the topics of the Synod of Dort in mind, particularly in the authority he willingly ascribes to Scripture. His citation of Paul (and the Epistle to the Romans in particular) is important as he affirms this Apostle’s singularity, where “none of the Apostles engaged with philosophy more than Paul” [nemo Apostolorum magis philosophatus est, quam Paulus] (SI 162/Theologico-Political Treatise O II.93): “Moses, the supreme prophet, put forward no orderly arguments. By contrast, the long deductions and arguments of Paul, such as are found in the Epistle to the Romans, were by no means written on the basis of spiritual revelation” (SI 157).

This, within the logic of the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, is quite a compliment, locating the Epistle to the Romans in a canon of philosophy, derived from reason rather than revelation or enthusiasm. Spinoza proceeds to stage a confrontation between Scriptural sources on faith and obedience, revisiting loci that were so crucial to the exegeses at Dordrecht earlier in the seventeenth century in an effort to demonstrate how the Apostles do indeed agree about religion itself, but widely disagree as to its foundations. Paul, for instance, to strengthen men in religion and to show them that salvation depends upon the grace of God alone, taught that no one may glory in their works but in faith alone, and that no one is justified by works (see Epistle to the Romans, 3.27-8), as well as the whole doctrine of predestination. On the other hand, James, in his Epistle, teaches that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone (see the Epistle of James 2.24); indeed, James sums up his whole

30 “summum Prophetam Mosen nullum legitimum argumentum fecisse; et contra longas Pauli deductiones et argumentationes, quales in Epist. ad Romanos reperiuntur, nullo modo ex revelatione supernaturali scriptas fuisse concedo” (Theologico-Political Treatise O II.89).
doctrine of religion in a very few words ignoring all of Paul’s arguments (Sl 161).³¹

Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans 3:28, affirms that “man is justified by faith without the works of the Law”; in the Epistle of James 2:24-6, however, James notes that “of works a man is justified, and not of faith onely…For as a bodie without the spirit is dead, euens so the faith without works is dead.”³² These are the loci at the center of the controversy concerning predestination precipitating the Synod of Dort and the Ordine Controversiarum established there in 1618/19.³³ Spinoza knows them well, folding them into his veiled critique of the burgerlijke citizens of Amsterdam (Reformed Orthodox and Sephardi alike) as well as into his careful examination of the terms of Scriptural authority. The Reformed Orthodox commentary in the margins of the 1560 Geneva Bible works to mediate these two opposing statements, glossing the passage in James as such: “the more his faith was declared by his obedience and good works, the more was it known to men to be perfect, as the goodness of a tree is known by her good fruite, otherwise no man can have perfection in this world: for everie man must pray for

³¹ “Apostolos in ipsa Religione quidem convenire, in fundamentis autem admodum discrepare. Nam Paulus, ut homines in Religione confirmaret, et iis ostenderet salutem a sola Dei gratia pendere, docuit, neminem ex operibus, sed sola fide gloriari posse, neminemque ex operibus justificari (vide Epist. ad Rom. cap. 3. vers. 27, 28.), et porro totam illam doctrinam de praedestinatione. Jacobus autem contra in sua Epistola, hominem ex operibus justificari, et non ex fide tantum (vide ejus Epist. cap. 2. vers. 24.); et totam doctrinam Religionis, missis omnibus illis Pauli deputationibus, paucis admodum comprehendit” (Theologico-Political Treatise O II.92-3).
³³ See Chapter 2.
remission of his sinnes, & increase of faith.”

Spinoza follows this gloss insofar as he affirms the importance of obedience, where “the sole aim of Scripture is to teach obedience [to the moral law]… God’s teaching contains nothing other than simple faith: to believe in God and to revere him, or, which is the same thing, to obey him” (SI 179).

In the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* Spinoza distinguishes faith from philosophy; he proceeds to cite James 2, on faith and works, together with I John 4, on love and rebirth in Christ, in an attempt understand the terms of obedience in Scripture. But insofar as obedience follows from faith it is distinct from truth; faith is proper to theology while truth is proper to philosophy. Spinoza thus affirms that “faith requires not so much true as pious dogmas, that is, such tenets as move the mind to obedience, even though many of these may not have a shadow of truth in them” (SI 181).

The prophet/theologian James stands against the philosopher Paul; the former affirms obedience as faith while the latter glimpses, however tentatively, the truth of God in affirming necessity and predestination.

Faith demands obedience, not any understanding of truth. In fact, what God is is irrelevant to faith, as are such matters as “whether man obeys God of his own free will or

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34 *The Geneva Bible (1560)*, 108l.
35 “intentum Scripturae esse tantum, obedientiam docere…Euangelica autem doctrina nihil praeter simplicem fidem continet: nempe Deo credere eumque revereri, sive quod idem est, Deo obedire” (*Theologico-Political Treatise* O II.107-8).
36 See SI 179-83/*Theologico-Political Treatise* O II.107-11.
37 “Fidem non tam requirere vera quam pia dogmata, hoc est talia, quae animum ad obedientiam movent, tametsi inter ea plurima sint, quae nec umbram veritatis habent” (*Theologico-Political Treatise* O II.109).
by the necessity of the divine decree” (SI 183). By the end of Chapter XIV, Spinoza has rendered many theological questions, insofar as they remain theological questions, subordinate to power; for faith, such investigations only probe the terms of various adiaphorae. But questions concerning necessity and predestination are rendered, in Spinoza’s account, matters of truth, the province of philosophy, and in this transformation he deliberately retains many Reformed Orthodox propositions and vocabularies. Attention to this continuity, which I demonstrate below, gives new meaning to the statement in the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, that “none of the Apostles engaged with philosophy more than Paul” [nemo Apostolorum magis philosophatus est, quam Paulus]. It also helps us understand the development of the Ethica over the course of the 1660s and 70s, as a revision of the Dutch Korte Verhandeling van God, de Mensch en Deszelfs Welstand [Short Treatise on God, Man, and his Well-Being], as well as a sequel to the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, as a geometric demonstration of what and how God is, in truth, in philosophical terms. It is in this sense that Spinoza affirms certain philosophical truths following Calvin’s Institutio—namely, necessity and the experience of this determinism as affectus.

This connection between Calvin and Spinoza has never been recognized. What follows points to a heretofore neglected body of theological resources which Spinoza used to develop the Ethica. To help make affectus clear, I begin with a thorough investigation of the Ethica, of how affectus works and what it enables Spinoza to do. I

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38 “vel…quod homo ex arbitrii libertate vel ex necessitate divini decreti Deo obediat” (Theologico-Political Treatise O II.111).
proceed to explain where this language comes from and how it comes to influence Spinoza. I first illustrate how and why affectus is not Cartesian; Spinoza’s is a departure from Descartes, from the terms and horizons of his 1649 treatise *Les Passiones de l’Ame* (or, in Latin, his *Passiones, sive Affectus Animae*). *Affectus* in the *Ethica* is distinct from earlier tracts on the passions written in the tradition of Stoicism or Thomism, such as Thomas Wright’s *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1596/1601) or Jean François Senault’s *The Use of the Passions* (1649), of which Spinoza took Descartes’ *Les Passiones de l’Ame* as a representative work. Proving that affectus does not proceed from Cartesianism I move through Spinoza’s Dutch text from the early 1660s, the *Korte Verhandeling*, demonstrating how and why he developed affectus in the *Ethica*. This investigation of the Dutch text reveals an engagement with Calvin and with Dutch Reformed Orthodoxy as Spinoza presents his nascent philosophy of necessity and affectus explicitly in terms of predestination. I end the chapter by returning to Calvin’s 1559 *Institutio* with the 1677 *Ethica* in mind, exploring the continuities and discontinuities between the two approaches to affectus and necessity as well as the new readings of Calvin, Spinoza, Reformed Orthodoxy and Spinozism this enables.

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Affective Physics: Affectus in the Ethica

The *Ethica*, published posthumously in 1677 as part of the *Opera Posthuma*, is Spinoza’s most comprehensive treatment of his philosophical system. It is, in many ways, an intimidating work, organized geometrically as a mathematical proof of God’s existence and as a systematic demonstration of his modes and attributes. The *Ethica* opens with several key definitions which set Part I: *De Deo* [On God] to work and continues to elaborate, in Part II: *De Natura et Origine Mentis* [On the Nature and Origin of the Mind], the composition of the mind and the terms of human knowing. Spinoza hones his approach to the mind as he develops a theory of the *affectus* across Part III: *De Origine et Natura Affectuum* [On the Origin and Nature of the *Affectus*] and Part IV: *De Servitute Humana, Seu de Affectuum Viribus* [On Human Servitude, or the Strength of the *Affectus*]; in Part V: *De Potentia Intellectus, seu de Libertate Humana* [On the Power of the Intellect, or Human Freedom] he focuses his treatment of the *affectus* in order to articulate a notion of freedom or blessedness [*beatitudo*] that proceeds from reason and understanding to emphasize human activity. The *Ethica* begins with a treatment of God and Nature, of ontology, and ends with a pointed attention to our active understanding of this ontology through the power of reason. As Spinoza proceeds from Part I to Part V he develops a consistent determination of *affectus* in order to express the connections and continuities between God and individuals, between ontology and the experience of being. At the center of the *Ethica* Spinoza delivers an affective physics which begins with a treatment of bodies—examining how they are affected and, in turn, proceed to affect other bodies—and continues to elaborate the experience of this affection in terms of
affectus. In this way, the Ethica may be read as Spinoza’s attempt to render the most basic ontological principles and categories intelligible as the object of the work becomes increasingly familiar. He begins with God and the distinctions between substance, mode and attribute and moves in concert through a study of the mind and the bases of human emotion to attend, finally, to a more familiar familiar subject, in Parts IV and V: the passions and our relation to them, a common genre in seventeenth-century philosophy and theology. But the Ethica diverges from other period treamtents of the passions, specifically through Spinoza’s careful articulation of affectus. In this section I investigate the development of affectus across the work, revealing its importance in connection with afficio and affectio and its function as a fundamental unit of relation and experience.

A thorough investigation of affectus in the Ethica begins with Part I: De Deo where Spinoza establishes basic ontological principles through a series of primary definitions and axioms. Here affectus first takes shape in a larger discussion of afficio and affectio—terms that, though distinct, are fundamentally related across the five parts of the Ethica. In Definition 4 Spinoza establishes that “By mode I mean the affections [affectiones] of substance, that is, that which is in something else and is conceived through something else” (I Def4/M 217). Lewis and Short define affectio as “the relation to or disposition toward a thing,” “a change in the state or condition of body or mind,” and “a state or frame of mind, feeling.” Spinoza begins by relating affectio directly to substance, where “Substance is by nature prior to its affections” (I P1/M

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40 “Per modum intelligo substantiae affectiones, sive id, quod in alio est, per quod etiam concipitur” (I Def IV/Ethica O I.37).
An affectio, then, is a modification of substance, proper to a mode in the tripartite system of classification in the Ethica: substance/mode/attribute. Spinoza also ties affectio together with the verb afficio, where “matter is everywhere the same, and there are no distinct parts in it except insofar as we conceive matter as modified [affectam esse] in various ways…its parts are distinct, not really but only modally [unde eius partes modaliter tantum distinguuntur, non autem realiter]” (I P15 Schol/M 226-7). Modes, i.e. affectiones of substance, are identical with substance that has been modified—a process which takes grammatical shape here in the Ethica through the use of afficio in the passive voice (affectam esse). Affectus is first brought into this economy of terms where Spinoza affirms that “those who confuse the divine nature with human nature easily ascribe to God human emotions [affectus], especially so long as they are ignorant of how the latter are produced in the mind [quomodo affectus in mente producuntur]” (I P8

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41 “Substantia prior est natura suis affectionibus” (Ethica O I.38). See also affectionum (I P4/M 218/ Ethica O I.39); affectiones (I P4 Dem/M219/ Ethica O I.39); affectionum/affectionibus (I P5 Dem/M 219/Ethica O I.39); affectiones (I P6 Cor/M 219/Ethica O I.40); affectiones (I P14 Cor 2/M 224/Ethica O I.47); affectiones (I P30/M 234/Ethica O I.60-1). For an insightful resource on substance in the history of philosophy see R. S. Woolhouse, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz: The Concept of Substance in Seventeenth-Century Metaphysics (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 1-53, 190-8.


43 Lewis and Short define afficio as “to do something to one, i.e. to exert an influence on body or mind, so that it is brought into such or such a state.” See Lewis and Short, afficio.

44 “materia ubique eadem est, nee partes in eadem distinguuntur, nisi quatenus materiam diversimode affectam esse concipimus, unde ejus partes modaliter tantum distinguuntur, non autem realiter” (Ethica O I.50).
Schol2/M 220). God is identical with Nature and substance; he is not subject to human emotions \([\textit{affectus}]\). He will revisit this later in the \textit{Ethica}, and frequently, but it is already evident in Part I, based on our understanding of \textit{afficio} and \textit{affectio}; \textit{affectus} proceed from God because God is substance, prior to all \textit{affectioes}. The relationship is made much more clear where Spinoza confirms that “an \textit{affectus} is the idea of an affection of the body, which must therefore involve some clear and distinct conception” (V P4 Cor/M 366), and an idea is nothing but a mode of substance proper to the attribute of intellect, to the mind as opposed to the body (extension). Substance is affected (the active voice of \textit{afficio}), giving rise to serial modifications of substance (\textit{affectioes}). These \textit{affectioes} affect the human body under the attributes of extension and intellect; Spinoza calls the ideas of these \textit{affectioes} affecting the body \textit{affectus}. The three terms are inextricable, conceptually and grammatically. Spinoza begins, in Part I, not with the mind or with specific \textit{affectus} but rather with God as substance, where “Particular things are nothing but affections [\textit{affectioes}] of the attributes of God, that is, modes wherein the attributes of God find expression [\textit{exprimuntur}] in a definite and determinate way” (I P25 Cor/M 232). Spinoza’s version of \textit{affectus} takes initial shape

45 “Sic etiam, qui naturam divinam cum humana confundunt, facile Deo affectus humanos tribuunt, praesertim quamdiu etiam ignorant, quomodo affectus in mente producuntur” (\textit{Ethica} O I.41). Because Shirley’s rendition of \textit{affectus} as “emotion” is so misleading I often replace “emotion” throughout with the original Latin term. In the interest of clarity I often take liberties with declension.

46 “Est namque affectus Corporis affectiois idea, quae propterea aliquem clarum et distinctum involvere debet conceptum” (\textit{Ethica} O I.243)

47 “Res particulares nihil sunt, nisi Dei attributorum affectioes, sive modi, quibus Dei attributa certo et determinato modo exprimuntur” (\textit{Ethica} O I.58).
through his determination of *affectio* and *afficio*, where he understands God as infinite and demonstrates that particular things are merely *affectio*nes of God as substance.

The *Ethica*, arranged as a geometrical demonstration after Euclid, is seldom recognized as artful. Nevertheless, it is hard to dismiss the style of the text as *affectus*, *afficio*, and *affectio* unfold grammatically and conceptually. Spinoza’s writing is striking, and the terms seem to emanate from one another, as when a body is described as “affected by an affection” [*Corpus afficiatur affectu*](II P17/Ethica O I.89) or when we are asked to imagine a thing that is wont to “affect us with an affection” [*affectu afficere*](III P14, P17/Ethica O I.130, 131). Through repetition across the five Parts as well as within individual Propositions, even across Definitions and Axioms, *affectus*, *afficio*, and *affectio* comprise the fabric of the *Ethica*. This is true in Part II: *De Natura et Origine Mentis*, where Spinoza extends his understanding of God to human beings and where the connection between *afficio, affectio*, and *affectus* is made more clear in direct relation to human intellect. But he is also clear in noting that an *affectus* affects the mind and the body; an *affectus* is “a state (*affectio*) of the body by which its power of acting is increased or diminished, assisted or restrained, along with the idea of that state.” It is a state of a body and an idea of the state of a body. In Part II, Axiom 3 Spinoza begins to

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48 Steven Nadler and Steven B. Smith both comment on the “unusual, even forbidding appearance” of the Ethica and its debts to Descartes, who “had set out to turn mathematics, especially geometry, into the veritable model for all human knowledge.” See Steven Nadler, *Spinoza’s Ethics: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 35; and Steven B. Smith, *Spinoza’s Book of Life: Freedom and Redemption in the Ethics* New Haven, Connecticut and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 20, 94.
49 Artlessly rendered by Shirley as “undergoes a further modification” (M 256).
articulate this unity in terms of specific affectus, where “Modes of thinking such as love, desire, or whatever affectus are designated by name, do not occur unless there is in the same individual the idea of the thing loved, desired, etc.” (II Ax3/M 244). Affectus are thus given here as modes of thinking [modi cogitandi], and modes themselves are nothing but affectiones of God’s attributes. Spinoza asserts that although there are infinite attributes, the only two that we can identify with any certainty are thought and extension—proper to the mind and the body, respectively. Thus in Spinoza’s philosophy there is no real distinction between mind and body, as in Cartesian thought; this distinction is only modal, realized in terms of the attributes. It is not substantial. The mind and the body are conceived as distinct only through different attributes; they are not, in fact, separate. Nor do they correspond to separate substances; both are proper to God, to the one eternal, infinite, and indivisible substance. It is important to note again that affectus do not proceed from the mind, nor do they only affect the mind; on the contrary, they affect body and mind alike, and are only proper to the mind insofar as they are understood as ideas under the attribute of intellect. Affectiones are modally constitutive of the body and the mind, where “We feel a certain body to be affected in many ways” [Nos corpus quoddam multis modis affici sentimus](II Ax4/M244/ Ethica O 1.73); affectus, then, proceed from this substantial unity/modal distinction insofar as affectus is specific to the attribute of the intellect.

51 “Modi cogitandi, ut amor, cupiditas, vel quicumque nomine affectus animi insigniuntur, non dantur, nisi in eodem Individuo detur idea rei amatae, desideratae, etc.” (Ethica O 1.73).
This, in the *Ethica*, is how Spinoza argues for a substantial unity between mind and body. They are not, as in Descartes, discrete substances but rather of one substance, understood and experienced via different attributes. This relates to *affectio* and *afficio* as “The idea of an individual thing existing in actuality has God for its cause not insofar as he is infinite but insofar as he is considered as affected [*affectus*] by another idea of a thing existing in actuality, of which God is the cause insofar as he is affected [*affectus est*] by a third idea, and so *ad infinitum*” (II P9/M 248).\(^5\) Moreover, “the essence of man is constituted by definite modifications of the attributes of God. For the being of substance does not pertain to the essence of man…which must therefore be something that is in God, and which can neither be nor be conceived without God; i.e. an affection or mode [*affectio, sive modus*]…which expresses [*exprimit*] the nature of God in a definite and determinate way” (II P10 Cor/M 249).\(^5\) Under Proposition 13 one can again see the intricacy and density of Spinoza’s claims concerning *affectio* and *afficio*, the degree to which the terms are inextricable, grammatically and conceptually: “All the ways in which a body is affected by another body follow from the nature of the affected body together with the nature of the body affecting it, so that one and the same body may move in various ways in accordance with the various natures of the bodies causing its

\(^{52}\) “Idea rei singularis, actu existentis, Deum pro causa habet, non quatenus infinitus est, sed quatenus alia rei singularis actu existentis idea affectus consideratur, cujus etiam Deus est causa, quatenus alia tertia affectus est, et sic in infinitum” (*Ethica* O I.78).

\(^{53}\) “essentiam hominis constitui a certis Dei attributorum modificationibus. Nam esse substantiae (*per Prop. praeced.*) ad essentiam hominis non pertinet. Est ergo (*per Prop. 15. p. 1.*) aliquid, quod in Deo est, et quod sine Deo nec esse nec concepi potest, sive (*per Coroll. Prop. 25. p. 1.*) affectio, sive modus, qui Dei naturam certo et determinato modo exprimit (*Ethica* O I.80).
motion; and, on the other hand, different bodies may be caused to move in different ways by one and the same body” (II P13 Lem3 Ax1/M 253).54 Spinoza, in his attempt to explain the composition of bodies and their relation to mind, delivers a physics where affectio and afficio are, in addition to modification and modifications, species of relation between bodies [corpus]. This physics begins with more basic bodies and moves concentrically towards the composite human body, bearing in mind the expansive Latin definition of corpus as “any object composed of materials perceptible by the senses.”55 Thus affectio and afficio are prior to human being as well as constitutive of it.

A human being—any human being—proceeds from God as a modification of substance, insofar as they are particular things. It is through afficio or modification that a particular thing emerges, and it persists as an affectio or mode. Spinoza makes this explicit as well in Part II, Proposition 13: “man consists of mind and body, and the human body exists according as we sense it” (II P13 Cor/M 251),56 a claim that he demonstrates in terms of ideas of the affections of the body [ideas affectionum Corporis]. Moreover, this basic language of afficio and affectio enables Spinoza to explain how human bodies [Corpus humanum] are structured and can, in turn, affect other bodies,

54 “Omnes modi, quibus corpus aliquod ab alio afficitur corpore, ex natura corporis affecti et simul ex natura corporis afficientis sequuntur; ita ut unum idemque corpus diversimode moveatur pro diversitate naturae corporum moventium, et contra ut diversa corpora ab uno eodemque corpore diversimode moveantur” (Ethica O I.85).
55 See Lewis and Short, corpus. See also II Def1/M 244/Ethica O I.72: “By ‘body’ I understand a mode that expresses in a definite and determinate way God’s essence insofar as he is considered as an extended thing” [Per corpus intelligo modum, qui Dei essentiam, quatenus ut res extensa consideratur, certo et determinato modo exprimit].
56 “hominem mente et corpore constare, et corpus humanum, prout ipsum sentimus, existere” (Ethica O I.82)
where “The individual components of the human body, and consequently the human body itself, are affected by external bodies in a great many ways” (II P13 Post3/M255), and where the human body “is so structured that it can affect external bodies in a great many ways” (II P14 Dem/M 255). The human body is thus constituted through affection or modification as an affection and, in turn, is affected by and able to affect external bodies accordingly.

Here Spinoza also reveals the extent to which the basis of any knowledge—from the “fragmentary and confused knowledge” \[ \textit{cognitionem...mutilatam et confusam} \] proceeding from the “common order of nature” \[ \textit{communi Naturae ordine} \] to an adequate understanding of immanent causality—takes shape in a language of affectio and afficio (I P29 Cor/M262/Ethica O I.97). The imagination is rendered in these terms. In Part II, Proposition 17 Spinoza affirms that “If the human body is affected \[ \textit{affectum est} \] in a way that involves the nature of some external body, the human mind will regard \[ \textit{contemplabitur} \] that same external body as actually existing, or as present to itself, until the human body undergoes a further modification \[ \textit{afficiatur affectu} \] which excludes the existence or presence of the said body” (II P17/M 256). The human mind, in turn, is capable of regarding as present external bodies which once affected the body but which are nevertheless no longer existent or present. This is a matter of memory and habit, as

\[ \textit{Individua Corpus humanum componentia, et consequenter ipsum humanum Corpus a corporibus externis plurimis modis afficitur} \ (\textit{Ethica} O I.87)

\[ \textit{disponiturque ad corpora externa plurimis modis afficiendum} \ (\textit{Ethica} O I.88).

\[ \textit{Si humanum Corpus affectum est modo, qui naturam Corporis alicujus externi involvit, Mens humana idem corpus externum ut actu existens, vel ut sibi praeens contemplabitur, donec Corpus afficiatur affectu, qui ejusdem corporis existentiam vel praesentiam secludat} \ (\textit{Ethica} O I.89).\]
“although the external bodies by which the human body has once been affected may no longer exist, the mind will regard them as present whenever this activity of the body is repeated” (II P17 Cor Dem/M 256-7).  

Thus the imagination pertains to “those affections of the human body the ideas of which set forth external bodies as if they were present to us…When the mind regards bodies in this way, we shall say that it ‘imagines’” (II P17 Cor Schol/M 257).  

This is all prior to any investigation of error; the imagination is described here purely in terms of operation. It is in Part II, Proposition 40 we encounter three kinds of knowledge, the first being opinion [opinionem] or imagination [Imaginationem]; the second, reason [Rationem]; and the third, intuition [Scientiam Intuitivam].  These are three different approaches to causality.  Imagination is given here as the lowest form of knowledge insofar as it implies an inadequate idea of freedom, where “Men are deceived into thinking themselves free, a belief [opinio] that consists only in this, that they are conscious of their actions and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined.  Therefore, the idea of their freedom is simply the ignorance of their actions.  As to their saying that human actions depend on the will, these are mere words without any corresponding idea” (II P35 Schol/M 264).  

Spinoza ascribes belief, freedom, and the will to ignorance and imagination.

60 “quamvis corpora externa, a quibus Corpus humanum affectum semel fuit, non existant, Mens tamen eadem toties ut praesentia contemplabitur, quoties haec corporis actio repetetur” (Ethica O 1.90).

61 “Corporis humani affectiones, quarum ideae corpora externa velut nobis praesentia repraesentant, rerum imagines vocabimus, tametsi rerum figuras non referunt. Et cum mens hac ratione contemplatur corpora, eandem imaginari dicemus” (Ethica O 1.90).

62 “Nempe falluntur homines, quod se liberos esse putant; quae opinio in hoc solo consistit, quod suarum actionum sint conscii, et ignari causarum, a quibus determinantur.
While I return to necessity at length below, let it now suffice to note the extent to which this attention to freedom and control informs the geometric *ordo docendi* of Spinoza’s argument. The emphasis of the *Ethica* shifts markedly between Parts II and III, as Spinoza moves from an investigation of three types of knowledge to his treatment of the origin and nature of the *affectus* [*De Origine et Natura Affectuum*]. This also marks the shift from *affectio* and *afficio* (where *affectus* is largely implied) to *affectus* directly. He begins with a pointed reference to Descartes and to traditional treatises on the passions or emotions that focus on their subordination to the will:

I know, indeed, that the renowned Descartes, though he too believed that the mind has absolute power over its actions, does explain human emotions [*Affectus*] through their first causes, and has also zealously striven to show how the mind can have absolute control over the emotions. But in my opinion [*mea quidem sententia*] he has shown nothing else but the brilliance of his own genius, as I shall demonstrate in due course; for I want now to return to those who prefer to abuse or deride the emotions [*Affectus*] and actions of men rather than to understand them (III Pref/M 277).

Spinoza attacks Descartes on a number of points, some of which I turn to below; here, what is most important is his attention to Descartes’ error in going so far “as to

Haec ergo est eorum libertatis idea, quod suarum actionum nullam cognoscant causam. Nam quod ajunt, humanas actiones a voluntate pendere, verba sunt, quorum nullam habent ideam” (*Ethica* O I.100).

63 “Scio equidem celeberrimum Cartesium, licet etiam crediderit, Mentem in suas actiones absolutam habere potentiam, Affectus tamen humanos per primas suas causas explicare, simulque viam ostendere studuisse, qua Mens in Affectus absolutum habere possit imperium; sed, mea quidem sententia, nihil praeter magni sui ingenii acumen ostendit, ut suo loco demonstrabo. Nam ad illos revertere volo, qui hominum Affectus et actiones detestari vel ridere malunt, quam intelligere” (*Ethica* O I.118).

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conceive man in Nature as a kingdom within a kingdom” [hominem in Natura veluti imperium in imperio concipere] (III Pref/M 277/Ethica O I.118), as a sort of microcosm within a macrocosm, subject to corresponding laws but ultimately regulated only through a sort of rhetorical convenientia. This is anathema to Spinoza’s economy of affectio, afficio, and, particularly in and after Book III, affectus. He has already gone to great lengths to demonstrate how the body is composed and constituted via affectio, as a series of affectiones. Moreover, Part III ostensibly begins with a clear determination of affectus proceeding from his earlier treatment of affectio under the separate attributes of extension and intellect: “By affectus I understand the affections of the body by which the body’s power of activity is increased or diminished, assisted or checked, together with the ideas of these affections. Thus, if we can be the adequate cause of one of these affections, then by Affectum I understand activity, otherwise passivity” (III Def3/M 278). What is striking about this definition of affectus is the new attention to the body’s power of activity as well as to activity and passivity. I will deal with these two additions to the Ethica in reverse order.

First, activity and passivity. Spinoza begins by affirming that God is only active and generative, and that “All modes of thinking have God for their cause insofar as he is a thinking thing, and not insofar as he is explicated by any other attribute” (III P2 Dem/M

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64 “Per Affectum intelligo Corporis affectiones, quibus ipsius Corporis agendi potentia augetur vel minuitur, juvatur vel coercetur, et simul harum affectionum ideas. Si itaque alicuius harum affectionum adaequata possimus esse causa, tum per Affectum actionem intelligo; alias passionem” (Ethica O I.119)
In this sense he directs us, in our attempt to understand affectus as conceptual, as a matter of body and mind conceived under the attribute of thought, not as thought itself, as substantially distinct from the body. Here he marks, again, his departure from Descartes and confirms that affectus, like all corporeal phenomena, are proper to nature and to the affectiones of God. There is only God, only substance, only one nature. This has profound effects on what he perceives as a prominent tradition of moral philosophy, where “Most of those who have written about the emotions [affectibus] and human conduct seem to be dealing not with natural phenomena that follow the common laws of Nature but with phenomena outside Nature” (III Pref/M 277). Such philosophers obscure the relationship between mind and body, between passions and nature, insofar as man, subject to affectus, “disturbs [perturbare] rather than follows Nature’s order, and has absolute power over his actions, and is determined by no other source than himself (III Pref/M 277). Spinoza breaks here with a tradition of rendering affectus as

65 “Omnes cogitandi modi Deum, quatenus res est cogitans, et non quatenus alio attributo explicatur, pro causa habent” (Ethica O I.121).
66 “Plerique qui de Affectibus et hominum vivendi ratione scripserunt, videntur non de rebus naturalibus, quae communes Naturae leges sequuntur, sed de rebus, quae extra Naturam sunt, agere” (Ethica O I.118).
67 “hominem Naturae ordinem magis perturbare quam sequi, ipsumque in suas actiones absolutam habere potestiam, nec aliunde quam a se ipso determinari” (Ethica O I.118). See also III P2 Schol/M 280/Ethica O I.121-2: “I can scarcely believe, without the confirmation of experience, that men can be induced to examine this view [that the mind determines the body to motion or rest] without prejudice, so strongly are they convinced that at the mere bidding of the mind the body can now be set in motion, now be brought to rest, and can perform any number of actions which depend solely on the will of the mind and the exercise of thought. However, nobody as yet has determined the limits of the body’s capabilities: that is, nobody as yet has learned from experience what the body can and cannot do, without being determined by mind, solely from the laws of its nature insofar as it is considered as corporeal… Hence it follows that when men say that this or
synonymous with *perturbatio*, as in Book XIV of Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei*. For Augustine, the body is the source of the *animi perturbationes*, the disturbances of the mind, which mark its corrupt nature which can only be restored by God, by the Creator who acts of a different nature. For Spinoza, however, *affectus* proceed from Nature and are not opposed to it; the task of man is not to overcome the *passiones* or *perturbationes* but to understand *affectus* adequately. Descartes and his predecessors are wrong “to conceive man in Nature as a kingdom within a kingdom” [*hominem in Natura veluti imperium in imperio concipere*] (III Pref/M 277/Ethica O I.118), as a sort of microcosm within a macrocosm, because man is nothing but a series of *affectus* of nature, only modally distinct from Nature in the broadest sense. The task is not to overcome nature or to establish a restrained version of it through the control of the *passiones* but, rather, to that action of the body arises from the mind which has command over the body, they do not know what they are saying, and are merely admitting, under a plausible cover of words, that they are ignorant of the true cause of that action and are not concerned to discover it” [*vix tamen credo, nisi rem experientia comprobavero, homines induci posse ad haec aequo animo perpendendum; adeo firmiter persuasi sunt, Corpus ex solo mentis nutu jam moveri, jam quiescere, plurimaque agere, quae a sola mentis voluntate et excogitandi arte pendent. Etenim, quid Corpus possit, nemo hucusque determinavit, hoc est, neminem huc usque experientia docuit, quid Corpus ex solis legibus Naturae, quatenus corporea tantum consideratur, possit agere, et quid non possit, nisi a Mente determinetur... Unde sequitur, cum homines dicunt, hanc vel illam actionem Corporis oriri a Mente, quae imperium in Corpus habet, eos nescire, quid dicant, nec alius agere, quam speciosis verbis fateri, se veram illius actionis causam absque admiratione ignorare*].

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69 Incidentally, Augustine ascribes the term *perturbatio* to Cicero in the *Tusculian Disputations*. 
comprehend God adequately, to investigate and explicate how man is involved in nature rather than sovereign within it. This is, foremost, a matter of understanding necessity, activity and passivity.

The distinction between affectus and the more common passions—i.e. passions—is a distinction between activity and passivity. In Part III, Proposition 3 Spinoza asserts in no uncertain terms that “active states [actiones] of the mind arise only from adequate ideas” and that “its passive states [passiones] depend solely on inadequate ideas” (III P3/M 282).70 But what does it mean, to be inadequate or passive? Spinoza states that “passive states are related to the mind only insofar as the mind has something involving negation: that is, insofar as the mind is considered as part of Nature, which cannot be clearly and distinctly perceived through itself independently of other parts” (III P3 Schol/M 282).71 Now, we know from Parts I, II, and the Preface to III that there is no real or substantial distinction between Nature or God and what we call the human mind. They are all of the same substance. The mind is an idea of an affection of the body, contemplated under the attribute of thought. It is only modally distinct from God and it is only distinct from the body insofar as it is considered through the attribute of thought (rather than extension). But a passive state—indeed, a passio or, in English, a passion—involves negation insofar as the mind is not even considered as modally distinct from nature at large. It does not understand its own capacity to affect other modalities or

70 “Mentis actiones ex solis ideis adaequatis oriuntur; passiones autem a solis inadaequatis pendent” (Ethica O I.124).
71 “passiones ad Mentem non referri, nisi quatenus aliquid habet, quod negationem involvit, sive quatenus consideratur Natura pars, quae per se absque aliis non potest Clare et distincte percipi” (Ethica O I.124).
affectiones nor does it realize itself as an active or creative force. It has an inadequate idea of itself and, in turn, of the body and of its relative modal independence from other parts of nature. An active state of the mind—an actio or, generally, affectus—enables one, through adequate ideas, to comprehend the terms of human agency and independence.  

Activity and passivity are immediately complicated by Spinoza’s firm conviction that “Nothing in nature is contingent, but all things are from the necessity of the divine nature determined to exist and act in a definite way” (I P29/M 234). God is infinite and eternal but never subject to fate or felicity. All is in God determinately because, should he lack or be subject to some sort of choice, this would be evidence of imperfection. This is, for Spinoza, absurdity, to render God imperfect. Moreover, God is never subject to passivity or passiones as, logically, this would imply that God has an inadequate idea of himself, another basic logical absurdity. God is active, perfect, generative, and determinate. In Part I, Proposition 33 Spinoza asserts this with shocking force: “Things

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72 J. B. Schneewind gives very different reading of the Ethica, where “For Spinoza any appearance that there are truly separate entities in the universe is a mistake due to ignorance or error” and where “It is easy to see why Spinoza quickly acquired a long-lasting reputation as an antireligious atheist.” See J. B. Schneewind, The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 225. Schneewind does not seem to understand the complexity of Spinoza’s distinctions between modes, attributes, and substance and thus mistakes the Ethica for a work that 1) affirms Cartesian dualism of mins and body and 2) has anything to say at all about “truly separate entities.” Spinoza, in the Ethica, asserts that there is no substantial distinction between modes but is not as vague or debilitating as Schneewind suggests with regard to separate entities. He clearly believes in distinct bodies as well as in (modal) autonomy.

73 “In rerum natura nullum datur contingens; sed omnia ex necessitate divinae naturae determinata sunt ad certo modo existendum et operandum” (Ethica O I.59).
could not have been produced by God in any other way or in any other order than is the case” (I P33/M 235). Following his affirmations concerning necessity, Spinoza understands the human will as a sort of philosophical relic, an anthropomorphic misunderstanding. Neither God nor men act from freedom of the will and insofar as anybody might be interested in retaining this language, “Will cannot be called a free cause, only a necessary cause” (I P32/M 235). In the mind there is no free will; free will only exists as an inadequate idea. The mind, rather, “is determined to this or that volition by a cause, which is likewise determined by another cause, and this again by another, and so ad infinitum” (II P48/M 272). Causality is rendered immanent and of the utmost importance. God is perfect and determined just as each thing, in its essence, “endeavors to persist in its own being” [in suo esse perservare conatur](III P6/M 283/Ethica O I.125). This is Spinoza’s theory of the conatus, how each thing endeavors to persist in its own being, its actual and indefinite essence, so crucial to the affective physics of the Ethica.77

Spinoza affirms necessity and works to establish human activity and passivity in terms of causality. God and thus nature are the necessary foundations for everything. They are universal efficient causes, immanent to all things and events.78 God is never a

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74 “Res nullo alio modo, neque alio ordine a Deo produci potuerunt, quam productae sunt” (Ethica O I.62). See Curley, 82-117.
75 “Voluntas non potestis vocari causa libera, sed tantum necessaria” (Ethica O I.61).
76 “Mens ad hoc vel illud volendum determinatur a causa, quae etiam ab alia determinata est, et haec iterum ab alia, et sic in infinitum” (Ethica O I.110).
77 See Ethica III, Propositions 6-9.
78 See Nadler, Spinoza’s Ethics, 84-121; and Harris, 110-137; Richard Mason, The God of Spinoza: A Philosophical Study (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 52-276
remote cause but is always substantial—active, in a sense, everytime something is affected. Human beings are active when we act modally through our essence, defined by our *conatus*. Such an action is understood as an adequate cause, when “what is done follows from our nature and is clearly and distinctly explicable through that alone.” We are passive, however, when we are affected and, in turn, moved by an *affectus* in which we understand ourselves as only partially or inadequately involved. In this sense, we are passive when the cause of an *affectus* is not understood as proceeding from nature and acting according to its essence but rather from some alien and inexplicable source.

Whether we understand things adequately or inadequately is a matter of comprehending causality correctly. God is always a cause and all things can be understood according to his nature. To understand human actions as such (i.e., as actions) means having an adequate understanding of the human essence, an ability to understand *conatus* as well as modality. Moreover, humans understand adequately when they affirm necessity and thus strive to understand *affectus* through their true causes. So it is through necessity and the *conatus* that we approach activity and passivity again, in relation to *affectus*, in Part III.

Returning to Part III, Spinoza affirms again that body and mind are united and that “Whatsoever increases or diminishes, assists or checks, the power of activity of our body, the idea of the said thing increases or diminishes, assists or checks the power of

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79 Harris, 110.
thought of our mind” (III P11/M 284). Spinoza works to describe this increase or decrease in terms of activity and passivity and, in turn, in terms of our experience of this change: “We see then that the mind can undergo considerable changes, and can pass now to a state of greater perfection, now to one of less perfection, and it is these passive transitions [passiones] that explicate for us the affectus of Pleasure [Laetitiae] and Pain [Tristitia]” (III P11 Schol/M 284-5). Pleasure and pain are affectus insofar as they describe a body’s experience of activity or passivity, where Spinoza asserts: “I shall understand by pleasure ‘the passive transition of the mind to a state of greater perfection,’ and by pain ‘the passive transition of the mind to [a] state of less perfection.’ The affectum of pleasure when it is simultaneously related to mind and body I call Titillation [Titillationem] or Cheerfulness [Hilaritatem]; the [affectum] of pain when it is similarly related I call Anguish [Dolorem] or Melancholy [Melancholiam]” (III P11 Schol/M 284-5).

Pleasure and pain are here given names in order to demonstrate the truth of Proposition 11, that mind and body are affected in proportion to one another, but it is equally clear that both are passiones and, in turn, are species of affectus. Passiones are by definition species of affectus; where Descartes, following a certain tradition of

80 “Quicquid Corporis nostri agendi potentiam auget vel minuit, juvat vel coërcet, ejusdem rei idea Mentis nostrae cogitandi potentiam auget vel minuit, juvat vel coërcet” (Ethica O I.127).
81 “Videmus itaque Mentem magnas posse pati mutationes, et jam ad majorem, jam autem ad minorem perfectionem transire, quae quidem passiones nobis explicant affectus Laetitiae et Tristitiae” (Ethica O I.127)
82 “Per Laetitiam itaque in sequentibus intelligam passionem, qua Mens ad maiorem perfectionem transit; per Tristitiam autem passionem, qua ipsa ad minorem transit perfectionem. Porro affectum Laetitiae, ad Mentem et Corpus simul relatum, Titillationem vel Hilaritatem voco; Tristitiae autem Dolorem vel Melancholiam” (Ethica O I.127)
writing on the passions, begins with definitions of the passions, Spinoza breaks form
insofar as his passiones are derivative of affectus, of larger ontological claims. Desire
[Cupiditas], Pleasure [Laetitia], and Pain [Tristitia] are, for Spinoza, the affectum
primarium (III P11 Schol/M I.128), but all three only make sense in an economy of
activity and passivity; they do not proceed from the body or the mind but rather constitute
them and exceed them. The task of the human, in the Ethica, is to understand them
adequately. Desire [Cupiditas] is identical to appetite, “nothing else but man’s essence,
from the nature of which there necessarily follow those things that tend to his
preservation, and which man is thus determined to perform” (III P9 Schol/M 284). In
this sense, desire is also identical to conatus, where “the conatus of a man affected by
pain is entirely directed to removing the pain” [quicquid homo tristitia affectus conatur,
est tristitiam amovere](III P37 Dem/M 297/Ethica O I.145). Desire, pleasure and pain
are species of affectus, but they are not identical with affectus. On the contrary, affectus
names the experience of necessity, the comportment of the modal individual to necessity.

Adequate contemplation of activity and passivity, following from his affirmation
of necessity, leads Spinoza to consider the body’s power of activity, to the central project
of the Ethica as an ethics. Affectus enables Spinoza to remap assumptions about human

83 “qui proinde nihil aliud est, quam ipsa hominis essentia, ex cujus natura ea, quae ipsius
conservationi inserviunt, necessario sequuntur; atque adeo homo ad eadem agendum
determinatus est” (Ethica O I.126).
84 See also Part III, Proposition 7 and Part III, Proposition 9 for confirmation of the
identity between conatus, appetite, desire, and essence. The only difference is that
Spinoza notes that “desire is usually related to men insofar as they are conscious of their
appetite” [cupiditas ad homines plerumque referatur, quatenus sui appetites sunt
conscii](M 284/Ethica O I.127)
behavior and understanding along the lines of activity and passivity, where “the conatus of a man affected by pain is entirely directed to removing the pain” [quicquid homo tristitia affectus conatur, est tristitiam amovere](III P37 Dem/M 297/Ethica O I.145), where “it is according to his affectu that everyone judges or deems what is good, bad, better, worse, best, or worst [and where] every man judges a thing good or bad, advantageous or disadvantageous, according to his own affectu” (III P39 Schol/M 298-9/Ethica O I.147). Affectio structures the human body and the human mind; affectus constitutes the conatus, describes the experience of affectation [afficio] as pleasant or painful, and, in turn, structures the relations between such qualities as good and bad, love and hate, and other states of activity and passivity. Describing these relations between qualities or affectus is the ambit of Part III. The qualification one must add, however, is that the definition of affectus is never reduced to emotion or passion, nor does Spinoza claim to exhaust the list of affectus in his treatment. On the contrary, there “are as many kinds of pleasure, pain, desire, and consequently of every affectus that is compounded of these (such as vacillation) or of every affectus that is derived from these (love, hatred, hope, fear, etc.), as there are kind of objects by which we are affected [afficimur]” (III P56/M 307). Objects, insofar as they are affected [afficio], experience this affection [affectio] as affectus. As Part III proceeds from a description of affectus as constitutive of

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85 “unusquisque ex suo affectu iudicat seu aestimat, quid bonum, quid malum, quid melius, quid pejus, et quid denique optimum, quidve pessimum sit…unusquisque ex suo affectu rem aliquam bonam aut malam, utilem aut inutilem esse iudicat” (Ethica O I.147).

86 “Laetitiae, Tristitiae, et Cupiditatis, et consequenter uniuscujusque affectus, qui ex his componitur, ut animi Fluctuationis, vel qui ab his derivatar, nemente Amoris, Odii, Spei, Metus, etc., tot species dantur, quot sunt species objectorum, a quibus afficimur” (Ethica O I.159).
specific *affectus* through a discussion of activity and passivity to a general survey of kinds of *affectus*, the terms *afficio*, *affectio* and *affectus* appear significantly less.

Ironically, there is a marked shift in the frequency of these terms under the heading *Affectuum Definitiones*; they are only prominent here where Spinoza defines the *affectus* as affecting, as things that affect [*afficere*], or, as in the initial case of desire, as things which are “conceived as determined to any action from any given affection of itself” (III Def/I/M 311). But Spinoza turns explicitly here to the body’s power of activity, in terms of the mind/body relationship, where “the *affectus* called a passive experience is a confused idea whereby the mind affirms a greater or less force of existence of its body, or part of its body, than was previously the case, and by the occurrence of which the mind is determined to think of one thing rather than another” (III *Affectuum Generalis Definitiones* Expl/I/M 319). Determination is prominent here, recalling the established propositions concerning necessity as well as the definition of the *conatus*, where each thing is determined to endeavor to persist in its own being. Also, Spinoza is careful in defining the “*affectus* called a passive experience” [*Affectus, qui animi pathema dicitur*], emphasizing through the verb *dico* that *affectus* is not reducible to this definition. The *passiones* (as they are called in other representative works of the genre) are specific *affectus* that Spinoza understands as *animi pathema*, as passive experiences of the mind or soul. This is made clear in the emergence, in the *Ethica*, of the conditional

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87 “ex data quacunque ejus affectione determinata concipitur ad aliquid agendum” (*Ethica* O I.164).
88 “Affectus, qui animi pathema dicitur, est confusa idea, qua Mens majorem vel minorem sui Corporis vel alicujus ejus partis existendi vim, quam antea, affirmat, et qua data ipsa Mens ad hoc potius, quam ad illud cogitandum determinatur” (*Ethica* O I.177).
formulation passio, seu affectus (IV P6/Ethica O I.186)—a passion that is at once an affect. *Pathema*, from the verb *patior*, is key here, implying suffering and affliction—even submitting to another's lust, or prostituting one's self—as well as the more neutral senses of passivity and experience. Animi is also key, looking immediately forward in the *ordo docendi* of the *Ethica* to Part IV: *De Servitute Humana, Seu de Affectuum Viribus*, on slavery rendered in terms of the passive experience of affectus and freedom as our subsequent capacity to perceive the world adequately, to increase our power of activity.

Increasing one’s power of activity consists primarily in the understanding, through the exercise of reason, in our ability to recognize that “We are passive [only] insofar as we are part of Nature which cannot be conceived independently of other parts” (IV P2/M 324). Certainly Spinoza recognizes that it “is impossible for a man not to be part of Nature and not to undergo changes other than those which can be understood solely through his own nature and of which he is the adequate cause” (IV P4/M 324); this is the thrust of the first half of the *Ethica* and the impulse behind the development of the tripartite language substance/mode/attribute. Insofar as humans are involved in the same substance that is God, and are inextricable from God as nature, “it follows that man is necessarily always subject to passionibus, and that he follows the common order of

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89 See Lewis and Short, *patior*.
90 “Nos eatenus patimur, quatenus Naturae sumus pars, quae per se absque aliis non potest concipi” (*Ethica* O I.184).
91 “Fieri non potest, ut homo non sit Naturae pars, et ut nullas possit pati mutationes, nisi quae per solam suam naturam possint intelligi, quorumque adaequata sit causa” (*Ethica* O I.184).
Nature, and obeys it, and accommodates himself to it as far as the nature of things demands” (IV P4 Cor/M 325). Moreover, we learn that the “force of any passive emotion [passionis, seu affectus] can surpass the rest of man’s activities or power so that the affectus stays firmly fixed in him” (IV P6/M 325/Ethica O I.186) and that such an affectus, in turn, “insofar as it is related to the mind, can neither be checked nor destroyed except through an idea of an affection of the body [Corporis affectionis] contrary to it and stronger than the affection we are experiencing” (IV P7 Cor/M 326). Spinoza turns our attention again to the mind and thus to his earlier definition of affectus as ideas of affectiones, specific to the attribute of the intellect. Here, he establishes affectus as ideas of experience and, from this, defines the knowledge of good and evil as our consciousness of affectus of pleasure and pain. These terms, good and evil, are only meaningful here insofar as they name the understanding of pleasure and pain; hence, “No affectum can be checked by the true knowledge of good and evil insofar as it is true, but only insofar as it is considered as an affectus” (IV P14/M 328). In other words, affectus have no “truth” but, rather, are units of force: “true knowledge of good and evil cannot check an affectus by virtue of being true…but insofar as it is an affectus…if it be stronger than the affectus which is to be checked, to that extent only it can check an affectus” (IV

92 “Hinc sequitur, hominem necessario passionibus esse semper obnoxium, communemque Naturae ordinem sequi et eadem parere, seseque eadem, quantum rerum natura exigit, accommodare” (Ethica O I.185).
93 “Affectus, quatenus ad Mentem refertur, nec coërceri nec tolli potest, nisi per ideam Corporis affectionis contrariae, et fortioris affectione, qua patimur” (Ethica O I.187).
94 See Part IV, Proposition 8.
95 “Vera boni et mali cognitio, quatenus vera, nullum affectum coërcere potest, sed tantum quatenus ut affectus consideratur” (Ethica O I.190).
Affectus structure knowledge and ethics as units of experience and force.

Parts IV and V of the Ethica take shape around this sharpened determination of affectus. Having established that primacy of desire (with pleasure and pain) from among the specific affectus Spinoza restates, in terms of virtue, that “to act in absolute conformity with virtue is nothing else in us but to act, to live, to preserve one’s own being (these three mean the same thing) under the guidance of reason, on the basis of seeking one’s own advantage” (IV P24/M 333). Moreover, Spinoza affirms that “the mind’s highest good is the knowledge of God, and the mind’s highest virtue is to know God” (IV P28/M 334). To know God is to understand his necessity; in this sense, the mind’s highest virtue is also the most powerful: “An affectus toward a thing which we think of as inevitable [necessariam] is more intense, other things being equal, than [affectus] toward a thing possible, or contingent, that is, not inevitable” (IV P11/M 327). The mind is capable of conceiving God as infinite and necessary; it follows that it has the ability to understand all things as governed by necessity and “to that extent it has

96 “vera boni et mali cognitio, quatenus vera, nullum affectum coercere potest. At quatenus affectus est (vide Prop. 8. hujus), si fortior affectu coercendo sit, eatenus tantum (per Prop. 7. hujus) affectum coercere poterit” (Ethica O I.190-1).
97 “Ex virtute absolute agere nihil aliud in nobis est, quam ex ductu Rationis agere, vivere, suum esse conservare (haec tria idem significant), ex fundamento proprium utile quaerendi” (Ethica O I.196).
98 “Summum Mentis bonum est Dei cognitio, et Summa Mentis virtus Deum cognoscere” (Ethica O I.198).
99 “Affectus erga rem, quam ut necessariam imaginamur, ceteris paribus, intensor est, quam erga possibilem vel contingentem, sive non necessariam” (Ethica O I.189).
greater power over affectus, i.e. it is less passive in respect of them” (V P6/M 367). This is the province of reason, the adequate idea of necessity, and thus “if men could be guided by reason, all desire that arises from passive affectu would be ineffective” (IV P59 Schol/M 351). This is because an adequate understanding of affectus as constitutive of human being, as proceeding from God necessarily and actively, enables men to comprehend the true causes of things and thus to maximize their own abilities to affect and be affected, their own modal existence. Spinoza makes it very clear that “God is without passive emotions, and he is not affected with any emotions of pleasure or pain” (V P17/M 371) and that, in the attempt to adequately understand God “the mind can bring it about that all the affections of the body—i.e. images of things—be related to the idea of God” (V P14/M 371). In this sense “there is no affectus of which we cannot form a clear and distinct conception…for an affectus is the idea of an affection of the body, which must therefore involve some clear and distinct conception” (V P4 Cor/M 366).

The Cartesian formulation clarum et distinctum reveals Spinoza’s debt to Descartes, but only in terms of method. While the Ethica is certainly dependent on

100 “Quatenus Mens res omnes ut necessarias intelligit, eatenus majorem in affectus potentiam habet, seu minus ab iisdem patitur” (Ethica O I.245).
101 “omnis Cupiditas, quae ex affectu, qui passio est, oritur, nullius esset usus, si homines ratione duci possent” (Ethica O I.222).
102 “Deus expers est passionum, nec ullo Laetitiae aut Tristitiae affectu afficitur” (Ethica O I.250).
103 “Mens efficere potest, ut omnes Corporis affectiones seu rerum imagines ad Dei ideam referantur” (Ethica O I.250).
104 “nullam esse affectum, cujus non possamus aliquem clarum et distinctum formare conceptum…Est namque affectus Corporis affectionis idea, quae propterea aliquem clarum et distinctum involvere debet conceptum” (Ethica O I.243).
Cartesian thought, Spinoza’s use of affectus marks an important departure from it, particularly where affectus work to structure experience and are perceptible in terms of activity or passivity. The Ethica is no mere discourse on the passions but, rather, a dramatic break from early modern writing on emotion and experience. In the next section I demonstrate how Descartes structures his own treatise on the passions as well as how and why Spinoza does not follow suit. This investigation of Descartes’ Les Passions de l’Ame—or, in Latin, his Passiones, sive Affectus Animae—proves that Spinoza does not derive his approach to affectus from Descartes. Moreover, it sets the stage for an encounter between Spinoza and Calvin where, despite incommensurable versions of God as well piety, the two figures locate affectus at the center of their versions of faith, experience, and understanding.

**Affectus is not Cartesian: Descartes’ Les Passions de l’Ame and the Latin Passiones, sive Affectus Animae**

The philosophy of René Descartes was clearly an important influence on Spinoza. There is little proof to the contrary. Spinoza came to intellectual maturity in a distinctly Cartesian milieu. Indeed, Cartesianism first emerged as an intellectual as well as an

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institutional force in Northern Europe in the Netherlands, with the accession of Henricus
Reneri (1593-1639) and the physician Henricus Regius (1598-1679) at Utrecht and
Adriaan Heereboord (1614-1661) and the theologian Johannes Coccejus (1603-1669) at
Leiden. In Amsterdam Spinoza’s associates Fransiscus van den Enden (1602-1674),
Lodewijk Meyer (1629-1681), Jan Rieuwertsz (1616/17-1687) and Jarig Jelles (1620-
1683) were all quite sympathetic to Descartes, writing and printing works influenced by
the new Cartesian philosophy. Moreover, while Adam Boreel (1603-1667) and other
members of the Dutch Collegiant community in Amsterdam did not advocate
Cartesianism, they certainly extended to readers of Descartes the freedom of thought so

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York: Continuum, 2007), 1-13, 29; Wiep van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza: An Essay
on Philosophy in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic* (Leiden, Boston, and Köln:
Brill, 2001), 34-122; J. A. van Ruler, *The Crisis of Causality: Voetius and Descartes on
God, Nature, and Change* (Leiden, New York, and Köln: E. J. Brill, 1995), 1-35; and
Theo Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch: Early Reactions to Cartesian Philosophy, 1637-
1650* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992),
13-51. Incidentally, it is important to note the proximity between Cartesian philosophy
and noted advances in medicine, especially given Spinoza’s own interest in medicine and
physiology. Moreover, Fix is instructive insofar as he notes that “Although Dutch
university Cartesians were eclectic thinkers who most often tended to misinterpret the
thought of Descartes, the spread of Cartesian-inspired ideas was an event of the first
importance for university intellectual life and for Dutch culture as a whole.” See Andrew
C. Fix, *The Dutch Collegiants in the Early Enlightenment* (Princeton, New Jersey:
Princeton University Press, 1991), 54. For an account of the initial clashes between
Johannes Coccejus and the advocates of Reformed Orthodoxy see Fix, *Fallen Angels*, 13-
34.

107 See Nyden-Bullock, 29-50; Wim Klever, *Mannen rond Spinoza, 1650-1700: 
Presentatie van een emanciperende generatie* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 1997),

108 See Nadler, *Spinoza*, 139-41.
vital to the Collegiant Movement. Spinoza himself owned a 1650 edition of Descartes’ *Opera Philosophica* in Latin, published by the same Elzevir press that was responsible for the first printing of *Les Passions de l’Ame* in Amsterdam in 1649. One assumes that it is this edition of the *Opera Philosophica* that Spinoza used as a reference as he composed his critical treatise in 1663, the *Principia Philosophiae More Geometrico Demonstrata* [often translated as *Descartes’ Principles of Philosophy*]—a reorganization and emendation of Cartesian philosophy that reveals much about Spinoza’s commitments to and departures from Descartes. Moreover, we assume that the Latin edition of Descartes’ *Opera Philosophica* was among his most valuable resources as Spinoza polished his drafts of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and the *Ethica*, the latter of which appeared only after his death with the publication of the *Opera Posthuma*. The Latin title of Descartes’ last philosophical work, *Les Passions de l’Ame*, is *Passiones, sive Affectus Animae* (*Opera Philosophica* 1). It is the proximity between the

110 *Les Passions de l’Ame* was originally published concurrently in Amsterdam and Paris in 1649. See René Descartes, *Les Passions de l’Ame* in *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, Volume XI (Paris: J. Vrin, 1996), 293-300. Citations hereafter refer to this text as AT. As every edition is numbered by article, the article number appears with the citation. See also *Catalogus van de Bibiotheek der Vereniging het Spinozahuis te Rijnsburg*, 22.
111 See Nadler, *Spinoza*, 204-12.
conceptual language of the *Ethica*—specifically, Spinoza’s use of the term *affectus*—and Descartes’ treatment of the passions in *Passiones, sive Affectus Animae* which I trace in this section. What follows is both a conceptual and a philological investigation to determine what, precisely, is Spinoza’s relationship to Descartes, concerning the primacy of *affectus* in the *Ethica*. Close attention to the distinctions between Cartesian and Spinozistic approaches to the passions as well as to the use of the Latin *affectus* reveals much about the assumed relationship between the two philosophers—namely, that Spinoza does not draw his determination of *affectio*, *afficio*, or *affectus* from Descartes but, rather, develops this language in direct opposition to *Passiones, sive Affectus Animae*.

Spinoza stages a detailed confrontation with Descartes in the Preface to Part V of the *Ethica*, where he affirms that “we are not concerned here with the manner or way in which the intellect should be perfected, nor yet with the science of tending the body so that it may correctly perform its functions. The latter is the province of medicine, the former of logic. Here, then, as I have said, I shall be dealing only with the power of the mind or reason” (V App/M363). This is a direct response to Descartes who in the outset


113 “Quomodo autem et qua via debeat Intellectus perfici, et qua deinde arte Corpus sit curandum; ut possit suo officio recte fungi, hoc non pertinet; hoc enim ad Medicinam, 289
of *Les Passions de l’Ame*, or *Passiones, sive Affectus Animae*, clearly states that his “intention was to explain the passions only as a natural philosopher, and not as a rhetorician or even as a moral philosopher” (RS 327). The *Passiones, sive Affectus Animae*, insofar as it is a systematic treatment of physical and mental passions, proceeds from Descartes’ interest in the composition and mechanical operation of the human body as well as his initial division between the body and the soul [*anima*]. In a sense, the text is an attempt to integrate reason and passion as well as to render an apt definition of the soul. The work consists of 212 articles organized into three discrete parts: a first section defining the passions in general, a second section describing the six primary passions, and a third section enumerating more specific passions composed of the initial six. Spinoza finds fault with the method and ambit of the *Passiones*, with Descartes’ assumptions about ontology and epistemology as well as his ambitious and misguided attempt to render a remedy against the passions. Where Descartes offers an understanding of the passions as within our absolute control and good of themselves, Spinoza proceeds by “showing the degree and nature of [reason, or the mind’s] command

illeg autem ad Logicam spectat. Hic igitur, ut dixi, de sola Mentis seu Rationis potentia agam” (O 1.239).

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114 “ut facile inde appareat, nihii propositum non fuisse explicare Passiones Oratorio more, imo ne quidem instar Philosophi moralis, sed solummodo ut decuit Physicum” (OP *Responsio ad secundam Epistolam*).

115 Hereafter referred to as the *Passiones*.

over the *affectus* in checking and controlling them. For I have already demonstrated that we do not have absolute command over them” (V App/M 363).\(^{117}\) Spinoza, as we have seen, is more interested in understanding, wherein adequate ideas of cause and necessity reveal what we often experience as *passiones* to be *affectus*. They are not subject to our command as *passiones* but rather adequately understood as *affectus*. Already we notice a critical difference between Descartes and Spinoza, where the former is only interested in *passiones* while the latter establishes definitions of the *passiones* in terms of *affectus*. I return to this distinction in detail below. For the time being, however, I continue to trace Spinoza’s critique of Descartes at the outset of Part V of the *Ethica*.

After summarizing the project of the first four Parts and rehearsing the extent to which we do not have absolute command over the *affectus*, Spinoza draws our attention (incidentally, for the first time in the *Ethica*) to “the Stoics [who] thought that the emotions depend absolutely on our will, and that we can have absolute command over them. However, with experience crying out against them they were obliged against their principles to admit that no little practice and zeal are required in order to check and control emotions” (V Pref/M 363). Spinoza’s critique of the Stoics\(^{118}\) extends directly and explicitly to Descartes, to a detailed summary of the *Passiones* as a physiological

\(^{117}\) “ante omnia, quantum et quale imperium in affectus habeat ad eosdem coërcendum et moderandum, ostendam. Nam nos in ipsos imperium absolutum non habere, jam supra demonstravimus.” (*Ethica* O 1.239).

approach to Stoic virtue. The “opinion” [opinioni] that human beings have the power to check and control their passiones as passiones is much favored by Descartes. He maintained that the soul or mind is united in a special way with a certain part of the brain called the pineal gland, by means of which the mind senses all movements that occur in the body, as well as external objects, and by the mere act of willing it can move the gland in various ways. He maintained that the gland is suspended in the middle of the brain in such a way that it can be moved by the slightest motion of the animal spirits. He further maintained that the number of different ways in which the gland can be suspended in the middle of the brain corresponds with the number of different ways in which the animal spirits can impinge upon it, and that, furthermore, as many different marks can be imprinted on the gland as there are external objects impelling the animal spirits toward it. As a result, if by the will of the soul, which can move it in various ways, the gland is later suspended in that particular way in which it had previously been suspended by a particular mode of agitation of the spirits, then the gland will impel and determine the animal spirits in the same way as they had previously been acted upon by a similar mode of suspension of the gland. He furthermore maintained that every single act of willing is by nature united to a particular motion of the gland.” (V Pref/M 363-4).

Spinoza explicates the physiological and ontological outcomes of Descartes’ glandular approach to the relationship between mind and body. Descartes “maintained that

119 “Huic opinioni non parum favet Cartesius. Nam statuit Animam seu Mentem unitam praecipue esse cuidam parti cerebri, glandulæ scilicet pineali dictae, cujus ope Mens motus omnes, qui in Corpore excitantur, et obiecta externa sentit, quamque Mens eo solo, quod vult, varie movere potest. Hanc glandulam in medio cerebri ita suspensam esse statuit, ut minimo spirituum animalium motu possit moveri. Deinde statuit, quod haec glans tot variis modis in medio cerebro suspendatur, quot variis modis spiritus animales in eandem impingunt, et quod praeterea tot varia vestigia in eadem imprimantur, quot varia obiecta externa ipsos spiritus animales versus eandem propellunt; unde fit, ut si glans postea ab Animae voluntate, illam diversimodo moveant, hoc aut illo modo suspendatur, quo semel fuit suspensa a spiritibus hoc aut illo modo agitatis, tum ipsa glans ipsos spiritus animales eodem modo propellit et determinabit, ac antea a simili glandulæ suspensione repulsæ fuerant. Praeterea statuit, unamquamque Mentis voluntatem Natura esse unitam certo cuidam glandis motui” (Ethica O I.239-40).
although each motion of this gland seems to have been connected through nature from the
beginning of our lives to particular thoughts, these motions can be joined to other
thoughts through training, and this he endeavors to prove in Article 50, Part I of *On the
Passions of the Soul*” (V Pref/M 240). The soul is able, through practice, to overcome
the passions from within; thus Descartes “concludes [from this] that there is no soul so
weak that it cannot, through good guidance, acquire absolute power over its passions.
For these passions are defined by him as ‘perceptions, or feelings, or disturbances of the
soul, which are related to the soul as species, and which are produced (note well!),
preserved and strengthened through some motion of the spirits.’ (See Article 27, Part I,
*On the Passions of the Soul*)” (V Pref/M240). Moreover, “as we are able to join any
motion of the gland, and consequently of the spirits, to any act of willing, and as the
determination of the will depends only on our own power, if therefore we determine our
will by the firm and sure decisions in accordance with which we want to direct the
actions of our lives, and if to these decisions we join the movements of the passions
which we want to have, we shall acquire absolute command over our passions” (V

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120 “Denique statuit, quod, etsi unusquisque motus hujus glandulae videatur connexus
esse per Naturam singulis ex nostris cogitationibus ab initio nostrae vitae, aliis tamen per
habitum possunt jungi; quod probare conatur art. 50. p. 1. de Pass. Animae.” (*Ethica* O
1.240).
121 “Ex his concludit, nullam esse tam imbecillem Animam, quae non possit, cum bene
dirigitur, acquirere potestatem absolutam in suas Passiones. Nam hae, ut ab eo
definiuntur, sunt perceptiones aut sensus aut commotiones animae, quae ad eam
speciatim referuntur, quaeque NB. * producuntur, conservantur, et corroborantur, per
Spinoza reads Descartes as an heir to Stoicism and as a firm believer in the willed direction of the passions (and in the power of the will itself).

This strikes Spinoza, at the outset of Part V of the *Ethica*, as clumsy and illogical. Descartes makes a muddle of the relationship between body and soul in his attention of the pineal gland, the privileged site of contact between two substances. Spinoza can barely refrain from mockery: “Such is the view of this illustrious person (so far as I can gather from his own words), a view which I could scarcely have believed to have been put forward by such a great man, had it been less ingenious. Indeed, I am lost in wonder that a philosopher who had strictly resolved to deduce nothing except from self-evident bases and to affirm nothing that he did not clearly and distinctly perceive, who had so often censured the Scholastics for seeking to explain obscurities through occult qualities, should adopt a theory more occult than any occult quality” (V Pref/M 364). Yet what becomes certain in Spinoza’s explication is the extent to which his critique of the gland is

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122 “At quandoquidem cuilibet voluntati possumus jungere motum quaecumque glandis, et consequenter spirituum; et determinatio voluntatis a sola nostra potestate pendet; si igitur nostram voluntatem certis et firmis judiciis, secundum quae nostrae vitae actiones dirigere volumus, determinemus, et motus passionum quas habere volumus, hisce judiciis jungamus, imperium acquiremus absolutum in nostras Passiones.” (*Ethica* O I.240).

123 On the will in Descartes/the *Passiones*: “I omit all Descartes’s assertions about the will and its freedom, since I have already abundantly demonstrated that they are false” [*Denique omnia, quae de voluntate ejusque libertate asserit, omitto, quandoquidem haec falsa esse satis superque ostenderim*] (V Pref/M 365/*Ethica* O I.241).

124 “Haec est clarissimi hujus Viri sententia (quantum ex ipsius verbis conjicio) quam ego vix credidissem a tanto Viro prolata esse, si minus acuta fuisset. Profecto mirari satis non possum, quod vir Philosophus, qui firmiter statuerat, nihil deducere, nisi ex principiis per se notis, et nihil affirmare, nisi quod clare et distincte peripseret, et qui toties Scholasticos reprehenderat, quod per occultas qualitates res obscuras voluerint explicare, Hypothesin sumat omni occulta qualitate occultiorem” (*Ethica* O I.240-1).
also a critique of Descartes’ substantial distinction between body and mind. While
Descartes mediates this distinction through the operation of the gland, Spinoza hardly
accepts his explanation:

I should like to know how many degrees of motion mind can impart to that pineal
gland of his, and by what force it can hold it suspended. For I know not whether
this gland can be moved about more slowly or more quickly by the mind that by
animal spirits, and whether the movements of the passions which we have joined
in a close union with firm decisions cannot again be separated from those
decisions by corporeal causes, from which it would follow that, although the mind
firmly decides to face danger and joins to that decisions the motions of boldness,
when the danger appears, the gland may assume such a form of suspension that
the mind can think only of flight. And surely, since will and motion have no
common standard, there cannot be any comparison between the power or strength
of the mind and body, and consequently the strength of the latter cannot possibly
be determined by the strength of the former” (V Pref/M 364-5).

For Descartes, will is proper to the intellect while motion is proper to extension, to
bodies; Spinoza notes that these have “no common standard” because they are not of the
same substance—a problem he rectifies in the Ethica with his distinction between the
attributes of extension and intellect. Instead of a common standard, Descartes explains
the interaction between mind and body in terms of the pineal gland that, for Spinoza, is
simply unsatisfactory. Descartes’ treatment of the pineal gland does not solve any

125 “Deinde pervelim seire, quot motus gradus potest glandulae isti pineali Mens tribuere,
et quanta cum vi eandem suspensam tenere potest. Nam nescio an haec glans tardius vel
celerius a Mente circumagatur, quam a spiritibus animalibus, et an motus Passionum,
quos firmis judiciis arcte junximus, non possint ab iisdem iterum a causis corporeis
disjungi; ex quo sequeretur, ut, quamvis Mens firmiter proposuerit contra pericula ire,
atque huic decreto motus audaciae junxerit, viso tamen periculo glans ita suspendatur, ut
Mens non nisi de fuga possit cogitare; et sane, cum nulla detur ratio voluntatis ad motum,
nulla etiam datur comparatio inter Mentis et Corporis potentiam seu vires; et
consequenter hujus vires nequaquam viribus illius determinari possunt.” (Ethica O I.241).
problems but rather creates additional problems and inconsistencies concerning cause and effect. Descartes begins by separating mind and body and proceeds to confuse the powers appropriate to each as well as their interaction. For Spinoza, this demands an entirely different approach: “since the power of the mind is defined solely by understanding…we shall determine solely by the knowledge of the mind the remedies for the affectuum—remedies which I believe all men experience but do not accurately disturb nor distinctly see—and from this knowledge we shall deduce all that concerns the blessedness of the mind” (V Pref/M 365). In reaction to Descartes, Spinoza proposes to clarify the powers appropriate to the mind and its province in relation to affectus. What this reveals is a difference of terminology as well as method. Descartes, notably, is interested in the passiones and goes to great lengths to define them as such. Spinoza, however, proposes a treatment of affectus. Moreover, Descartes enters the Ethica explicitly at the beginning of Part V, after a detailed and sustained attempt to define affectus in the prior four parts; Spinoza’s claim, that we do not have absolute command over the affectus has, at this point, a complex history in the text. Spinoza had to prepare for this encounter with Descartes and the Passiones; where Descartes begins with the passiones, Spinoza needs four books to arrive here, to render the passiones in terms of affectus. These terms are, for Spinoza, not synonymous.

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126 “Igitur quia Mentis potentia, ut supra ostendi, sola intelligentia definitur, affectuum remedia, quae omnes experiri quidem, sed non accurate observare nec distincte videre credo, sola Mentis cognitione determinabimus, et ex eadem illa omnia, quae ad ipsius beatitudinem spectant, deducemus.” (Ethica O I.241).
Given the Latin title, the *Passiones, sive Affectus Animae*, one might expect the origins of Spinoza’s use of *affectus* to lie in Cartesianism. This is not the case. Descartes’ treatise begins with a series of articles intended to demonstrate what, in precise physiological terms, a *passio* is: “we should recognize that what is a passion in the soul is usually an action in the body. Hence there is no better way of coming to know about our passions than by examining the difference between the soul and the body” (Article 2/RS 328). Moreover, in an effort to distinguish the passions of the soul from the crude vital motions of the body—indeed, the actions of the body—Descartes notes that “anything we experience as being in us, and which we see can also exist in wholly inanimate bodies, must be attributed only to our body” (Article 3/RS 329). This includes the movement of our limbs and extremities as well as the circulation of the blood; in addition, Descartes introduces a language of “sensations” [*sensus*] and “animal spirits” [*spirituum animalium*]” in an effort to explain the discrete operations of body and soul (Article 7/RS 330/OP 4). Once he establishes, in some detail, the motor functions of the body as well as several points of contact between body and soul, Descartes continues to elaborate upon the distinctions between the actions and passions proper to the soul itself: “Having thus considered all the functions of belonging solely to the body, it is easy to recognize that there is nothing in us which we must attribute to our soul except our thoughts. These are of two principal kinds, some being actions of the soul and others its passions” (Article

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127 “per consequens cogitandum illud ipsum quod in eo passio vocatur, in hoc vulgo *Actionem esse*; ita ut nulla tutor detur via deveniendi in cognitionem nostrarum *Passionum*, quam so prius expendatur *differentia quae est inter animum & corpus*” (OP 2) 128 “omne quod experimur esse in nobis, & quod videmus etiam posse in esse corporibus plane inanimatis, soli nostro corpori *tribuendum esse*” (OP 2).
It is here that we first encounter, in the Latin *Passiones*, the term *affectus*. What is striking, however, is the extent to which the Latin text—the text which Spinoza read—suggests that the terms *Passiones* and *Affectus* are entirely synonymous. Indeed, the term which connects them in Article 17 is *sive*, simply meaning “or.” The Latin conjunction is not conditional here, as in *si…sive* formations. On the contrary, there is no condition: either term might work just as well, *Passiones* or *Affectus*. The French text confirms this insofar as there is no mention of *affectus* at all: “les unes sont les actions de l’ame, les autres sont ses passions” (AT 342). *Affectus* is absent entirely in the original language. Similar or identical formulations appear in Article 25, “under the title ‘passions of the soul’” [*sub nomine Affectuum vel Passionum animae*] (Article 25/RS 338/OP 13) as well as in Article 21: “some of these imaginings are passions of the soul [*Passiones sive Affectus animae*], taking the word ‘passion’ in its proper and more exact sense, and all may be regarded as such if the word is understood in a more general sense” (Article 21/RS 336). He refers here to the fact that passions [*Passiones sive Affectus*] are only properly so when they are of the soul [*animae*]. This is in opposition to phenomena generally referred to as passions, however improperly—nervous tension and other species of corporeal energy. Again, Descartes mines the distinction between body and soul in order to confirm that passions are only appropriate to the soul. This is

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129 “Postquam ita consideravimus omnes functiones quae pertinent as solum corpus, facile est cognoscere nihil in nobis restare quod debeamus tribuere nostrae animae, exceptis nostris cogitationibus, quae praecipue duum generum sunt; quaedam enim sunt Actiones voco, aliae ejus Passiones sive Affectus” (OP 10).
130 “Et si autem quaedam harum Imaginationum sint Passiones sive Affectus animae, sumpto illo vocabulo in magis propria & specialiori significacione, et possint ita omnes nominari, si in significatu generaliori idem nomen sumatur” (OP 11).
precisely what Spinoza finds distasteful and disabling about Descartes’ project; in the
*Ethica*, *affectus* is distinct from *passio*, constitutive of *passio*, and it affects both body
and soul alike. For Spinoza a *passio* is an *affectus* but an *affectus* is not necessarily a
*passio*. Moreover an *affectus* is proper to substance and thus to body and soul; one might
consider an *affectus* under distinct attributes (extension or thought), or through the
contemplation of a particular mode but ultimately there is no substantial division. For
Descartes, however, the *affectus* of the formula *Passiones sive Affectus animae* is easily
elided in the Latin text. It is, at best, a synonym for *passiones*.

In other places as well the Latin terminology loses its consistency, especially
where “pain, heat and other states [*affectus*] we feel as being in our limbs, and not as
being in objects outside us” (Article 24/RS 337)\(^{131}\) describes how human beings perceive
and experience corporeal motions, specific to the body and not to the soul. In other
places—in fact, in the majority of articles across the treatise—*affectus* is entirely absent.
For instance, where Descartes gives the first and most complete definition of the passions
of the soul as “those perceptions, sensations or emotions of the soul which we refer
particularly to [the soul], and which are caused, maintained and strengthened by the same
movement of the spirits” (Article 27/RS 338-9), the term *affectus* does not appear.\(^{132}\)
When *affectus* does in fact appear, it is only to help describe the work of the passions as
distinct from the operations of the body and the forces appropriate to it. Insofar as the

\(^{131}\) “dolor, calor, & alii affectus quos sentimus quasi in membris nostris, & non ut in
objectis quae sunt extra nos” (OP 12).

\(^{132}\) “Perceptiones, aut sensus, aut commotions animae, quae ad eam speciatim referuntur,
quaeque producuntur, conservantur & corroborantur per aliquem motum spirituum” (OP
14).
minds and bodies of human beings are related—where humans develop bodily responses and habits based on the passion of revulsion or aversion in the soul, and vice versa—“the same may be observed in animals. For although they lack reason, and perhaps even thought, all the movements of the spirits and of the gland which produce passions in us are nevertheless present in them too, though in them they serve to maintain and strengthen only the movements of the nerves and the muscles which usually accompany the passions and not, as in us, the passions themselves [Affectibus]” (Article 50/RS 348). Animals, like humans, are animated by an economy of spirits that develop through experience and habit. The key difference, however, is that human beings are endowed with the pineal gland, the critical point of contact between body and soul, where the spirits proper to the body (to the nerves and muscles) affect the soul and through which, in turn, the passions of the soul affect the body. Thus, while all animals are animated by animal spirits, only human beings experience the passions (Affectibus); only human beings are endowed with a rational soul. The Latin text of the Opera Philosophica makes this distinction explicit in terms of affectus.

Descartes, at first light, seems to reproduce Aristotelian accounts of the tripartite soul, divided into nutritive/vegetative, sensitive, and rational activities. Here only man is capable of rational activity and, thus, only man’s body is in a position to adapt in reaction to the passions of the soul: the soul has “the power to receive in itself every other

133 “Quin idem in bestiis potest observari: nam etsi ratione careant & forte omni cogitatione, omnes tamen motus spirituum & glandis qui excitant in nobis Passiones, in illis quoque sunt, & inserviunt conservandis & confirmandis, non ut in nobis, Affectibus, sed motibus nervorum & musculorum qui eos comitari solent.” (OP 25).

134 Susan James, Passion and Action, 39-45, 91.
passion, or to perform the actions to which the passions impel it” (Article 68/RS 352). Nevertheless, Descartes is clear insofar as his version of the tripartite soul does not carry with it the trappings of Thomism or of what he considered Scholasticism. Where “they [after Aquinas] derive their enumeration from a distinction they draw, within the sensitive part of the soul, between the two appetites they call ‘concupiscible’ and ‘irascible’… I recognize no distinction of parts within the soul…And besides, their enumeration does not include all of the principle passions” (Article 68/RS 352).

Rejecting the Thomist canon of eleven passions (six concupiscible and five irascible) Descartes opts instead for six principle passions. These six “primitive” passions [Primitivas Passiones] are wonder [Admirationem], love [Amorem], hatred [Odium], desire [Cupiditatem], joy [Laetitiam] and sadness [Moerorem]; “All others are either composed from some of these six or they are species of them” [caeteras omnes componi ex quibusdam harum sex, aut earum esse species](Article 69/RS 353/OP 31). Here, again, the Latin text of the Opera Philosophica betrays another imprecision in the use of affectus. It is as though the term has no meaning other than as a synonym for passionem. Joy [laetitiae] is given as an affectum (Articles 91, 109/OP 41, 49), love [Amorem] an Affectus (Articles 102, 107/OP 46, 48), hatred [Odium] an Affectum (Article 108/OP 48),

135 “in se recipiendi singulos alios Affectus, aut ea agendi ad quae hi Affectus eam impellunt” (OP 31).
136 “Nam derivant suam enumerationem ex eo quod distinguunt in parte sensitiva animae duos appetites, quorum unum vocant Concupiscibilem, alterum Irascibilem. Et quoniam nullam in anima agnosco distinctionem partium…Adde quod eorum enumeratio non comprehendit omnes praecipuas Passiones” (OP 31). See also James, Passion and Action, 56-63; Brown, Descartes, 49-54; and Michael Moriarty, Early Modern French Thought: The Age of Suspicion (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 18-49.
sadness [Tristitia] an Affectus (Article 92/RS 361/OP 42). Of love we are told that “this passion is conducive to health” [hic Affectus sit utilis valetudini](Article 97/RS 363/OP 44) and, with regard to the movements of the eyes and the mercurial character of the face Descartes affirms that “we may use such expressions to hide our passions as well as to reveal them” [ita ut possint aeque adhiberi ad dissimulandos Affectus, ac ad illos declarandos](Article 113/RS 368/OP 50). The Latin text uses affectus most frequently as a synonym for passion. It is even distinct from commotionibus (Article 157/RS 381/OP66). Affectio and afficio rarely appear in the treatise; one suspects that Descartes uses tangere (Articles 72, 148/OP 33, 66) and afficere as synonyms, just as “touch” is rendered misleadingly in the English translation in terms of “affect.” In the French text Descartes does use the term “l’affectation,” but only to describe a species of love (Articles 81-83/RS 357/AT 388-90). The Passiones serves as a convenient foil for Spinoza’s project in the Ethica and, to an extent, gives structure to Part V. Nevertheless, it does not serve as a conceptual resource as far as the triad affectio, afficio, affectus is concerned. Descartes’ version of passio takes us far from Spinoza’s determination of passio in the Ethica. Conceptually—and, specifically, in terms of affectus—there is little continuity between the two works.

The Korte Verhandeling (1660-1662) as Theology

Spinoza’s attention to affectus does not follow from Descartes; the Korte Verhandeling van God, de Mensch en Deszels Welstand [Short Treatise on God, Man,

\footnote{For further use of affectus in the Opera Philosophica see Articles 117, 121, 136, 137, 151, 152, 157/OP 51, 53, 59, 60, 62-3, 63, 66.}
and his Well-Being],\textsuperscript{138} rather, suggests that the approach to affectus in the Ethica derives, in fact, from an engagement with Calvin and the resources of Reformed Orthodoxy. This seems, at first, quite counter-intuitive, considering Spinoza’s critique of Dutch Reformed Orthodoxy in the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus as well as the ferocity with which all of Spinoza’s works were attacked and condemned by clerics of all confessions during and after his lifetime. But the Korte Verhandeling, Spinoza’s only surviving work in a language other than Latin, offers crucial insight into the development of the Ethica, in conversation with Christianity (and Reformed Orthodoxy after the Synod of Dort/Dodrecht in particular). While the editorial apparatus of the work proclaims the Korte Verhandeling to be a translation from an existent Latin original, no such source text has survived. Nadler suggests that the work was “most likely begun while [Spinoza] was still in Amsterdam [in 1660], at the instigation of his friends…[who] wanted a concise exposition of his own developing philosophical ideas, preferably something on paper that they could study and discuss.”\textsuperscript{139} Some of these friends, attendants at the Collegient gatherings in Amsterdam and Rijnsburg, evidently required a translation of the

\textsuperscript{138} Hereafter referred to in the text as the Korte Verhandeling. Unless otherwise noted, all English citations are taken from the 1910 A. Wolf translation, emended by Michael L. Morgan, Bieneke Heitjama and Inge Van Der Cruysse, in Spinoza: Complete Works, ed. Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis, Indiana and Cambridge: Hackett, 2002), 31-107. Citations from the Dutch text are taken from: Benedicti de Spinoza, Korte Verhandeling van God, de Mensch, en Deszelfs Welstand [Versio Belgica], ed. Car. Schaarsschmidt (Amsterdam: Fredericum Muller, 1869). Citations appear in the text followed, in parentheses, by page references to the English translation (marked M) and to the Dutch (marked KV).

\textsuperscript{139} See Nadler, Spinoza, 186.
work from the Latin to the vernacular. Hence the subtitle to the *Korte Verhandeling*, a work

Previously written in the Latin tongue by B. D. S. for the use of his disciples [leerlingen] who wanted to devote themselves to the study of Ethics [Zeedekonst] and true Philosophy [waare Wysbegeerte]. And now translated into the Dutch language for the use of the Lovers [Liefhebbers] of Truth [Waarheid] and Virtue [Deugd]: so that they who spout so much about it, and put dirt and filth into the hands of simpletons as though it were ambergris, may just have their mouths stopped, and cease to profane what they do not understand: *God, themselves, and how to help people have regard for each other’s well-being, and how to heal those whose mind is sick, in a spirit [geest] of tenderness [Sagtmoedigheid] and tolerance [Verdraagzaamheid], after the example [Voorbeeld] of the Lord Christ, our best teacher [besten leermeester]*” (M 33).  

Spinoza scholars and historians of philosophy seldom account for the *Korte Verhandeling*. When they do it is either as a meager rough draft of the *Ethica*, where the “overall character of Spinoza’s understanding of religion, metaphysics, nature, and

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140 Incidentally, the first publication proper was in 1862; prior to this the *Korte Verhandeling* circulated only in manuscript, two of which have survived and are currently housed in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the National library of the Netherlands located at the Hague. References in the text are to the Bogaers manuscript published in 1869 by Carl Schaarschmidt.

141 “Voor deze in de Latynsche taal beschreven door B. D. S. ten dienste van syne leerlingen die zig wilde begreven tot de oeffeninge der Zeedekonst en waare Wysbegeerte. En nu in de Neerduytsche spraak overgeset ten dienste van de Liefhebbers van Waarheid en Deudg: op dat die daarvan zo breed opgeven en hun drek en vuyligheid aan de eenvoudige voor amber de grys in de vuyst duwen, een maal de mond gestopt mogten worden, en ophouden te lasteren, dat zy nog niet verstaan: God, hun zelven, en malkanders welstand hulpens in agt neemen, En die krank in’t verstand syn door den geest der Sagtmoedigheid en Verdraagzaamheid geneezen naa’t Voorbeeld van de Heer Christus, onzen besten leermeester” (KV 1-2).

142 Steven Nadler approaches the *Korte Verhandeling* with some care but, ultimately, is more interested with Spinoza’s abandonment of the project. See Nadler, *Spinoza’s Ethics*, 36.
ethics has taken shape, but its fine lineaments needed elaboration,” or as a cautious initial presentation of a philosophy that was bound to offend his Christian readers: “Spinoza clearly recognized, not just the extraordinary originality of his ideas, but the certainty of their appearing too radical in the eyes of the Dutch Calvinist authorities.”

Certainly, his often-jarring formulations risked striking his contemporaries as confusing, threatening, or absurd; even as generous a correspondent as Henry Oldenburg confesses, in a 1661 letter, that when he and Spinoza “conversed [at Rijnsburg] about God, about infinite Extension and Thought, about the difference and agreement of these attributes, and about the nature of the union of the human soul with the body; and also about the principles of the Cartesian and Baconian philosophy…we then spoke about such important topics as through a lattice-window [per transennam] and only in a cursory way, and in the meantime all these things continue to torment me” (Letter I: M 760).

Nevertheless, Spinoza’s presentation of his early philosophy in the Korte Verhandeling warrants more attention, particularly insofar as his instructions on “how to heal those whose mind is sick, in a spirit [geest] of tenderness [Sagtmoedigheid] and tolerance [Verdraagzaamheid], after the example [Voorbeeld] of the Lord Christ, our best teacher [besten leermeester]” might offer new insight into the development of his project in conversation with contemporary theological resources. It also helps us understand the

143 Morgan in Spinoza: Complete Works, 32; and Nadler, Spinoza, 186-7.
144 “Habeamus Rhenoburgi sermonem de Deo, de Extensione et Cogitatione infinita, de horum attributorum discrimine et convenientia, de ratione unionis animae humanae cum corpore; porro de Principiiis Philosophiae Cartesianaec et Baconianae. Verum, cum quasi per transennam et in transcursu duntaxat de tanti momenti argumentis tunc loqueremur, atque interim ista omnia menti meae crucem sigant” (Epistola I: O II.195-6).
ambit of the *Ethica*, and points to previously overlooked influences and interlocutors. In other words, a careful treatment of the *Korte Verhandeling*, of Spinoza’s sustained articulation of his philosophy in the terms of Christianity, reveals the degree to which his early philosophy betrays a familiarity with the debates concerning Orthodox Calvinism that marked seventeenth-century Dutch politics, philosophy and theology. In the *Korte Verhandeling*, Spinoza attempts to develop a philosophical language that is in many ways continuous with Calvin’s own theology; reading the *Korte Verhandeling* with an eye to detail enables us to trace how and why Spinoza transformed his approaches to necessity and *affectus* in the period between this relatively early vernacular treatise and the mature Latin *Ethica*. A comparative reading of the *Korte Verhandeling* with the *Ethica* reveals the degree to which his later attention to *affectus* corrects and sharpens the imprecise approaches to *passio*, emotion and agency in the earlier text in a language of *affectus* and *afficere* prominent in Calvin. Thus, while the transition between the *Korte Verhandeling* and the *Ethica* is often described as a process of secularization or liberation from religion as superstition, Spinoza nevertheless draws his approach to *affectus* from Calvin—extracting from the 1559 *Institutio* a version of *affectus* that is consonant with reason and necessity while ultimately rejecting Reformed Orthodoxy, the terms of “true belief,” and Revelation.

At the most superficial level, the *Korte Verhandeling* evinces an engagement with theological languages and resources. In the first part of the text, concerning God, Spinoza offers an elaborate proof of God’s existence (“Dat God is,” or “That God exists”) that breaks decisively with other seventeenth-century demonstrations. Spinoza
affirms that God, “who is the first cause of all things, and also the cause of himself, makes himself known through himself” and that “one need not attach much importance to the saying of Thomas Aquinas, namely, that God could not be proved a priori because he, forsooth, has no cause” (M 40).

What follows accordingly is an account of God’s existence in terms of causality where God’s substance—which is rendered appropriately in Dutch as selfstandigheid—is infinite and perfect, and that “there is no substance or attribute in the infinite understanding of God other than what exists formaliter in Nature” (M 42).

Spinoza’s attempt to work through a creatio ex deo theology takes shape in opposition to Thomism as well as through a rejection of Ramist Scholasticism. Against predominantly Ramist methods of logical division Spinoza affirms that ‘‘part’ and ‘whole’ are not true or real entities, but only ‘things of reason,’ and consequently there are in Nature neither whole nor parts” (M 44).

To this point, it is perhaps easy to see why the Korte Verhandeling is so readily considered a draft version of the Latin Ethica, particularly where Spinoza begins the earlier treatise with a prolonged treatment of God’s substance, modes and attributes while ultimately working to confirm that “good and evil,

145 “Dog God de eerste oorzak aller dingen, en ook de oorzak syns zelfs, die geeft hen zelve te kenne door hem zelve. Weshalven van niet veel belang is het segge van Thomas Aquina, namentlyk dat God a priori niet en zoude kunnen beweezen worden, omdat hij kwansuys geen oorzak heeft” (KV 9-10).
146 “dat er geen selfstandigheid of eijgeschappen in het oneijndelyk verstand Gods zyn, als die formelyk in de natuur zyn” (KV 13)
147 “dat deel en geheel geen waare of daadelyke wizens zijn, maar alleen wizens van reeden en dienvolgende en zyn in de natuur nog geheel nog deelen” (KV 17). See also Korte Verhandeling 1.7 where though “they say that a correct definition must consist of a ‘genus’ and ‘differentia’…although all the Logicians admit this, I do not know where they get it from” (M 57/KV 42)(“Zy zeggen dan voorerest, date en wettige beschrijvinge bestaan moet van een geslacht en onderscheid. Evenwel alscoon alle de Logici dit toestaan, ik en weet niet van waar zij dit hebben”).

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or sin, these are only modes of thought [wijzen van denken], and by no means things, or anything that has reality [wezentlykheid]…for all things and works which are in Nature [i.e. God] are perfect [volmaakt]” (M 56). Where God is equivalent with Nature and where the Dutch text sets to work a radical critique of the theo­l­o­gy of good and evil it does seem as though the kernel of the later Eth­ica is present in the Korte Ver­han­del­ing.

While this is in some ways the case, Spinoza nevertheless develops his philosophical concepts in the Korte Ver­han­del­ing in striking continuity with the debates regarding the shape of Reformed Orthodoxy in the Nether­lands since the Synod of Dort. This is not at all apparent in the body of writing on Spinoza and the Radical Enlightenment nor is it made clear across scholarship on the Eth­ica. To begin, the Korte Ver­han­del­ing, while conceptually similar to the Eth­ica, is a strikingly different genre of treatise, including two dialogues (one between Understanding, Love, Reason and Desire and another between Erasmus and Theophilus) as well as a series of loci determined not by reason or the geometric method but by the standard forms of theological debate. The Dutch terms that Spinoza uses to describe God and to demonstrate his existence follow entirely from theological treatises on the subject. God “exists through himself, is Eternal, One, Immutable, etc.” which has “reference to his activity, such as that he is a cause, predestines [een voorbeschikker], and rules all things”

148 “goet en kwaat, of zonden en zijn, dat niet anders als wijzen van denken, en geenzins eenige zaaken off iets dat wezentlykheid heeft…Want alle dingen en werken die in de Natuur zijn, die zijn volmaakt” (KV 39).
His “necessary activity” [noodzaakelyk werken] is rendered explicitly in terms of predestination [Predestinatie], where “all that happens is done by God, it must therefore necessarily be predetermined by him, otherwise he would be mutable, which would be a great imperfection in him” (M 51). In I.5, on God’s Providence [Gods Voorzienigheid], Spinoza describes that “which we call a proprium [(proprium of) eigen] is his Providence [voorzienigheid], which to us is nothing else than the striving [poginge] which we find in the whole of Nature and in individual things to maintain and preserve their own existence” (M 53). In the Ethica Spinoza will deploy the Latin term conatus to describe how each thing endeavors to persist in its own being. There he delivers a more articulate and consistent treatment of modes, through which the attributes of God are expressed, and affectus. But here, in the Korte Verhandeling, the Dutch term poginge emerges from an explicit discussion of Divine Providence. The distinction between God, through whom “all things are produced and sustained insofar as they are parts of the whole of Nature,” and all particular things that strive in themselves to preserve their diverse existences is rendered through a tentative division between general

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150 “door zig zelfs bestaande, Eewig, Eenig, Onveranderlyk, enz. ofte, zeg ik, in opzigt van syne werkinge: gelykerwys, als dat Hy is een oorzaak, een voorbeschikker, en Regeerder van alle dingen” (KV 20).
151 For the Dutch term Praedestinatie see also KV 30, 31.
152 “Wy zeggen dan dewyl alles dat’er gescheid van God gedaan woort, also by hem noodzaakelyk moet voorbepaalt zijn, andersins waar vy veranderlijk, dat dan in hem een groote onvolmaaktheid zoude zijn” (KV 31).
153 “die wij (proprium of) eigen noemen is de Voorzienigheid, welke bij ons niet anders is als die poginge, de wij en in de geheele Natuur, en in de bezondere dingen ondervinden, strekkende tot behoudenisse en bewaringe van haar zelfs wezen” (KV 35).
154 See Ethica III Propositions VI-VII (V I.125-6).
[algemeene] and special [bezondere] providence [voorzienigheid](M 53). Providence, whether in Dutch or Latin, is entirely excluded from the *Ethica*. But in the *Korte Verhandeling* it is central to Spinoza’s determination of necessity and human agency as well as to his explication of God as Nature; moreover, it is through Divine Providence that Spinoza approaches Divine Predestination [*goddelyke praedestinatie*]. Hence, in Chapter VI of Part I of the *Korte Verhandeling*, Spinoza affirms the truth of Divine Predestination [*goddelyke praedestinatie*] and, in turn, denies entirely that there can be accidental things [*gebeurlyke dingen*] in Nature.156

God’s necessity, that which structures all of Spinoza’s treatises and which both buttresses and proceeds from his various affirmations and demonstrations of God’s existence, first takes shape in the *Korte Verhandeling* explicitly in terms of predestination. God is the first and only cause of a thing—indeed, of any thing—and as “the first pertains to God alone, it is thereby proved…that God alone is the first cause of all things,” including the will of man [*de wille van de mensch*](M 55).157 Human will and human agency enter the discussion under the heading of “Divine Predestination” and, specifically, in light of Spinoza’s pending explication of sin. Here Spinoza derides Platonic and Aristotelian distinctions among forms and ideas, particularly the inapt division between general and particular ideas, where God supposedly exercises no

155 “de algemeene is die, door dewelke ieder zaak voortgebragt en ouderhouden word voor zoveel zy zyn deeled van de geheele natuur” (KV 35).
156 See M 54-6/KV 35-9.
157 “het eerste alleen aan God toebehoort, zo word daardoor betoond…dat God namentlyk alleen de eerste oorzak van alles is” (KV 37).
“providence over Bucephalus, etc., but only over the whole genus Horse” (M 55).158

Such scholars “say also that God has no knowledge of particular and transient things, but only of the general, which, in their opinion, are imperishable. We have, however, rightly considered this to be due to their ignorance. For it is precisely the particular things, and they alone, that have a cause, and not the general, because they are nothing” (M 55).159

For Spinoza, God is the cause of particular things only, but there are only particular things. God directly causes all things to happen and particular things are sins only “with reference to us, that is, as when we compare two things with each other, or from different points of view” (M 55)160; thus questions of sin and agency are still proper to Divine Predestination but only insofar as sins and human acts are like any other particular things. There are no meaningful distinctions between such things in God. Nevertheless, the language of the Korte Verhandeling is clear insofar as God does not “cause” sin. Sin only has meaning in comparison with other particular things and, even then, only in terms of human perspective. As Spinoza poses the question concerning sin and agency—namely, “why God has not made mankind so that they should not sin” [waarom dat God de menschen niet en heeft geschapen datse niet en zondigen]—he resolves the problem by

158 “sijne voorsorge zig niet over de bezondere, maar alleen over over de geslagte uytstrekt e.g. noijt heeft God sijne voorsorge gehad over Bucephalum enz. maar wel over het geheele geslagte van Paard” (KV 38).
159 Zij zeggen ook dat God geen wetenschap heeft van de bezondere en vergankelijke dingen, maar wel van de algemeene, die na haar meeninge onvergankelyk zijn. Dog wij hebben dit met regt in haar voor een onwetenheid aangemerkt, want eerst de byzondere alle alleen hebben oorzaak en niet de algemeene, dewyle die niets zijn” (KV 38).
160 “alles watter van de zonde ook gezeid word, zulks alleen maar gezeid word in opzigt van ons te weeten als wanneer wij twee dingen met een anderen off onder verscheide opzigten vergelyken” (KV 39).
separating sin and predestination into two distinct orders: the former, human, based on an investigation of the modes proper to man, and the latter, divine and ontological, an affirmation of absolute necessity. Good, evil and sin are “only modes of thought, and by no means things, or anything that has reality” (M 56). Instead, reality is defined in terms of God’s three attributes, his *propria*: he is the cause of all things, he operates in all things and in himself through Providence, and what is—God himself—exists only of necessity, through Divine Predestination.

Spinoza’s engagement with theology—and with Calvin and Reformed Orthodoxy in particular—informs the second part of the *Korte Verhandeling* as well. In an investigation of “Man, and what pertains to him” [*De Mensch en ‘t geen tot hem aanhorig is*] (M 60/KV 48), he defines the modes of which man consists as “ideas, differentiated as Opinion [*waan*], true Belief [*waar geloof*], and clear and distinct knowledge [*klare onderscheide kenis*], produced by objects, each in its own way” (M 62). This treatment of knowledge or forms of knowledge certainly looks proleptically to the *Ethica* insofar as such forms are bound up with Spinoza’s discussion of the passions and, as in the *Ethica*, they are organized in an ascending order ranging from the least to the most certain and perfect mode of knowing. There are, however, key differences between the *Korte Verhandeling* and the *Ethica* here. For instance, while the

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161 “goet en kwaat, of zonden en zijn, dat niet anders als wijzen van denken, een geenzins eenige zaaken of iets dat wezentlykheid heeft” (KV 39).
162 See *Korte Verhandeling* I.3-6 (M 50-56/KV 29-39).
163 “De wijzen van dewelke de mensch bestaat, zijn Begrippen, afgedeeld in waan, waar geloof en klare onderscheide kenis, veroorzaakt door de voorwerpen, ieder na syn aard” (KV 51). Opinion [*waan*] is also referred to as mere belief arising either from experience [*ondervinding*] or hearsay [*hooren zeggen*]. See M 62-3/KV 52.
forms of knowledge precede the discussion of passion and causality in the Korte Verhandeling, in the Ethica the treatment of affectus in Parts I, II, and III enable a different approach to the three kinds of knowing in Parts IV and V. Moreover, a key distinction between the two works can be made with reference to Spinoza’s tacit affirmation of the power of true belief in the Korte Verhandeling—an aspect that is certainly abandoned on the way to the Ethica. Here in the early 1660s Spinoza accords belief a special status, where “Belief is a strong proof based on Reasons, whereby I am convinced in my mind that the thing is really, and just such, outside my understanding, as I am convinced in my mind that it is. I say, a strong proof based on Reasons, in order thereby to distinguish it both from Opinion, which is always doubtful and liable to error, and from knowledge which does not consist in being convinced by Reasons, but in an immediate union with the thing itself” (M 66). This determination of belief, of true belief, is clearly distinct from later versions of the concept in the Ethica and in the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, where belief in Revelation is the province of theology and is ultimately opposed to philosophy, to matters having to do with truth and reason. Here, however, Spinoza uses the distinctions between opinion, true belief, and clear and distinct knowledge to organize his treatment of the passions. He does so in order to address topics that are generally reserved for theology. Under the heading of Grief [Het

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164 “Het geloof is een krachtige betuiging van Redenen, door welke ik in mijn verstand overtuigd ben, dat de zaak waarlijk en zodanig is buijten mijn verstand, als ik in mijn verstand daaraf overtuigd ben. Een krachtig betuig van Redened zeg ik: om het daardoor te onderscheiden, en van de waan die altyd twyffelachtig, en doling onderworpen is, en van ‘t weeten, dat niet bestaat in overtuijging van Redenen, maar in een onmiddelyke vereeniging met de zaak zelve” (KV 68-9).

165 See, in particular, Chapters I, XIV, and XV in the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus.
Beklagh], for instance, Spinoza addresses perseverance—one of the most important concepts in seventeenth-century Reformed Orthodoxy—in articulating the sufficiency of both true belief and reason; in an effort to understand what these forms of knowledge enable, as opposed to opinion, he notes that it is “when man comes to love God who always is and remains immutable, then it is impossible [onmogelijk] for him to fall into this welter [poel] of passions [passien]. And for this reason we state it as a fixed and immovable principle that God is the first and only cause of all our good and delivers us from all our evil” (M 78-9).\footnote{166 “wanneer de mensch God komt te beminnen, die altyd onveranderlijk is en blyvt, zo is ’t hem onmogelijk in deze poel val passien te vervallen, En daar om zo stellen wij voor een vaste en onvrikbare regul, dat God is de eerste en eenige oorzak van al ons goedt, en een vrymaaker van al ons kwaad” (KV 82-3).}

Spinoza pushes this approach to true belief and clear and distinct knowledge in order to account for the will. Granted, what appears in the Korte Verhandeling is an idiosyncratic approach to the will that would, no doubt, shock and confuse Spinoza’s contemporaries—Reformed Orthodox, Collegient, Jesuit, and Jansenist alike. Nevertheless, it is quite significant that Spinoza develops his philosophy in theological terms and according to established loci and topics. This is especially important considering the proximity between the organization of the Korte Verhandeling and existing Reformed Orthodox approaches to perseverance and the will. Here, in II.16, the will [Wille] appears in an extremely qualified form, proceeding from the discussion of perseverance and the affirmation that desire is nothing other than “the inclination, which the soul has towards something which it chooses as good; whence it follows that before
our desire inclines towards something outside, we have already inwardly decided that such a thing is good, and this affirmation, or, stated more generally, the power to affirm and to deny, is called the Will” (M 80-1).167 Good and evil, like sin, are rendered subordinate to God’s absolute necessity; they refer us to another register of action and thus the will, as an affirmation of good and evil—even as a “power to affirm and to deny” [de magt van bevestigen en ontkennen]—is reduced to a faculty proper to true belief, reason, and clear and distinct knowledge. Moreover, the understanding which is so integral to this determination of the will is “purely passive; it is an awareness, in the soul, of the essence and existence of things; so that it is never we who affirm or deny something of a thing, but it is the thing itself that affirms or denies, in us, something of itself” (M 82).168 All of these are rendered theological insofar as they hinge on the human ability to understand God. Moreover, Spinoza describes these distinct comportments to God in theological terms, couched in theological controversies concerning the perseverance of the saints and the depravity of the human will, topics integral to Reformed Orthodoxy after the Synod of Dort. Spinoza records that men are “truly servants, aye, slaves, of God, and that it is our greatest perfection to be such necessarily” [wy waarlyk dienaars ja slaven Gods zijn, en dat het onse grootste

167 “De Begeerte hebben wij gezeid die nijginge te zijn die de Ziele heeft tot iets ‘t geen zij als goet keurt; zo dat dan daaruit volgt dat eer onse begeerte zich uytierlijk tot iets uijstrekt, in ons alvoorens een besluijt is gegaan, van dat zulk iet goet is. welke bevestiging dan, of algemeen genoemen, de magt van bevestigen en ontkennen, die wille genoemt word” (KV 86).
168 “het verstaan een pure lydinge is dat is een gewaarwordinge in de ziel van de wezentheid en wezentlykheid der zaaken; also dat wy het nooyt en zijn die van de zaak iet bevestigen of ontkennen, maar de zaak zelfs is het, die iets van zigh in ons bevestigt of ontkent” (KV 89).
volmaakheid is zulks noodzakelyk te zijn](M 85/KV 94). It is in understanding this that our happiness consists. Moreover, it is in the direct revelation of objects to our understanding through a modification of the third kind of knowledge, rendered in Dutch as *Waare Kennisse* or *Wedergeboorte*—as true knowledge or rebirth/regeneration—that men can come to truly understand God immediately and through the effects of this union (via understanding). In referencing a rebirth or regeneration [*Wedergeboorte*], Spinoza uses the same language as in the 1637 *Statenbijbel*, echoing such passages as John 3:3, “verily, verily I say vnto thee, except a man be borne againe, he can not se the kingdome of God”*[voorwaer, voorwaer, segge ick u, ten zy dat yemant wederom geboren worde, hy en can het Coninckrijcke Gods niet sien]* and II Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if anie man be in Christ, let him be a new creature. Olde things are passed away: beholde, all things are become new”*[So dan indien yemandt in Christo is, die is een nieuw schepsel: het oude is voorby gegaen, siet, het is al nieuw geworden]*.169 According to Spinoza, “when we become aware of these excellent effects, then we may say with truth, *that we have been born again*” (M 95).170

The *Korte Verhandeling* thus evinces an important conversation between Spinoza and Reformed Orthodoxy. It also demonstrates how fluent Spinoza was in the Christian


170 “wanneer wij dan deze uijtwerkingen gewaar worden, alsdan konnen wij met waarheid zeggen weder gebored te zijn” (KV 113).
theological tradition, how readily he was able to develop concepts in and around existing languages and ideas. This was no doubt helpful as Spinoza sought to communicate his philosophy—indeed, his break with Descartes—to his Collegiant friends and associates. But while Spinoza may have used the terms of Reformed Orthodoxy to express his nascent system of philosophy within a Christian community, he also drew heavily from theological resources as he honed and sharpened his thinking across the 1660s, until the publication of his mature *Ethica*. The *Korte Verhandeling* reveals an engagement with theology at the same time as it demonstrates the inefficacy of the language of the passions to express God’s activity and our true agency. This is the subject of the next section which moves us through the *Korte Verhandeling* and to Calvin’s 1559 *Institutio* in search of the origins of *affectus*.

**Affectus in the Korte Verhandeling**

No Latinate form of *affectus* or *afficere* appears in the *Korte Verhandeling*. Instead, we encounter a parade of disparate Dutch terms that present a very different picture of faith, passion, and the modes comprising man than that given in the *Ethica*. Nevertheless, the modern translators of the *Korte Verhandeling*, no doubt operating with the *Ethica* in mind, have attempted to render Spinoza’s Dutch consistent with his Latin *Ethica* through the use of the Latinate “affect.” This is abrupt and misleading; there is no language of *affectus* or *afficere* in the *Korte Verhandeling*. In this section I demonstrate what the disparate Dutch terms and phrases reveal: a confrontation between theological resources and philosophical treatises such as Descartes’ *Passiones*, a confrontation which drives Spinoza to the terms of *affectus* and *afficere* in the *Ethica*—derived from Calvin
and Reformed Orthodoxy and not, as is usually inferred, from Descartes and emergent Cartesian philosophy.

Spinoza begins the *Korte Verhandeling* by affirming that God, as Nature and as substance [*zelfstandigheid*] is whole and productive. Since God can only be productive and perfect and thus whole, “Division, then, or passivity, always takes place in the mode” [*De deeling dan of lydinge gescheid altyd in de wyse*](M 45/KV 19). Passivity, in the Dutch, is rendered as *lydinge*, an early modern derivative of the verb *lijden*, to suffer or to undergo, as well as the noun *lijden*, meaning “suffering, pain, agony, grief, or misery.” In explaining the degree to which God is an immanent cause [*Inblyvende oorzaak*], he affirms that “it can never be said that he has the imperfection [*onvolmaakt*] of a patient [*een lyder*], because he is not affected [*lyd*] by another… since substance is [the cause] and the origin of all its modes [*wyzen*], it may with far greater right be called an agent [*doender*] than a patient [*leyder*]” (M 45). One who is acted upon is a *leyder* while an agent or actor is a *doender*, revealing an economy of activity and passivity operating in Spinoza’s description of God and causality. This language, although prevalent throughout the text, does not continue beyond the section in any systematic manner. By I.9, for instance, we encounter “*de Aandoeningen van de Ziele,*” which Wolf translates as “the Affects of the Soul” (M 59/KV 46) but which ultimately suggests “disorders” or, following Latin idioms, “perturbations.” What is even more striking about I.9, however, is Spinoza’s description of motion as a necessary and immutable effect of God, as “a Son, 

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171 “ken men nooyt zeggen dat hy die onvolmaakt heeft van een lyder, dewijl hy niet van een ander lyd… de zelfstandigheyd, dewyl zij en het beginsel is van alle hare wyzen, zo kan zy met veel grooter regt een doender al seen leyder genoemt worden” (KV 19).
Product, or effect created immediately by God” [een Zone, maaksel, of Uitwerksel, onmiddelyk van God geschapen](M 59/KV 45). ¹⁷² There is no standard language at this point in the treatise, nor is there an attempt to explain any of the tentative terms used to describe the basic units or dynamic processes which later fall under the term affectus. On the contrary, even at the beginning of the Korte Verhandeling, in the demonstration of God’s existence and the investigation of his attributes, Spinoza deploys a set of vernacular terms already pregnant with theological meaning—from the suffering and passion of lijden to the practical language of products and effects [maaksel and Uitwerksel] to the provocative theological claim regarding God’s effect or effects as een Zone.

But this terminology is not revisited and remains a tentative provocation; there is not a great deal of consistency in this matter at this point in the Korte Verhandeling. By Part II, in his discussion of the three kinds of knowing (which eventually lead us to another, to the True Knowledge of Regeneration), Spinoza inaugurates a new Dutch vocabulary to describe the experience of causality. Before diagramming this language I want to make clear how distinct this is from the organization of the Ethica where a systematic treatment of affectus leads the reader to and through an investigation of three kinds of knowing; there, affectus precedes and organizes the discussion of activity and passivity. In the Korte Verhandeling, however, there is no such language or conceptual framework in place and so, in a proleptic inversion of the Ethica, the treatment of

¹⁷² I bracket a pressing investigation of Spinoza’s early Anti-Trinitarianism where one might tease out the implications of God’s production of a Son from himself under the topical heading of Natura Naturata rather than Natura Naturans. See M 58-9/KV 44-46.
knowledge *precedes* Spinoza’s attention to the passions. In the *Korte Verhandeling*, Spinoza describes three kinds of knowledge: opinion [*waan*], true belief [*waar gelaag*], and clear and distinct knowledge [*klare onderscheide kennis*]—the latter also being the most perfect kind, true knowledge [*waare kennis*], following from rebirth or regeneration [*weedergeboorte*]. Opinion is a knowledge derived from experience [*ondervinding*] or hearsay [*hooren zeggen*] and is, unsurprisingly, the most “subject to error” [*dooling onderworpen*](M 62/KV 52-3). True belief is a “strong proof based on Reasons, whereby I am convinced in my mind that the thing is really, and just such, outside of my understanding, as I am convinced in my mind that it is” (M 66). Clear and distinct knowledge, which later develops into a more perfect kind in the explication of true knowledge and regeneration, is similar to true belief insofar as neither kind of knowledge can err. However, where true belief rests on an art of reasoning that depends on phenomena exterior to our understanding, true knowledge (or clear and distinct knowledge, to use the Cartesian idiom) “does not result from something else, but from a direct revelation of the object itself to the understanding” (M 93).

After describing these types of knowledge in terms of degree, Spinoza proceeds in II.2 to elaborate their effects, *haare uitwerkingen* (a Dutch term which immediately recalls his description of effects in I.9). From opinion “proceed all the ‘passions’

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173 “Het gelove is een krachtige betuyginge van Redenen, door welke ik in mijn verstand overtuygt ben, dat de zaak waarlyk en zodanig is buijten myn verstand, als ik in mijn verstand daaraf overtuygt ben” (KV 58).
174 See II.22.
175 “deze manier van kennisse niet en is uyt gevolg van iets anders, maar door een onmiddelijke vertooninge aan het verstand van het voorwerp zelve” (KV 111).
[lydinge (passiën)] which are opposed to good reason; from the second [true belief], good desires [geode Begeerten]; and from the third [knowledge], true and sincere Love [de waare en oprechte Liefde], with all its offshoots” (M 63). In all, Spinoza affirms that “Knowledge is the proximate cause of all the ‘passions’ in the soul” [de naaste oorzaak van alle de lydingen in de Ziele, de kennisse stellen](M 63/KV 54). Spinoza here renders “passion” across a number of Dutch terms. Lydinge and passiën are the most prominent terms, both of which are used, specifically, to describe the origin of passion in the opinion (the first sort of knowledge), as well as in the most general manner, used to describe any sort of feeling or experience whatsoever. In this sense, the terms are quite imprecise across Book II of the Korte Verhandeling—a trait which is evident in the development of numerous synonyms that are themselves modifications of the most basic encounters between modes. Love [Liefde], for instance, is given as an effect of the third type of knowledge, as “de waare en oprechte Liefde,” as well as an effect of opinion (M 63-4/KV 54, 56). Spinoza attempts to make the point that certain forms of love are proper effects of all the types of knowledge, but only “true and sincere Love [de waare en oprechte Liefde], with all its offshoots” proceeds from the third type; nevertheless, the use of love [Liefde] to describe the most basic encounters with “something good” [iets goets] as well as a more perfect and proper reaction (M 64-5/KV 56). In other words, Spinoza risks imprecision insofar as love is read as constitutive of an encounter as well as a specific and directed result of such an encounter. Spinoza betrays an important

176 “uijt de eerstst hervoorkomt alle de lydinge (passiën) die daar streydig zijn tegen de geode reden. Uyt de tweede de geode Begeerten, en uyt de derde de waare en oprechte Liefde met alle haar uijtspruijtzels” (KV 54).
intellectual resource here, echoing Augustine’s descriptions of love as constitutive of other emotions. But there is no attempt to develop this influence in the Korte Verhandeling. On the contrary, in the following chapter (II.4) Spinoza gives a much more basic description of “how the movement [beweging], passions [tochten], and activities [werkingen] of the soul arise from ideas [uyt he begrip]” (M 67/KV 61). Here these forces are constitutive of love. Moreover, the Dutch terms beweging (movement or motion) and werkingen (actions, functionings, or effects) suggest that they are entirely constitutive of the passions themselves, insofar as we understand the passions (following the Korte Verhandeling) as specific emotions or even forms of desire. Desire itself is rendered in Dutch as de Begeerte and is listed in II.3 as an “outcome of the first kind of knowledge” [uyt de eerste manier van kennen voortkomt](M 65/KV 57-8).178 Bewegingen or werkingen are constitutive of love, desire, good and evil. But Spinoza’s third term in II.4 is even more striking: tochten, translated by Wolf as “passions.”

Tochten is the plural form of tocht—a draught or a breeze as well as a journey or trip. It is distinct in the Korte Verhandeling from bevinding: a result, effect, or experience. Moreover, it is markedly distinct from Spinoza’s use of passien for passion. With tochten he renders some fundamental and constitutive movement or activity in the soul as a draught or breeze, as an airy effect without real meaning or consistency. It is here that Spinoza comes closest, in Dutch, to what he eventually renders in terms of affectus in

177 See James, Passion and Action, 114-5.
178 Spinoza is clear, in II.17, that Desire “is not really anything, can also not really cause anything” [de Begeerte dan niet waarlijk iets zijnde ka nook niet dadelijk veroorzaaken](M 84-5/KV 93)—an attribute which follows from his determinations of the will and freedom.
Latin—a movement or fundamental relation, given in physical terms, that is constitutive of feeling and experience as well as new relations. It is also given as a species of Nature, as a breeze that is natural but nevertheless contributes to nature, as *Natura naturans*, proceeding from necessity. However, there is no consistency to this terminology, even within II.4 itself. By the end of the section Spinoza returns to the terms *lydigen* and *passien*—the most prominent terms in *the Korte Verhandeling*\(^\text{179}\)—to describe the “affects or passions” and we wait until II.9 for other uses of *tochten* [or *togten*](M 68, 77, 74/KV 62, 80, 75): “I am well aware that almost all people consider these affects [*togten*] to be good; but, notwithstanding this, I venture to say that they can have no place in a perfect man” (M 77/KV 80) and “Since we know now whence these passions [*togten*] originate, it will be very easy for us to show which of them are good, and which are bad” (M 74).\(^\text{180}\) While *tocht* looks proleptically to the *Ethica* at first, it quickly loses its precision and becomes yet another synonym for passion or emotion. It also loses its specificity as a sort of cause; we lose sight, in the *Korte Verhandeling*, of its status in nature as well as in human nature.

\(^\text{179}\) See also *lyden* (M 69/KV 69); *passien* (M 70/KV 67); Hatred as a “perturbation of the soul” [*een onsteltenisse van de ziel*](M 71/KV 68); *passien* (M 74/KV 74); *passien* (M 75/KV 76); *passien* (M 79/KV 82); pure *lyding* [translated by Wolf as “pure passivity”] (M 80, 82/KV 84, 89); *gevoel* [“feeling”] (M 80/KV 85); *passien* (M 85/KV 95); *passien* (M 86/KV 96); *uitwerkingen* [“effect”](M 88/KV 100); *lydinge* (M 88/KV 100); *lyden* (M 88/KV 101); *passien* (M 89-90/KV 103); *passien* (M 90/KV 104); *ontroering* [emotion or motion; translated by Wolf as “perturbation”](M 90/KV 104); *passien* (M 99/KV 121); *lyding* (M 100/KV 123).

\(^\text{180}\) “Ik weet weld at meest all menschen oordeelen deze togten goet te zijn, doch niet tegenstaande dat, zo derf ik zeggen, dat ze in een volmaakt mensch geen plaatse konnen hebben”; and “Dewijl ons dan nu bekend zijn waaruyt deze togten komen te ontstaan, zo zal ons heel ligtelyk zyn te betogen, welke van die goet, welke kwaad zijn” (KV 75). See also II.19 (M 87/KV 97); and II.22 (M 94/KV 113).
The *Korte Verhandeling* is key insofar as it reveals an intimate engagement with Christianity—specifically, Reformed Orthodoxy—as well as in Spinoza’s relatively early attempt to forge a fundamental vocabulary of relation, causality, and experience. With respect to Christianity, Spinoza’s record of publications during the 1660s and 70s reveals a sharp turn from the project of the *Korte Verhandeling* but, as is evident in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, he remained in conversation with Reformed Orthodoxy and with predestinarian theology in general. As for his attempts to develop a language of causality, activity, passivity, and experience in the *Korte Verhandeling*, he did not render a consistent vocabulary nor does the Dutch work reveal much evidence of a constitutive notion of *affectus* proceeding from necessity. This is the project of the *Ethica*, where Spinoza departs from the passions of the *Korte Verhandeling* but, at the same time, continues the conversation with Calvin and Calvinism staged in the earlier tract.

**From the *Institutio Christianae Religionis* to the *Ethica***

As I demonstrated in Chapter 1, *affectus*, *afficio* and *affectio* are collocated with *persuasio* across III.ii of the 1559 *Institutio Christianae Religionis*, as Jean Calvin sharpens his determination of faith and, in turn, accounts for the structure of the relationship between God and men. Faith, for Calvin, is “a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us, founded on the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (III.ii.7/B 551). It is initially from Romans 10:10 that Calvin draws the language of the heart, a crucial citation given the importance of the statement “With the heart men believeth unto
righteousness” [Corde enim creditur in iustitiam](C Romans 222; Romanos 216). But this is coupled, in the Institutio, with knowledge, with the proper comportment to the knowledge of God the Creator explicated in Book I. This is not that knowledge which, content with empty speculation, merely flits in the brain, but that which will be sound and fruitful if we duly perceive it, and if it takes root in the heart. For the Lord manifests himself by his powers, the force of which we feel [sentimus] within ourselves and the benefits of which we enjoy [fruimur]. We must therefore be much more profoundly affected [affici] by this knowledge than if we were to imagine a God of whom no perception came through to us (I.v.9/B 61-2).

The knowledge that “takes root in the heart,” developed at length in III.ii, proceeds from this pious affection or inclination. Here Calvin follows Romans 10:10 again, where faith is “more of the heart than of the brain, and more of the disposition [affectus] than of the understanding” (III.ii.8/B 552). These articulations of affectus, affectio, and afficio

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182 Atque hic rursus observandum est, invitari nos ad Dei notitiam, non quae inani speculatione contenta in cerebro tantum volitetur, sed quae solida futura sit et fructuosa si rite perciatur a nobis, radicemque agat in corde. A suis enim virtutibus manifestatur Dominus: quarum vim quia sentimus intra nos, et beneficiis fruimur, vividius multo hac cognitione nos affici necesse est quam si Deum imaginaremur cuiusnullus ad nos sensus perviniret” (I.v.9/OS III 53).

183 “assensionem scilicet ipsam, sicuti ex parte attigi, et fusius iterum repetam, cordis esse magis quam cerebri, et affectus magis quam intelligentiae” (III.ii.8/OS IV 17).
structure the division between the heart and the mind, between knowledge and feeling, as well as between soul and body. Insofar as God affects believers and non-believers alike, the terms of affectus operate prior to these divisions and, indeed, distribute qualities across them. It is in this sense that he describes additive understandings of faith; Calvin, in his use of affectio, affirms affectus as constitutive of heart and mind as well as the division between them: “they are speaking foolishly when they say that faith is ‘formed’ when pious inclination [piae affectionis] is added to assent. For even assent rests upon such pious inclination [pia affectione]—at least such assent as is revealed in the Scriptures!” (III.ii.8/B 552). In the Institutio, an individual is affected by God and, in turn, driven through persuasion to belief, knowledge, and faith. This individual experiences faith in terms of affectus and its cognates which duly constitute the relationship between men and God. I demonstrate the degree to which Calvin uses affectus (with persuadeo) to complicate agency as well as justification, election, reprobation and predestination—all of which follow faith in the ordo docendi of the 1559 Institutio—in Chapter 1.

Spinoza’s is a remarkable transformation of Calvin’s determination of affectus. The Ethica is in most ways a radical departure from Reformed Orthodoxy, Christianity in general, and theology at large but it is, specifically in terms of affectus, peculiarly shaped by Spinoza’s attention to Calvin and Calvinism. The terms of this transformation are

\[^{184}\text{Quoniam res minime dubia est, uno verbo statuimus, eos inepte loqui quum fidem formari dicunt, accessione piae affectionis ad assensum facta: quum assensus quoque pia affectione constet: qualsaltem in Scripturis demonstratur. Sed alterum multo clarius argumentum se etiamnum offert} (III.i.8/IV IV 18).\]
evident when we look closely at the *Institutio*, from a Spinozan perspective. Calvin comes to understand “that knowledge which, content with empty speculation, merely flits in the brain” against “that which will be sound and fruitful if we duly perceive it, and if it takes root in the heart” [*Atque hic rursus observandum est, invitari nos ad Dei notitiam, non quae inani speculacione contenta in cerebro tantum volitet, sed quae solida futura sit et fructuosa si rite percipiatur a nobis, radicemque agat in corde*] (I.v.9/ B 61-2/OS III 53). But where he continues to describe how “the lord manifests himself by his powers” [*A suis enim virtutibus manifestatur Dominus*], “the force of which we feel within ourselves and the benefits of which we enjoy” [*quarum vim quia sentimus intra nos, et beneficiis fruimur*] (I.v.9/ B 61-2/OS III 53), one begins to see the influence of the *Institutio* on Spinoza. Spinoza and Calvin have incommensurable approaches to God. Calvin spends all of Book I of the *Institutio* exploring the terms of our knowledge of God the Creator who acts from eternity, of what we can know through a nature that is distinct from God. While Calvin does not investigate this distinction in ontological terms, he does affirm a substantial distinction between God and nature elsewhere in the *Institutio*. For Spinoza, however, God is identical with nature, immanent. They are of the same substance, as are all particular things. But even Spinoza might agree with the fragment from Calvin’s statement in I.v.9, that “the lord manifests himself by his powers” [*A suis enim virtutibus manifestatur Dominus*]. The title of Part IV of the *Ethica, De Servitute Humana, Seu de Affectuum Viribus*, deliberately recalls Calvin’s depiction of God who is manifest, in and through himself, through the power [*vis*] of his powers [*virtus*]. Moreover, Spinoza glosses Calvin’s prescriptive statement as well, that “We must
therefore be much more profoundly affected by this knowledge than if we were to imagine a God of whom no perception came through to us” [vividius multo hac cognitione nos affici necesse est quam si Deum imaginaremur cuius nullus ad nos sensus perviniret] (I.v.9/ B 61-2/OS III 53). Battles’ translation is misleading here. It loses the lively and animating force of vividius coupled with the inevitability of necesse est, where Calvin asserts that we are inevitably or necessarily affected, vividly and spiritedly, by this knowledge. Moreover, this knowledge of an active God, through afficio, is more powerful than knowledge that proceeds from the imagination, where we are left to passively imagine [imaginaremur] God from whom nothing reaches [pervenio] to affect our senses. This, for Spinoza, is a distinction between active and passive understandings of God, of causality and necessity. For Calvin, the status of causality is much different; nevertheless, we see in this confrontation the importance of affectus and its cognates and the manner in which Spinoza mobilizes Calvin’s version of this vocabulary to his own ends.

Spinoza is no Calvinist, but neither is his engagement with the Calvin merely ironic or deliberately perverse. Spinoza recognizes in the 1559 Institutio an important and powerful philosophical resource, a constitutive determination of affectus that stands at odds with the dominant forms of Reformed Orthodoxy, of Calvinism, during the seventeenth century. Spinoza seems to recognize in Calvin’s writing on faith what the Dutch Reformed Orthodox, after the Synod of Dort, consistently miss—namely, the complication of agency and necessity through the use of affectus and its cognates.
Chapter 4: The “sense of Heav’n’s desertion”: *Lustratio, Affectus* and God’s Special Decree in John Milton’s *Samson Agonistes* (1671)

Tragoedia est imitatio actionis seriae, &c. Per misericordiam & metum perficiens talium affectuum lustrationem.

John Milton, *Samson Agonistes*

In his influential *De Tragoediae Constitutione Liber* ([On the Constitution of Tragedy](1611)), a translation of Aristotle’s *De Poetica* coupled with a detailed commentary, Daniel Heinsius (1580-1655) renders the definition of tragedy from Greek into Latin as such:

Tragoedia ergo est, absolutae, & quae justam magnitudinem habeat, actionis imitatio; sermone constans ad voluptatem facto: ita vt singula genera in singulis parribus habeant locum: vtque non errando, sed per misericordiam & metum, similium perturbationum expiationem inducat. Per sermonem autem factum ad voluptatem, eum intelligo, qui rythmo constat, harmonia, & metro.  

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2 “Tragedy is the imitation of an action that is complete and that has proper dignity; with fit language to move desire; in such a way that distinct types of speech, in equal parts, each have a place; is not without direction or an end, but through pity and fear directs the expiation of similar perturbations. Moreover, I understand by ‘language to move desire’ that form of language that works through rhythm, harmony, and meter—i.e., poetry.” See Daniel Heinsius, *Dan. Heinsii De Tragoediae Constitutione Liber. In qvo inter caetera tota de hac Aristotelis sententia dilucide explicatur. Editio auctior multo. Cui & Aristotelis De Poëtica libellus, cum ejusdem Notis & Interpretatione, accedit* (Lvgd. Batav. [Amsterdam]: [ex officina] Elseviriana, 1643), 247. While Heinsius first published a version of the work in 1611, I use the 1643 edition with revisions and
Heinsius’ Latin translation follows his study of tragedy, a work that bore considerable influence across Northern Europe in the seventeenth century. It was not only a crucial reference for Continental poets, including Hugo Grotius, Joost van den Vondel, Martin Opitz, and Jean Racine, but also for such English luminaries as Ben Jonson and John Dryden. John Milton and his circle looked favorably upon Heinsius, a scholar of great renown who delved into poetry in addition to the study of classical languages. Milton’s nephew and former student Edward Philips names Heinsius as “the most fam’d of Hollanders, and the most Celebrated by Learned Men for his egregious Wit, and deep proficiency in all kind of Literature.” Heinsius was involved in the case against the Remonstrants on behalf of the States General during the Synod of Dort and turned his attention to theology and the text of the New Testament in the aftermath of these events. Milton himself no doubt knew Heinsius’ poetic and theological work just as he was editions by the author. Unless otherwise noted, translations of Heinsius are mine. Paul R. Sellin and John J. McManmon translate the title of this work as *On Plot in Tragedy* which, though not necessarily incorrect, loses the strong sense of *constitutio* not only as “order” or “arrangement” but also as “disposition,” “definition,” or “nature.” See Daniel Heinsius, *On Plot in Tragedy*, trans. Paul R. Sellin and John J. McManmon (Northridge, California: San Fernando Valley State College Foundation, 1971).


familiar with the writing of his son Nicholaas Heinsius. All three men shared a formidable enemy in the Leiden scholar Claude Saumaise, or Salmasius. Stylistically, the preface to *Samson Agonistes*, “Of that sort of Dramatic Poem which is call’d Tragedy,” bears close resemblance to Daniel Heinsius’ commentary on the *Poetics*. Milton follows Heinsius in his description of the utility of tragedy, where

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\textit{In concitandis igitur affectibus cum maxime versetur haec Musa, finem ejus esse, hos ipsos vt temperet, iterumq; componat, Aristoteles existimat. Affectus proprii illius sunt duo: Misericordia, & Horror. Quous vt excitat in animo, ita sensim efferentes sese, deprimit, quemadmodum oportet, & in ordinem sic cogit. Quod affectuum proinde expiationem, siue perturbationum, Aristoteles vocauit.}
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Milton, like Heinsius, attends to *misericordia*, *metus* and *horror*, to the “power” of “raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such like passions, that is to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirr’d up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated.” Fear [*metus*] and terror [*horror*] are, for both writers, equivalent. Milton’s citation of Gregory Nazianzen’s *Christ Suffering* suggests a

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\text{5 F. F. Blok, Isaac Vossius and his Circle: His Life Until His Farewell to Queen Christina of Sweden, 1618-1655 (Groningen: Egbert Forsten Groningen, 2000), 27-43; and Barbara K. Lewalski, The Life of John Milton, Revised Edition (Malden, Massachusetts and Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 99, 236-64.}
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\text{6 Heinsius, 10. In English: “Since this Muse is primarily engaged in arousing the passions, Aristotle therefore thinks its end is to temper these very passions, and to put them back in order. The passions proper to it are two: pity and horror. As it arouses them in the soul, so, as they gradually rise, it reduces them to the right measure and forces them into order. Accordingly, Aristotle called this the ‘expiation’ of the passions, or emotions.” For this translation see On Plot in Tragedy, trans. Paul R. Sellin and John J. McMannon, 11. Note that Heinsius uses perturbatio and affectus interchangeably—something Milton does not do.}
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\text{7 SA 3.}
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debt to Heinsius who investigated Christological tragedy in Chapter II of *De Tragoediae Constitutione Liber*, in terms of magnanimity and expiation, as well as in his own biblical poetry—particularly the *Lof-sanck van Jesus Christus* (1616), a Dutch work that, like *Paradise Lost*, echoes Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas in scope and style. Heinsius’ studies in tragedy look forward to Milton’s own, to *Samson Agonistes* and to the belief that Milton, like the both Apostle Paul and David Pareaus (both of whom appear in the preface to the poem), is free to mine the resources of poetry to investigate providence and the work of the spirit.

But Milton’s Latin translation of Aristotle’s Greek is itself striking. It is located on the title page of *Samson Agonistes*, displayed prominently beneath the Greek text and its locus in the *Poetics*. It is the only line of Latin in the 1671 volume; the titles, details of publication, and the subsequent text of *Samson Agonistes* itself (including the Argument and the note on tragedy) are all in English. The Latin paraphrase is conspicuous, almost out of place, especially given Milton’s proficiency in Greek and the degree to which we might assume that a volume of poetry in English was intended for an Anglophone audience. Of course, the Latin might suggest distinction or sophistication to an audience interested in classical poetry but, if so, one wonders how effective a single line might have been in attracting would-be savants. My contention is that here Milton’s revision of

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9 David Pareaus (or Pareus)(1548-1622) was a German theologian noted by Milton in *Samson Agonistes* for his attention to the tragic structure of the book of Revelation. Towards the end of his life Pareaus wrote exhaustively against Cardinal Bellarmine.

10 On Paul and David Paraeus see SA 3.
Heinsius’ translation points to his theological project in Samson Agonistes, to the retrieval of lustratio, the term at the heart of his definition of tragedy, as a concept central to human salvation. Milton renders the definition of tragedy, the locus in Book VI of the Poetica given above, in a different Latin idiom than Heinsius: “Tragoedia est imitatio actionis seriae, &c. Per misericordiam & metum perficiens talium affectuum lustrationem” [Tragedy is the imitation of an action that is serious, etc. perfecting, through pity and fear, the purification, by sacrifice, of such affectuum].\(^1\) Granted, Milton eschews much of Aristotle’s definition, opting instead for an “&c.” in place of the treatment of appropriate forms of language designed to excite the passions through desire or delight. But what follows the “&c.” is quite distinct from Heinsius’ translation of Aristotle, particularly where Milton substitutes perficiens for inducat, lustrationem for expiationem, and talium affectuum for simulium perturbationum. Lewis and Short define lustratio as “a purification by sacrifice, a lustration” as well as a “going or wandering about.”\(^2\) Here Milton deliberately recalls the non errando [not a wandering about] of Heinsius’ Latin in order to mark his distance from this. For Milton, the perfecting [perficiens] through purification [lustrationem] is accomplished precisely through a sort of wandering or hazard in such a way that rejects the strong and uncompromising sense of Heinsius’ induco: a bringing forward, exhibiting, or introducing which nevertheless

\(^{1}\) SA I.

\(^{2}\) See Lewis and Short, lustratio. See also Book I, Chapter 28 of Milton’s De Doctrina Christiana where, under the heading “Of the External Sealing of the Covenant of Grace,” lustratio appears in the exegesis of Christ’s baptism by John: it “seems to have been a kind of imitation or purification [lustratio], rather than an absolute sealing [absoluta obsignatio] of the covenant [foederis]: for only the Spirit seals [Spiritus enim solus obsignat]” (I.28/CPW VI.551-2/DC 322).
retains the imperious sense of *duco* (to lead, march, drag, carry off, or produce).\(^\text{13}\) Moreover, Milton opts for *affectuum* in place of Heinsius’ *perturbationem*. This recalls the manner in which *affectus* deliberately and specifically structures the fundamental relationship between God and man in Calvin’s 1559 *Institutio*, where faith is realized in terms of *affectus*—clearly distinct from both knowledge and emotion, but bound up with both terms. Where *affectus* (and related verbal and adjectival forms) receives its most thorough theoretical treatment in III.ii of the 1559 *Institutio*, it prepares the reader for a more careful and nuanced understanding of justification and prayer (in III.xi-xviii and III.xx, respectively)—all of which precede election and reprobation in the *ordo docendi* of the work. Calvin is very clear in making *affectus* and *persuasio* the grounds through which to address faith and, by extension, election and reprobation. Milton’s invocation of *affectus* signals an engagement with faith and experience in and after Calvin’s 1559 *Institutio*.

These substitutions structure the theology of *Samson Agonistes*; in due form *lustratio* and *affectus* structure this chapter. *Samson Agonistes* works to create feelings of despair and abandonment through contradictory and conflicting approaches to providence, predestination, election, and reprobation. Samson wanders and errs with respect to the theology of providence and history, recalling the strong sense of Milton’s Latin *lustratio*; through him and his interlocutors we encounter numerous depictions of God’s will, many of which challenge and undermine the proper understanding of his nature as benevolent. In this sense, Milton points to the importance of despair in human

\(^{13}\) See Lewis and Short, *duco, induco*. 334
salvation, through Samson’s experience of defeat and his suffering.\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Samson Agonistes} foregrounds the human experience of God’s will and, in turn, supplements Milton’s theology of divine decree, God’s freedom, and predestination in \textit{De Doctrina Christiana}. It also complicates Milton’s theology of predestination or “peculiar grace” found in his earlier poems and prose experiments.\textsuperscript{15} Moreover, Milton’s invocation of affectus, together with his meditations on election and predestination across \textit{Samson Agonistes}, enable new insights into the character of his famed antitrinitarianism, helping to explain the relationship between Christ’s exceptional sacrifice and the banality of salvation through human freedom. In \textit{De Doctrina Christiana} and \textit{Samson Agonistes} Milton considers faith under conditions of freedom—both God’s and man’s. A detailed reading


\textsuperscript{15} I invoke Stephen M. Fallon’s study \textit{Milton’s Peculiar Grace: Self-Representation and Authority}, particularly Chapter 7, “Elect above the Rest”: \textit{De Doctrina Christiana} and \textit{Paradise Lost.”} While it is often difficult to untangle his insightful claims regarding Milton’s theology from his more speculative claims regarding Milton’s desire “to be elect by both birthright and merit,” Fallon is correct in identifying an unresolved tension across his works concerning the cause of salvation. Fallon notes the degree to which Milton suggests that men are predestined to salvation through “an apparent residue of Calvinist teaching on election” while, at the same time, are able to merit salvation through faith. Whether these two approaches are distinct or, in fact, are inextricable is unclear across Milton’s writing; thus we are held in suspense or tension between what Fallon describes as Calvinist and Arminian models. While Fallon’s study is insightful I thoroughly reject his version of Arminianism, as is evident below. Moreover, he errs where he attends to predestination without considering Christology through the divine decree, as does Milton in \textit{De Doctrina Christiana}. See Stephen M. Fallon, \textit{Milton’s Peculiar Grace: Self-Representation and Authority} (Ithaca, New York and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), 190, 184.
of the first three sections of *De Doctrina Christiana*, including Milton’s theology of efficiency, divine decree, and predestination, also emphasizes another sense of *lustratio*, not only as a wandering but also as a sacrifice. These works, read together, demonstrate how Milton’s approaches to predestination and God’s decrees open, necessarily to his antitrinitarianism. The *lustratio* of tragedy—Samson’s tragedy as well as our own—is not only a substitution for Heinsius’ *expiatio* but for Christ’s as well. Milton presents, across the two works, a theology of atonement where Christ’s sacrifice is able to redeem his elect but is at the same time not necessary for redemption; in other words, Milton displaces the focus of Christian tragedy from Christ’s despair to the individual. He works this out, however, not directly in Christological terms but rather with reference to God’s will, his efficiency, providence, and predestination.

I turn, in the conclusion, to the third substitution—*affectuum* for *perturbationum*—to demonstrate how, despite his manifold innovations, Milton understands faith in terms of *affectus*. *Affectus* remains a means by which Milton investigates the terms of human agency and experience. In his effort to render tragedy a fit medium for theology and devotion, Milton draws from the *Institutio* and its afterlives to tie faith and *affectus* inextricably together with their perfection [*perficiens*], through *misericordiam & metum*. What is more, Milton takes this opportunity, this meditation on *affectus*, to extend his investigations of predestination, election, and salvation beyond his systematic treatment in *De Doctrina Christiana*. Like John Calvin and Baruch Spinoza, John Milton uses *affectus* to pose complex problems concerning agency, activity, and passivity. Milton begins *Samson Agonistes* with a formal investigation of tragedy that is
dually a meditation on *affectus*. But Milton’s *affectus* departs from the 1559 *Institutio*, where *affectus* proceeds from an investigation of Christ’s exceptional Passion and structures the experiences of justification and predestination. Milton’s *affectus* also departs from the *Ethica*, where *affectus* constitutes experience in an economy of activity and passivity determined by necessity and revealed by reason. For Milton, *affectus* is the stuff of “secret refreshings”—a marked departure from the conversation on faith and necessity I have discussed across the previous three chapters of the present study. For Milton, *affectus* is subjective, indicative of a relationship between Spirit and believer; it does not exceed this relationship, nor does Milton think about *affectus* and election in terms of “nation,” community, or collectivity. Milton’s *affectus* is indicative of a relationship with God, not necessarily constitutive of it.

**Lustratio: God’s Will, Providence, and Predestination in *Samson Agonistes***

Milton’s attention to instruction through “wandering” has long been a commonplace across readings of his poetry and prose.¹⁶ Wandering [*erro*] is etymologically related to temptation as well as to the human condition after the Fall; Adam and Eve, having erred, are subject to wander at the end of *Paradise Lost* just as human beings work to perfect their knowledge of divinity through trial and error. The verb *erro* relates directly to the term “errand,” a purposeful journey that, in the language

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of Puritanism, implies divine direction. Milton extends his treatment of wandering [erro] in *Samson Agonistes* where he offers the term *lustratio* against Heinsius’ insistence that tragedy proceeds to direct the emotions in an orderly manner, non errando [not a wandering about]. For Milton, the perfecting [perficiens] through purification [lustrationem] is accomplished precisely through a sort of wandering or hazard in such a way that rejects the strong and uncompromising sense of Heinsius’ induco/non errando. I demonstrate later how Milton, through the use of *lustratio*, introduces another term into this nexus of concepts: sacrifice, *lustratio* as a purification by sacrifice as well as a going or wandering about. *Samson Agonistes*, following this substitution, proceeds to establish the conditions for Samson’s sacrifice. This section investigates rival explanations of God’s will across the poem and, in turn, competing approaches to the doctrines of predestination and providence. Samson and his interlocutors emphasize despair and helplessness at the expense of God’s benevolence—a fatalistic depiction that foregrounds the painful and harrowing human experience of God’s will as well as Samson’s sacrifice, inspiration and “Secret refreshings.”

In his captivity Samson wanders from position to position without any sense of faith. We read, rather, of his inner persuasion, of his inspiration. Milton states in the “Argument” preceding *Samson Agonistes* that Samson, “at length perswaded inwardly

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17 See Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1956), 1-13. This is evident in *Samson Agonistes* as well, where Milton describes God’s manifest will: “Swift as the lightning glance he executes/ His errand on the wicked, who supris’d/ Lose thir defence distracted and amaz’d.” See SA 76-7; ll. 1286-8.
18 Lewis and Short, *lustratio*.
that this was from God,” freely accompanies the “publick Officer” to the feast in
celebration of the Philistine deity Dagon.19 The poem traces this “inward persuasion”
across a series of encounters between Samson and his interlocutors. This is not a
demonstration of “Rational Theology” or “Progressive Revelation,” as Mary Ann
Radzinowicz argues.20 Neither Samson Agonistes nor De Doctrina Christiana begin with
a prescriptive definition of faith or with the assumptions that “Faith, which results from
true biblical interpretation arrived at by the comparison of one text with another, is a
series of complementary and harmonious propositions.”21 Nor does either work
understand faith in terms of God’s benevolence, in spite of Milton’s affirmation in De
Doctrina Christiana that God is absolutely good. Samson Agonistes, rather, begins with
its hero in despair and investigates the conditions of his blindness and captivity through a

19 SA 6
20 See Mary Ann Radzinowicz, Toward Samson Agonistes: The Growth of Milton’s Mind
21 Radzinowicz, Toward Samson Agonistes, 280. Radzinowicz’s Milton is “Persistently
a Biblicist” just as her approach to Milton’s poetry foregrounds the influence of Scripture
on style and content: “God’s justice is simply asserted in a language recalling both Job
and the Psalmist.” See Radzinowicz, Toward Samson Agonistes, 279, 31. This attention
to Scripture—and to the Psalms in particular—proves Radzinowicz’s work an invaluable
resource toward understanding Milton’s poetry and prose. See also Mary Ann
Radzinowicz, Milton’s Epics and the Book of Psalms (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton
University Press, 1989). Nevertheless, the priority she gives to Scripture in Samson
Agonistes (a work modeled on classical tragedy) and De Doctrina Christiana (a work of a
particular genre, with a unique ordo docendi proceeding from tradition rather than sola
scriptura) risks obscuring Milton’s version of faith. Scripture, for instance, does not
structure Book I of De Doctrina Christiana; on the contrary, Milton notes that “We may
rightly insist that Christians should believe in the SCRIPTURES, from which [Christian]
doctrine is drawn. Scriptural authority, however, will be discussed in its proper place”
[Scripturis, unde haec hausimus, credi a Christianis haud inique postulamus; de earum
vero auctoritate suo loco tractabimus]—in Book 1, Chapter 30! See CPW VI 126/ DC 7.
Although it is an exegetical tradition which influences the language and structure of De
Doctrina Christiana, Milton does not acknowledge this in the work.

339
jarring series of contradictory depictions of God’s will, of providence, election, and predestination. The poem works, in part, “by offering a representative figure of one kind of human being who discovers in the course of his life the inadequacy of his own conception of God, who by experience of his tragic existence learns a more adequate conception, and who, armed with the better understanding, modifies his nature in such a way as to perfect a relationship and thereby also give evidence of God’s nature.” But the relationship Milton investigates, through his meditation on Aristotle’s definition of tragedy, departs significantly from one founded on faith in God’s benevolence.

_Samson Agonistes_ begins with a lament. In Line 1 Samson petitions an unknown actor to “lend thy guiding hand” despite the fact that there is no other character present in the text, nor was the poem intended for the stage. This gives the lament additional resonance as a sort of prayer addressed to an unseen God. After several lines establishing the current conditions of his captivity, it being a feast day for the Philistines in honor of their deity Dagon, Samson turns abruptly to consider the terms of God’s will, of his prophecy.

Why was my breeding order'd and prescrib'd As of a person separate to God, Design'd for great exploits; if I must dye Betray'd, Captiv'd, and both my Eyes put out, Made of my Enemies the scorn and gaze; To grind in Brazen Fetters under task With this Heav'n-gifted strength?23

22 Radzinowicz, _Toward_ Samson Agonistes, 290.
23 _SA_ 10-11; ll. 30-6.
Samson is literally set apart from his fellow Hebrews, as he is identified (after Scripture) in Line 318 as a Nazarite, “a man or a woman [who] doeth separate them selues to vowe a vowe of a Nazarite to separate him selfe vnto the Lord,” one that “shal absteine from wine & strong drinke” and thus “shalbe holie, and shal let the lockes of the here of his head grove.” The identity of a Nazarite, given in Numbers 6, thus depends upon the observance of specific habits and practices. Milton draws this directly from Judges, depicting Samson as one who falls only after revealing the secret of his strength—the condition of his separation—to Dalila, who promptly has him sheared. Samson asks why this failure was not foreseen, why his birth was “order'd and prescrib'd.” Moreover, Samson wonders what it means to have been “Design'd for great exploits” if he were to eventually lose this status. But “separate,” together with “order'd and prescrib'd,” also signals an initial interest in predestination, election, and human agency. “Separate” recalls Paul’s calling in the first line of his Epistle to the Romans, “put aparte to preache the Gospel of God,” as well as his treatment of predestination in Romans 8:38-9, of election and perseverance: “For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor anie other creature shalbe able to separate vs from the loue of God, which is in Christ Iesus our Lord.” Samson’s identity as one “order’d and prescrib’d/ As of a person

24 See Numbers 6:1-5 in The Geneva Bible: A facsimile of the 1560 edition, 64l. The 1560 Geneva Bible glosses “Nazarite” as one “which separated them selues from the world, & dedicated them selues to God: [which] figure was accomplished in Christ.”

25 See Romans 1:1 and 8:38-9 in The Geneva Bible: A facsimile of the 1560 edition, 70r, 74l [New Testament pagination]. Incidentally, another Scriptural locus for “separate” is Mark 10:8-9, on marriage: “And they twaine shalbe one flesh: so that thei are no more
“separate to God” asks us to consider his unconditional election against as his conditional identity as a Nazarite. Moreover, “separate” tacitly invokes predestination, election, and providence, suggesting the importance of such concepts in Samson’s experience of despair. Yet, significantly, none of these discrete concepts are named; they are, rather, only implied in Samson’s invocation of God’s design as well as in the terms of his separation. Milton is interested in providence and predestination, but certainly not the same ways as his Reformed Orthodox contemporaries. Such terms afford him a conceptual language to work out his own conclusions concerning election, salvation, and merit. Samson continues, for instance, in Line 33, to describe his present condition as “Betray’d,” an ascription which might as easily refer to his relationship with God and the Angel who “my birth from Heaven foretold/ Twice” as to his earthly betrayal by Dalila. It is, at this point in the poem, unclear as to who “Betray’d” Samson, or to whom he is “Captiv’d”: to the Philistines or to the capricious will of God.

It is quite possible that Samson’s lament is also a complaint, impatient, directed at God in a mode recalling Job 29-30. If it seems rash or faithless to question divine providence and to conceive of God as an opponent of sorts, a thought unbefitting a biblical hero, consider the manner in which Samson rebukes himself immediately after:

“twaine, but one flesh. Therefore, what God hathe coupled to gether, let no man separate.”

See The Geneva Bible: A facsimile of the 1560 edition, 231 [New Testament pagination]. This was certainly an important locus for Milton, given his enduring interest in divorce. 26 SA 10; ll. 23-4.
Yet stay, let me not rashly call in doubt
Divine Prediction; what if all foretold
Had been fulfill'd but through mine own default,
Whom have I to complain of but my self?"27

This suggests that the preceding lines were, in fact, spoken rashly, inappropriately. Upon further consideration, Samson opts instead to consider “Divine Prediction,” an ambiguous term which points again to providence, predestination and election while nevertheless holding this body of theology at a distance. “Prediction” retains its Latin meaning as a prophecy or foretelling as well as its etymology, the adverb prae with the verb dicto, as an existing declaration or pronouncement, previously spoken.28 Despite Milton’s best attempt to render Samson Agonistes according to form of classical tragedy, where “The circumscription of time wherein the whole Drama begins and ends, is according to antient rule, and best example, within the space of 24 hours,” this prediction exceeds its limits, occupying another time entirely.29 Samson struggles to recognize, relatively early in the poem, that his agency might be of little significance within a larger pre-existing design. This is suggested by the tension inherent in the term “separate” as well as in the confused grammar of his response, where the lines following “Divine Prediction” take shape as a question. The status of “Divine Prediction” balances on how we understand the “but” in the fragment, “what if all foretold/ Had been fulfilld but through mine own default.” While the phrase follows a tacit affirmation of “Divine Prediction,” Samson’s agency is accorded a very different status if one understands the “Had been fulfilld” liberally, in the

27 SA 11; ll. 43-6.
28 Lewis and Short, praedictio, prae, dicto.
29 SA 5.
future perfect tense it seems to imply, as “would have been fulfilled.” Thus one might rephrase Samson’s question as follows: “what if everything God foretold would have been fulfilled, had I not spoiled this through my own default.” “Default” is a legal term, describing Samson’s failure to act or to uphold his side of a given agreement; in other words, Samson does not make good on his promise. Through folly, weakness, and negligence Samson changes what had been “foretold” and reveals “Divine Prediction” as a conditional prediction that he nevertheless changed through weakness and negligence. In this sense he reiterates his earlier question regarding his annunciation, “Why was my breeding order’d and prescrib’d/ As of a person separate to God.” This is, however, not the only way to read these lines, particularly if it is too much to ask the reader to substitute a passive future perfect “would have been fulfilled” for the passive pluperfect “Had been fulfill’d.” The poem, then, invites us to read “but” as “despite” or “even” rather than as a strong conditional conjunction. One might paraphrase this, again, as follows: “what if everything God foretold had been fulfilled despite my own default.” Here “Divine Prediction” is fulfilled in and through Samson’s “own default” or, as the poem will demonstrate, because of it. This places due emphasis on Samson’s question, his meditation: “Whom have I to complain of but my self?” The ambiguity of the phrase demonstrates Samson’s own inability to understand his circumstances in terms of God’s will or providence.

Samson is preoccupied with “Divine Prediction,” struggling with providence and predestination, suspended between complaint and consolation. It is as if Milton distils centuries of arguments concerning the pastoral function of the doctrine of predestination
into a series of dialectical arguments proposed by a single speaker.\textsuperscript{30} What is more, Samson struggles to understand God’s will even before the introduction of the Chorus, which will frequently change its approaches to predestination, providence, and God’s freedom across the poem. In his initial lament Samson begrudges God for his “slight” gift, his strength, without adequate intellectual resources to support its application:

But what is strength without a double share  
Of wisdom, vast, unwieldy, burdensom,  
Proudly secure, yet liable to fall  
By weakest subtleties, not made to rule,  
But to subserve where wisdom bears command.  
God, when he gave me strength, to shew withal  
How slight the gift was, hung it in my Hair.\textsuperscript{31}

In almost the same breath, however, Samson rebukes himself again, affirming in certain terms that he “must not quarrel with the will/ Of highest dispensation, which herein/ Happ'ly had ends above my reach to know.”\textsuperscript{32} Samson’s use of “Happ’ly” to describe the “will/ Of highest dispensation” marks the first time in the poem that “Divine Prediction” approaches anything close to providence, God’s benevolent government of nature.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{SA} 12; ll. 53-9.  
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{SA} 12; ll. 60-2.
The Chorus, according to Milton’s “Argument,” is comprised of “certain friends and equals of his tribe...who seek to comfort him what they can.”\textsuperscript{33} Regardless of its function in classical tragedy, the Chorus seems determined to console Samson and to aid him in his attempt to find solace in providence. Providence, however, is never grounded in God’s benevolence in the poem; the “antient” or “modern” books—those “Consolatories writ” cited by the Chorus—are not necessarily pious or Christian. The Chorus notes that “Many are the sayings of the wise/ In antient and in modern books enroll'd... With studied argument, and much persuasian,” “Extolling Patience” as “the truest fortitude;/ And to the bearing well of all calamities”; despite the most compelling arguments for consolation, however,

\begin{verbatim}
with th' afflicted in his pangs thir sound
Little prevails, or rather seems a tune,
Harsh, and of dissonant mood from his complaint,
Unless he feel within
Some source of consolation from above;
Secret refreshings, that repair his strength,
And fainting spirits uphold.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{verbatim}

Consolatory books, without the “Secret refreshings” of the Spirit, lack authority; of this the Chorus is clear. Nevertheless, the Chorus never grounds this inspiration in God’s benevolence. On the contrary, the Chorus affirms God’s caprice and the sole efficacy of his election\textit{ without} asserting his benevolence. Its initial lines seem to stage a conflict between the project of consolation and the work of classical tragedy:

\begin{verbatim}
\textsuperscript{33} SA 2.
\textsuperscript{34} SA 43-4; ll. 660-66.
\end{verbatim}
O mirror of our fickle state,
Since man on earth unparallel'd!
The rarer thy example stands,
By how much from the top of wondrous glory,
Strongest of mortal men,
To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fall'n.
For him I reckon not in high estate
Whom long descent of birth
Or the sphair of fortune raises;
But thee whose strength, while vertue was her mate
Might have subdu'd the Earth,
Universally crown'd with highest praises.\textsuperscript{35}

If Samson is to come to an adequate determination of God's providence and
predestination by the end of the poem, the Chorus disrupts this upon its first encounter
with the fallen hero. Albeit comprised of well-intentioned Hebrews who “who seek to
comfort [Samson] what they can,” the Chorus speaks, unequivocally, the language of
Stoic tragedy. In particular, the Chorus recalls the language of Senecan tragedy.\textsuperscript{36} This is
precisely the sort of art and philosophy debased and rejected by Jesus in \textit{Paradise
Regained}, the preceding poem in the 1671 volume. Looking proleptically to his project
in \textit{Samson Agonistes}, Milton first attends to the origin and work of tragedy in Book IV of

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{SA} 18; ll. 164-75.
\textsuperscript{36} Calvin, Beza, and Thomas Norton all explore the pastoral and theological uses of
Senecan tragedy. Nevertheless, by the middle of the seventeenth century, after
generations of vulgar adaptations and recuperations of Stoicism against Christian
Philosophy, Milton takes a markedly different approach. See John Calvin, \textit{Calvin's
Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia}, trans. Ford Lewis Battles and André Malan
Hugo (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969); Theodore Beza, \textit{A Tragedie of Abrahams Sacrifice:
Written in French by Theodore Beza and Translated into English by Arthur Golding},
Malcolm W. Wallace, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1906); and Thomas
Sackville and Thomas Norton, \textit{Gorboduc}, ed. Irby B. Cauthen (Lincoln, Nebraska:
University of Nebraska Press, 1970).
Paradise Regained, as Satan tempts Jesus with wisdom beyond his instruction in Hebrew scripture. Satan points to the wisdom of the Greeks, from Socrates and Plato to the Peripatetics, Epicureans, and Stoics. Such knowledge would be an asset to Jesus in his mission on earth, at least as Satan conceives of it: “with the Gentiles much thou must converse,/ Ruling them by perswasion as thou mean'st,/ Without their learning how wilt thou with them,/ Or they with thee hold conversation meet?” In addition, Satan leads Jesus to consider the Greek arts, and tragedy in particular:

what the lofty grave Tragoedians taught
In Chorus or Iambic, teachers best
Of moral prudence, with delight receiv'd
In brief sententious precepts, while they treat
Of fate, and chance, and change in human life;
High actions, and high passions best describing.

Jesus’ response is telling. His denunciation of the Stoic preoccupation with fate and fortune ranges among his most vehement and spirited statements in the poem. The Stoics are

37 This is, foremost, a practical matter, appealing to Jesus’ ministry rather than to any interest in speculation or abstract knowledge. Satan’s ambit is clear where he asks Jesus to recognize that “All knowledge is not couch't in Moses Law,/ The Pentateuch or what the Prophets wrote,/ The Gentiles also know, and write, and teach/ To admiration, led by Natures light.” See PR 90; ll. 225-28.
38 PR 90; ll. 229-32. The thrust of Satan’s temptation seems to hang on the similarity between conversation and its analogue, conversion.
39 PR 92; ll. 261-66.
40 In the interest of continuity I note that Milton, like Calvin and Spinoza, follows Augustine’s decisive condemnations of Stoic fate and reason in De Civitate Dei. I investigate Augustine’s departure from Stoicism in the note on affect preceding Chapter 1. For Calvin and Spinoza this stands in the interest of affirming (very different
Ignorant of themselves, of God much more,
And how the world began, and how man fell
Degraded by himself, on grace depending?
Much of the Soul they talk, but all awrie,
And in themselves seek vertue, and to themselves
All glory arrogate, to God give none,
Rather accuse him under usual names,
Fortune and Fate, as one regardless quite
Of mortal things. Who therefore seeks in these
True wisdom, finds her not, or by delusion
Far worse, her false resemblance only meets,
An empty cloud.  

This section of *Paradise Regained* figures prominently within the 1671 volume as a whole; in a sense, Jesus establishes the conditions for Milton’s retrieval of tragedy while, at the same time, works proleptically against the Chorus in *Samson Agonistes*. The version of tragedy founded on Stoic approaches to fate and fortune is but “An empty cloud.” He “who reads/ Incessantly, and to his reading brings not/ A spirit and judgment equal or superior…Uncertain and unsettl'd still remains,/ Deep verst in books and shallow in himself,/ Crude or intoxicate, collecting toys,/ And trifles for choice matters, worth a spunge;/ As Children gathering pibles on the shore.” In other words, without the guidance of the Spirit, one’s reading is at best “Uncertain and unsettl'd”—and readers approaches to) necessity; Milton does so in defense of providence, under the conditions of God’s absolute freedom. Scholars of early modernity who consistently name these figures as Stoics, or operating in a Stoic tradition, are sorely mistaken. See *Institutio* I.iii-xiii and Chapter 3 above.

PR 94-5; ll. 310-21.

PR 94-5; ll. 322-30.
who “seek vertue, and to themselves/ All glory arrogate, to God give none./ Rather accuse him under usual names, Fortune and Fate” certainly lack the Spirit. According to Milton’s Jesus, “he who receives/ Light from above, from the fountain of light./ No other doctrine needs, though granted true”; the Stoic language of fate, even with its accompanying stab at morality, is revealed as “false, or little else but dreams./ Conjectures, fancies, built on nothing firm.”43 This seems, at first, similar to what the Chorus confirms in Samson Agonistes, Lines 652-666, in their excursus on reading and consolation. Yet the Chorus, in its first encounter with Samson, has yet to take this to heart. It is, after Jesus’ own diagnosis, “Uncertain and unsettl’d” with regard to the providential status of Samson’s captivity. The Chorus begins, “O mirror of our fickle state,/ Since man on earth unparallel'd!”—introducing a God who is indecisive or capricious in his dealings with men as well as in the consistency of his decrees. The Chorus risks identifying God with nature, crudely conflating fate and fortune with providence and predestination. The lines “By how much from the top of wondrous glory,/ Strongest of mortal men,/ To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fall'n” certainly express the magnanimous subject of the poem, crucial to its status as a tragedy, but they do so without purging the classical language of the taint of “fortune.” The term

43 PR 93; ll. 286-92. Jesus, in turn, demonstrates how the arts of the Hebrews, celebrated in captivity by their captors, preceded and influenced the glory of Greece. What is redeemable about tragedy is its proximity to Hebrew art. This historical argument informs the preface to Samson Agonistes, particularly where Milton begins his description “Of that sort of Dramatic Poem which is call’d Tragedy” with a definition, “Tragedy, as it was antiently compos’d, hath been ever held the gravest, moralest, and most profitable of all other Poems,” and only after this invokes Aristotle’s definition. Milton, following Jesus in Paradise Regained, points to a history of tragedy that predates Aristotle’s treatment of it in the Poetics. See SA 3.
appears again a few lines after, referring to “him I reckon not in high estate/ Whom long
descent of birth/ Or the sphear of fortune raises.” Fortune, not predestination or
providence, is the subject of the Chorus’ speech. Without any affirmation of God’s
benevolence it is merely a Stoic lament, an empty echo an Senecan drama.

At other moments the Chorus seems comprised of Hebrews who are closer to the
contemplative pagans of Calvin’s 1559 Institutio I.v, those who recognize God’s glory in
nature but not his benevolence. Even statements which seem pious are tainted, as when
the Chorus reproaches Samson for his boldness with superficial advice: “Tax not divine
disposal, wisest Men/ Have err'd, and by bad Women been deceiv'd;/ And shall again,
pretend they ne're so wise.” The enjambment across the lines “wisest Men/ Have err'd”
is artful, suspending the statement between the imperative “Tax not divine disposal,
wisest Men” and the indicative “Tax not divine disposal, wisest Men/ Have err'd” in an
attempt to hail the reader, with Samson, to the moral point. But the use of the term
“disposal” signals another ambiguous determination of God’s will and providence. It is
spoken by several characters in the poem and follows Milton’s use of the term in The
Tenure of Kings and Magistrates (1649), where God acts “out of his providence and high
disposal.” “Disposal,” in line 210 of Samson Agonistes, looks forward to like terms in

44 SA 20; ll. 210-12.
45 John Milton, “The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates,” Complete Poems and Major
751. Milton’s use of “disposal” here in “The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates” is
particularly prescient given its proximity to the language of tragedy, to those who fought
against Charles I and tyranny but who, when faced with the option of executing him,
“are, on a sudden grown so pitiful, we may conclude their pity can be no true and
Christian commiseration, but either levity and shallowness of mind or else a carnal
the poem: “high disposal,” 46 “th’ unsearchable dispose;” 47 “highest dispensation”, 48 and to God, whose “own Laws he can best dispence.” 49 It is a term that means, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, “The action of arranging, ordering, or regulating by right of power or possession,” or “control, direction, management.” 50 It also names the structuring of the mind, where Samson cites “heavenly disposition” 51 to sharpen his definition of “Divine Prediction” and where, much later, Samson cites those “rouzing motions in me which dispose/ To something extraordinary my thoughts.” 52 At either moment God is given as a powerful being who directs and distributes effects across human history from his absolute freedom. But “disposal,” “dispose,” and “disposition,” in their similarity, invoke other terms as well—not only the “dispence” given above but also the “despotic” of the Chorus’ misogynistic justification

Gods universal Law
Gave to the man despotic power
Over his female in due awe,

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admiring of that worldly pomp and greatness from whence they see him fallen.” See “The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates,” 751.

46 SA 35; ll. 506.
47 SA 100; ll. 1746.
48 SA 12; ll. 61.
49 SA 25; ll. 314.
51 SA 29; ll. 373.
52 SA 82; ll. 1382-3.
Nor from that right to part an hour,
Smile she or lowre:
So shall he least confusion draw
On his whole life, not sway'd
By female usurpation, nor dismay'd.\(^{53}\)

The “disp” of “disposal”/“dispose” draws us to consider this term with other like sounds, including the “desp” of “despotic.” While Milton does not make this connection explicit the Chorus does elicit the connection between God’s “disposal” and his possible despotism insofar as it is reluctant to confirm his benevolence. Human beings are, rather, at his disposal; while “dispose” is not yet an exact synonym for the treatment of garbage in the seventeenth century it is certain that the Chorus, using this term, invites us to consider God’s power over human history as absolute but not benevolent. It invites us to consider human beings and human history as “disposable.” Moreover, it implies a legalistic relationship between man and God, recalling the noun “deposition” as well as the degree to which God is free to “determine or control the course of affairs or events,” to appoint or ordain as he sees fit, not in the interest of love but in terms of glory, power and right. Following Milton’s treatments of piety in *De Doctrina Christiana* and in other prose works written during the Interregnum, Samson subjects the Chorus’ crude diagram of power to scorn and irony: “Masters commands come with a power resistless/ To such as owe them absolute subjection.”\(^{54}\) These lines lambaste the terms of his thralldom to his Philistine captors. When the Chorus attempts to transfer this understanding of power to God’s will and its relationship to providence, Samson is certainly critical. Nevertheless,

\(^{53}\) SA 64-5; ll. 1053-60.
\(^{54}\) SA 83; ll. 1404-5.
Samson mocks his so-called “masters” without correcting the Chorus’ doctrinal errors; he never affirms God’s benevolence.

Even where the Chorus echoes the language of *Paradise Lost*—the famous project of the poem, to “assert Eternal Providence,/ And justifie the wayes of God to men”—it eschews any affirmation of God’s benevolence, opting instead for another legalistic description of “Divine Prediction” centered on God’s power. While the Chorus seems, in its invocation of justice, to address providence and election it quickly turns to an admonition of atheism and speculation:

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Just are the ways of God,
And justifiable to Men;
Unless there be who think not God at all,
If any be, they walk obscure;
For of such Doctrine never was there School,
But the heart of the Fool,
And no man therein Doctor but himself.
Yet more there be who doubt his ways not just,
As to his own edicts, found contradicting,
Then give the rains to wandring thought,
Regardless of his glories diminution;
Till by thir own perplexities involv'd
They ravel more, still less resolv'd,
But never find self-satisfying solution.
As if they would confine th' interminable,
And tie him to his own prescript,
Who made our Laws to bind us, not himself,
And hath full right to exempt
Whom so it pleases him by choice
From National obstriction, without taint
Of sin, or legal debt;
For with his own Laws he can best dispence.55
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55 *Sa* 24-5; ll. 293-314.
The Chorus is not necessarily wrong to speak thus. It is, however, striking that this description, following its antecedents, neglects God’s benevolence. The Chorus also eschews specific invocations of providence or predestination. To begin, there is little in the speech that Samson might find consoling, at least past the initial invocation of justice. Moreover, the reference to “National obstriction” speaks specifically to Samson’s charge as Judge, as sovereign over the Hebrews; it tests the efficacy of the consolatory doctrine of predestination to answer Samson’s despair by telling him, in no uncertain terms, that God’s promise and covenant with his people “bind us, not himself” who “hath full right to exempt/ Whom so it pleases him by choice/ From National obstriction.” The Chorus here severs its effort to render the “ways of God…justifiable to men” from any larger sense of Justification—of providence, predestination, and election proceeding from faith in God’s benevolence—as if man’s salvation is subject to another will entirely.

In a long speech between Lines 667 and 704, Milton uses the Chorus to tie providence together with predestination, election and reprobation, in explicit terms. The speech proceeds as a prayer, an address to the “God of our Fathers”:

God of our Fathers, what is man!  
That thou towards him with hand so various,  
Or might I say contrarious,  
Temperst thy providence through his short course,  
Not evenly, as thou rul'st  
The Angelic orders and inferiour creatures mute,  
Irrational and brute.  
Nor do I name of men the common rout,  
That wandring loose about  
Grow up and perish, as the summer flie,  
Heads without name no more rememberd,  
But such as thou hast solemnly elected,
With gifts and graces eminently adorn'd
To some great work, thy glory,
And peoples safety, which in part they effect:
Yet toward these thus dignifi'd, thou oft
Amidst thir highth of noon,
Changest thy countenance, and thy hand with no regard
Of highest favours past
From thee on them, or them to thee of service.
Nor only dost degrade them, or remit
To life obscur'd, which were a fair dismission,
But throw'st them lower then thou didst exalt them high,
Unseemly falls in human eie,
Too grievous for the trespass or omission,
Oft leav'st them to the hostile sword
Of Heathen and prophane, thir carkasses
To dogs and fowls a prey, or else captiv'd:
Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times,
And condemnation of the ingrateful multitude.
If these they scape, perhaps in poverty
With sickness and disease thou bow'st them down,
Painful diseases and deform'd,
In crude old age;
Though not disordinate, yet causeless suffering
The punishment of dissolute days, in fine,
Just or unjust, alike seem miserable,
For oft alike, both come to evil end.  

The Chorus describes “the common rout/ That wandring loose about/ Grow up
and perish, as the summer flie,/ Heads without name no more rememberd”—in other
words, the reprobate who, following God’s will, are condemned to eternal damnation.
Implicit here is lustratio as “wandering,” the condition of the poem, the experience of
God’s will as aimless and desperate. But the description deliberately recalls Revelation
3:5 as well, where “He that overcometh, shalbe clothed in white arraye, & I wil not put
his name out of the boke of life, but I wil confesse his name before my Father, & before

56 SA 44-6; ll. 667-704.
his Angels,” as well as Revelation 20:12-15, where the names of the elect are entered into the Book of Life while the names of the dead—the reprobate—are forgotten: “whosoeuer was not founde written in the boke of life, was cast into the lake of fyre.”

The reprobate are depicted as “wandring loose about,” “loose” qualifying an otherwise categorical and ordinary “wandring” common to all men. Those which God “hast solemnly elected,/ With gifts and graces eminently adorn’d/ To some great work, thy glory,/ And people’s safety” are accorded relative agency; while the reprobate wander loosely, the elect experience a “safety,” salvation, which “in part they effect.” Both “wandring loose about” and “in part they effect” imply participation in reprobation and election, respectively. Nevertheless, both depictions maintain the primacy of God’s will as does the form of the description, a prayer or address to God. To this point, the speech seems relatively ordinary, a call to God to “Temperst thy providence” through the “short course” of human life which leads into a separation between the elect and the reprobate. But what follows is strange, particularly where the “safety” of election is qualified. The elect do not persevere in their election; on the contrary, the terms of their safety, which “in part they effect,” are unclear.

The Chorus is not specific with regard to the following lines: “Yet toward these thus dignifi'd, thou oft/ Amidst thir highth of noon,/ Changest thy countenance, and thy hand with no regard/ Of highest favours past/ From thee on them, or them to thee of service.” While one assumes, at first, that this change in

58 Here Milton recalls the struggle between rival versions of Reformed Orthodoxy at the Synod of Dort insofar as he challenges the truth of perseverance and unconditional election—the “P” and the “U” of the Contra-Remonstrant acronym “TULIP.”
God’s “countenance” refers specifically to life on earth, one cannot be sure; it may refer, in fact, to the conditional status of election itself. God is depicted as absolutely free to “dispense” with laws and decrees as he will; there is no treatment of necessity or benevolence here, nor is there any attention whatsoever, in the speech of the Chorus or in Milton’s project across Samson Agonistes, to perseverance as it developed over decades of Reformed Orthodox debate. While “highth of noon” implies the time of the world rather than eternity, and thus suggests that this line refers to the elect on earth, one cannot be sure. It is unclear whether this describes the earthly life of the elect, the experience of life prior to their entry into the Book of Life, or their eventual fate, their absence from the Book of Life entirely. The Chorus leaves the status of grace and merit, of “highest favours past/ From thee on them, or them to thee of service,” in relative obscurity.

God, moreover, is given as afflicting the elect and reprobate alike, working not only to “degrade them, or remit/ To life obscur'd, which were a fair dismission,/ But throw'st them lower then thou didst exalt them high.” He “Oft leav'st them to the hostile sword/ Of Heathen and prophane, thir carcasses/ To dogs and fowls a prey, or else captiv'd:/ Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times,/ And condempnation of the ingrateful multitude.” The last lines are particularly troubling, where in “not disordinate, yet causeless suffer'ng” the “Just or unjust, alike seem miserable,/ For oft alike, both come to evil end.” “Causeless” might imply that worldly suffering is, literally, without a cause or reason, an affirmation approaching atheism, or that God is somehow not the cause of this “not disordinate” suffering. Here Milton recalls Samson’s earlier reproach, his address to Manoa to “Appoint not heavenly disposition, Father,/ Nothing of all these evils
hath befall'n me/ But justly; I my self have brought them on,/ Sole Author I, sole cause.”  This earlier reproach comes on the heels of Samson’s own rash testament against God’s will, the impassioned questions delivered to God before the entry of the Chorus concerning his blindness and captivity. Returning to the “not disordinate, yet causeless sufferings,” the confused grammar of the line as well as the double-negative “not disordinate” suggest that the Chorus (and Milton himself) struggle to understand a world that proceeds from God’s will yet where he is not implicated in the creation of evil. For any number of theologians—Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Arminius, and countless others—this is a purely orthodox statement: that God is neither the source of evil or sin nor does he subject men to it. All of these theologians, however, develop their theology of evil together with pronounced approaches to providence, necessity, and faith in God’s benevolence—none of which appear prominently in Samson Agonistes. The Chorus, rather, bemoan the fact that the “Just or unjust, alike seem miserable,/ For oft alike, both come to evil end,” emphasizing the doleful experience of God’s will in the face of his unsearchable disposition and the obscurity of election and reprobation under the conditions of worldly despair.

By the end of the poem, the status of human agency or participation in salvation is not any less troubling or obscure. The Chorus celebrates Samson’s
dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious!
Living or dying thou hast fulfill'd
The work for which thou wast foretold

59 SA 29; ll. 373-7.
To Israel, and now ly'st victorious
Among thy slain self-kill'd
Not willingly, but tangl'd in the fold
Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoin'd
Thee with thy slaughter'd foes in number more
Then all thy life had slain before.\(^{60}\)

Samson brings the temple of the Philistines down around him, killing scores of his
enemies in the process, “self-kill’d/ Not willingly, but tangl’d in the fold/ Of dire
necessity.” This is, incidentally, the only mention of necessity in the poem—“dire
necessity”—which we, like Samson, experience ambiguously. If the revenge proceeds
from God and manifests his glory, through his will and providence, this is nevertheless a
providence severed from his benevolence. Samson’s final act is given in lurid detail and
is difficult to read without recognizing the degree to which his agency was compromised,
in death by suicide: “Samson with these immixt, inevitably/ Pulld down the same
destruction on himself;/ The vulgar only scap'd who stood without.”\(^{61}\) Granted, Milton
suggests that Samson was animated by God’s will, just as the Philistine captors were led
to death by “wrath divine”: “So fond are mortal men/ Fall'n into wrath divine,/ As thir
own ruin on themselves to invite,/ Insensate left, or to sense reprobate,/ And with
blindness internal struck.”\(^{62}\) Yet where the phrase “Fall'n into wrath divine” seems to
mark the Philistines as reprobate from eternity, according to God’s will, the following
line contradicts this as they “invite” “thir own ruin on themselves.” “Wrath divine”

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\(^{60}\) SA 96; ll. 1660-8.
\(^{61}\) SA 96; ll. 1657-9.
\(^{62}\) SA 97; ll. 1682-6. With respect to the rules of classical tragedy, we are left at the end of
Samson Agonistes with a magnanimous act without a befitting audience; only the vulgar
survive, save Manoa and the Chorus (itself comprised of Samson’s friendly subjects).
follows from God’s providence but not through predestination; it is almost as if it is of the order of nature rather than of men and reason. *De Doctrina Christiana* confirms this, as I demonstrate below. What is immediately apparent in Lines 1682 to 1686, however, is the way that Milton uses the adjective “reprobate” to describe the Philistine actors who lead themselves astray. They are left, by their own devices, “to sense reprobate” and thus bring about their demise. Milton cunningly fashions “sense reprobate” in Line 1685, together with “dire necessity” in 1666, as descriptions of states that follow directly from human agency. Reprobation and necessity are wrested from Reformed Orthodox determinations of predestination and given here, instead, as names for human exigencies. Necessity and reprobation are, for the majority of seventeenth-century philosophers and theologians, terms that proceed directly from God. In *Samson Agonistes*, however, they proceed from human agency and describe worldly events.

In the final section of the poem, Milton does seem to affirm God’s benevolence, in the Chorus’ last description of providence, where “All is best, though we oft doubt,/ What th' unsearchable dispose/ Of highest wisdom brings about,/ And ever best found in the close.”\(^\text{63}\) However, “All is best” is not necessarily evidence of God’s goodness, his kindness, but testifies rather to his perfection. It only seems to affirm his benevolence, if we read “best” in evaluative human terms rather than as a description of God’s nature. The succeeding lines confirm this, where the Chorus notes how “Oft he seems to hide his face,/ But unexpectedly returns/ And to his faithful Champion hath in place/ Bore witness

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\(^{63}\) *SA* 100-1; ll. 1745-48.
“Gloriously” emphasizes, again, God’s perfect nature manifest in human events rather than his benevolence; moreover, Milton does not even give this in terms of God’s nature but, rather, in human terms. God’s glory is not directly manifest but, instead, he “Bore witness gloriously” to Samson’s suicidal act. This, at the end of the poem, does not render providence or predestination in terms that console the reader or help one understand why or how God’s will is unsearchable. The affirmation that “All is best,” rather, coupled with Samson’s suicide in “dire necessity” merely emphasizes the painful and confusing human experience of God’s will and the unfathomable depths of his predestination. Milton realizes, through the competing determinations of providence, predestination, and God’s will across the poem, the centrality of *lustratio*, as a wandering or erring, to tragedy. In emphasizing the human experience of these supposedly-consolatory doctrines as suffering and confusion, Milton also determines *lustratio* as a form of purification or sacrifice. In the next section, I investigate how Milton understands human sacrifice and salvation in *De Doctrina Christiana* before returning, in the final section, to *lustratio* and *affectus* in *Samson Agonistes*.

*De Doctrina Christiana, Predestination, and the Distinction between General and Special Decrees*

Milton’s claims about predestination and Christ in *De Doctrina Christiana* enable us to read *Samson Agonistes* with new clarity. But this requires due attention to the genre and form of *De Doctrina Christiana* as well as to its *ordo docendi*, aspects of the work which complicate any easy collation between the manuscript and the poems. Since its

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64 *SA* 100-1; ll. 1749-52.
recovery in 1823, *De Doctrina Christiana* has served as an important resource, to varying degrees, in tracing John Milton’s theological investigations across the poems and prose works. Composed as a sort of commonplace book, the work developed into a systematic theological treatise as Milton increased and emended it over the course of several decades, beginning in the 1640s and continuing at least until the Restoration.

Daniel Skinner inherited the manuscript of *De Doctrina Christiana* after Milton’s death in 1674 and subsequently forwarded it to the Amsterdam printer Daniel Elzevir for publication in 1675. The Elzevir Press was responsible for some of the most celebrated (and, indeed controversial) publications of the seventeenth century, including Heinsius’ commentary on Aristotle’s *Poetics* and Descartes’ works in French and Latin, both treated above. But Elzevir refused to publish *De Doctrina Christiana*, perhaps because of Holland’s anti-Socinian legislation drafted in 1653, under which Adriaan Koerbagh

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66 I am aware the claim that Milton continued to develop *De Doctrina Christiana* after the Restoration challenges the conclusions of the most thorough study of the manuscript, that conducted by Gordon Campbell, Thomas N. Corns, John K. Hale, and Fiona J. Tweedie; see Campbell, Corns, Hale, and Tweedie, 157-8.

was notably tried and imprisoned in 1668, or because of Sir Joseph Williamson’s efforts to block its publication in his capacity as the Secretary of State. The manuscript returned to England and remained in obscurity until the nineteenth century.

Initially conceived as a primer in the spirit of such projects as William [Amesius] Ames’ (1576-1633) Medulla S. S. Theologica (1623) and Johannes [Wollebius] Wolleb’s (1589-1629) Compendium Theologicae Christianae (1626), Milton’s De Doctrina Christiana breaks decisively from these works in its heretical and often idiosyncratic claims. While his heterodox investigations and conclusions on polygamy, mortalism, divorce, and monism are prominent in the work, Milton’s antitrinitarianism tends to preoccupy readers of the manuscript. This is quite logical; Milton developed his theological positions in conversation with numerous seventeenth-century Christianities struggling to define and maintain orthodox positions against what seemed an onslaught of Socinian heretics and positions. In other words, Jesuits, Jansenists, Lutherans, and

68 See Israel, Radical Enlightenment, 185-96; and Campbell, Corns, Hale, and Tweedie, 5-29.

Reformed Orthodox alike found themselves at war against renewed forms of Arianism, attacks on the divinity of Christ and his identity as the second person of the Trinity.\(^70\) Milton’s poetry and prose emerges from this heated conversation. Thus, in what seems to be an “ongoing tendency in modern criticism,” according to Michael Lieb, “scholars are ever more inclined to align Milton with the various heresies that emerged with renewed vigor during the revolutionary decades of the seventeenth century,” particularly those involving Christ and his relationship to and within the Trinity.\(^71\) But many such scholars, so convinced of his identity as a heretic, have been reticent to read *De Doctrina Christiana* in conversation with seventeenth-century debates concerning God’s decree, predestination, and the shape of Reformed Orthodoxy, to examine why and how Milton arrived at his detailed and often conflicting conclusions about the deity of Christ. A careful treatment of *De Doctrina Christiana* reveals a detailed path to antitrinitarianism, particularly where Milton relegated his investigation of the Son to Book I, Chapter V—after thorough examinations of God, necessity, divine decrees, and predestination. Milton departs here from a tradition inaugurated by Augustine (in *De Trinitate*) and Peter Lombard (d. 1160), both of which give structure to Calvin’s 1559 *Institutio*. For these

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figures, a detailed treatment of God and the Trinity precedes and shapes all other theological topics, including creation, providence, and redemption. Existing commentaries on Milton’s Christology are wrong to neglect his departure from this tradition, leading us to look closely at the relationship between predestination, freedom, and necessity in *De Doctrina Christiana*, particularly where these concepts precede and help organize his approach to the figure and function of the Son.\(^7\)

The initial organization of *De Doctrina Christiana* follows William Ames’ division between faith [*fides*] and observance [*observantia*].\(^7\) in Book I Milton treats “FAITH, or KNOWLEDGE OF GOD” [*FIDES, seu COGNITIO DEI*] while Book II is dedicated to “LOVE, or THE WORSHIP OF GOD” [*CHARITAS seu DEI CULTUS*]

\(^7\) For instance, John Rogers, in his effort to explain why Milton restricts the Son’s priesthood to Heaven rather than to his intercession on the cross, affirms that Milton’s Christ “cannot be considered, at least in any sense accessible to his Puritan or Anglican contemporaries, their sacrificial redeemer.” This is not true; it does not attend to the *ordo docendi* of concepts across *De Doctrina Christiana*, nor does Rogers work to establish Milton’s departure from “orthodoxy” in relation to Reformed Orthodoxy. It is not that Christ cannot be considered the sacrificial redeemer but, rather, that Christ is not necessarily their sacrificial redeemer—the details of which I investigate below. Christ is able to redeem believers but only insofar as he operates through God’s special decree. See John Rogers, “Milton and the heretical priesthood of Christ,” *Heresy, Literature, and Politics in Early Modern English Culture*, ed. David Loewenstein and John Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 214.

But where Ames moves through an exhaustive discussion of faith, Milton skips rather quickly to his description of God, given under several attributes. God is, first, the “TRUE GOD” [VERUS DEUS]; second, “God in his most simple nature is a SPIRIT” [Deus sit natura simplicissima SPIRITUS]; third, he is “IMMENSE and INFINITE” [IMMENSUS et INFINITUS]; fourth, he is “ETERNAL” [AETERNUS]; fifth, “IMMUTABLE” [IMMUTABILIS]; sixth, “INCORRUPTIBLE” [INCORRUPTIBILIS]; seventh, as “a consequence of his infinity...God is PRESENT EVERYWHERE” [UBIQUE PRÆSENS]; eighth, God is “OMNIPOTENT” [OMNIPOTENS]; and, ninth, God is “ONE” [UNUS] (I.2/CPW VI 140-6/ DC 14-7). Having established the nature of God in I.2, Milton turns in the next chapter to his efficiency under the heading De Divino Decreto. Again, this echoes Ames in form and content, particularly where Ames defines the efficiency, “or working power [efficientia], of God [as] that by which he works all things in all things” [Efficientia Dei est, qua omnia in omnibus operatur] (Marrow 91/ Medulla 23). For Ames, “The meaning both of the essence of God and his subsistence shines forth in his efficiency” [In Efficientia Dei, elucet ratio Essentiae divinae, & ratio Subsistentiae] (Marrow 91/ Medulla 23). This is God’s active power, indistinct from his essence, from his omnipotence. Ames, in tying efficiency together with God’s essence and subsistence, follows Calvin’s initial treatment of the Trinity in Book I, Chapter 13 of the 1559 Institutio, particularly where the earlier Reformer affirms that it is through the

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74 For the Latin text of De Doctrina Christiana see Joannis Miltoni [John Milton], De Doctrina Christiana: Libri Duo Posthumi, quos ex schedis manuscriptis depropompsit, et typis mandari primus curavit Carolus Ricardus Sumner, ed. Charles Richard Sumner (Cantabrigiae [Cambridge]: Typis Academicis, excudit Joannes Smith, 1825). This is referred to in the notes as DC, followed by page number.
Spirit that “we come into communion with God, so that we in a way feel his life-giving power toward us” (I.xiii.14/B 139) and where he asserts, uncompromisingly, that “providence means not that by which God idly observes from heaven what takes place on earth, but that by which, as keeper of the keys, he governs all events” (I.xvi.4/B 201-2).75 God’s efficiency, for Calvin and Ames (albeit in different capacities), is expressed through his decree and realized both in creation and providence, the government of creation. This is why Calvin begins the *Institutio* by attending to our knowledge of God the Creator and why Ames proceeds to treat creation and providence only after his initial attention to God’s decree.

This order is evident in both the *Institutio* and the *Medulla S. S. Scriptura*. God’s decree takes shape in the *Institutio* in relation to the Trinity, to the one indivisible essence of God that nevertheless contains three persons. This is the subject of Book I, Chapter XIII; here Calvin establishes the deity of the Word and, in doing so, the relationship between the Son as God’s Word [*Dei verbum*] and as “everlasting Wisdom, residing from God, from which all oracles and prophecies go forth” (I.xiii.7/B 129).76 For Calvin, the deity of the Word sets the stage for his treatment of providence and the consolatory understanding of God’s benevolence, of Christ’s sacrifice, where “Our most merciful Father decreed what was best for us” [*Caeterum quod nobis optimum erat statuit*]

75 “in Dei participationem venimus, ut eius vertutem sentiamus erga nos quodammodo vivificam” (I.xiii.14/OS III 128); and “providentiam vocari, non qua Deus e caelo otiosus speculetur quae in mundo fiunt, sed qua veluti clavam tenens, eventus omnes moderatur” (I.xvi.4/OS III 192).

76 “perpetua magis Sapientia indicetur apud Deum residens, unde et oracula et prophetiae omnes prodierunt” (I.xiii.7/OS III 117).
clementissimus Pater], that “heavenly decree on which men’s salvation depended”
[caelesti decreto, unde pendebat hominum salus] (II.xii.1/B 464/OS III 437). Ames,
following Calvin, also establishes the decree and counsel of God prior to creation and
providence; there is, for Ames, only one indivisible decree, only one “firm decision by
which [God] performs all things through his almighty power according to his counsel”
[Decretum Dei est definita ejus sententia de rebus omnibus per omnipotentiam &
secundum consilium suum efficiendis] (Marrow 94/Medulla 27). This decree is efficient
insofar as it sets creation to work through the Word, as an efficient cause. Echoing the
opening lines of the Gospel according to John—“In the beginning was the Worde, and
the Worde was with God and that Worde was God”—Ames affirms that “In the exercise
of God’s efficiency, the decree of God comes first [and that] this manner of working is
the most perfect of all and notably agrees with the divine nature” (Marrow 94).77
Moreover, Ames sharpens his attention to logic and causality by affirming, in I.7, that the
“willing of one thing by God is not the efficient cause in him of his willing another. The
efficiency of a cause in regard to its effect and dependence of an effect upon a cause
cannot be an event in the will of God, which is God himself truly and simply willing all
things together and at once in only one act” (Marrow 98).78 God’s will is a unity and is

77 “In potenti Dei Efficientia primum locum obtinet Decretum Dei: quia his modus
efficiendi, quum, sit omnium perfectissimus, maxime convenit naturae divinae” (Medulla
27). See also The Geneva Bible: A facsimile of the 1560 edition (Madison, WI;
Pagination].
78 “Neque etiam in Deo volitio unius rei est proprie dicta causa, efficiens ut in semetipso
velit aliam: quoniam efficientia causae in effectum, & dependentia effecti a causa, in
not subject to contingency, nor does it in any sense depend upon the will of his creatures. Ames, after Calvin, affirms God’s necessity as well as the realization of his decrees through creation and providence.

Milton strays very far from Calvin and Ames on providence and the Trinity. This is evident, first, in his treatment of efficiency and God’s decrees. He begins by introducing a distinction between God’s internal and external efficiency, with internal efficiency as “that which begins and ends within God himself” [\textit{INTERNA est quae intra Deum terminatur}] (I.3/CPW VI 153/DC 22). Of this Milton is explicit, that “His decrees come into this category” [\textit{qualia sunt ejus decreta}], citing, from Ephesians 1:9, those mysteries of God’s will which he “determined beforehand in his own mind” [\textit{quod praestituerat in se}] (I.3/CPW VI 153/DC 22). This is an innovation in \textit{De Doctrina Christiana}; it not the same distinction that Ames treats in the \textit{Medulla S. S. Scriptura}, between God’s absolute power [\textit{potentiam absolutam}] and his ordaining or actual power [\textit{potentiam ordinatam, sive actualem}], nor does it have any precedent in Calvin’s theology.\textsuperscript{79} It is, rather, an attempt to express God’s omnipotence while at the same time drawing a distinction between the exercise of his power within himself and the exercise of power outside of himself—a substantial contradiction considering Milton’s early claim that God is one, a unity, as well as later monist depictions in \textit{De Doctrina Christiana}. Milton proceeds by marking distinctions between internal and external efficiency and,

\textit{voluptatem divinam, quae est Deus ipse omnia simul & semel unico actu vere & simpliciter volens, cadere non potest” (Medulla 34).} 
\textsuperscript{79} See \textit{Medulla 25/Marrow 93}. 
then, between general and special decrees. God’s decrees are all proper to his internal
efficiency. Here he is again explicit and emphatic: “God’s GENERAL DECREE is that
by which HE DECREED FROM ETERNITY, WITH ABSOLUTE FREEDOM, WITH
ABSOLUTE WISDOM AND WITH ABSOLUTE HOLINESS, ALL THOSE THINGS
WHICH HE PROMISED OR WHICH HE WAS GOING TO PERFORM” (I.3/CPW VI 153).80

Milton works through this definition painstakingly, founding the distinction
between general and special decrees on a fundamental difference between God’s absolute
freedom and other beings that act freely. He approaches this difference by sharpening the
“ALL” of “ALL THOSE THINGS WHICH”: “This does not mean the things which
others perform, or which God performs in co-operation with others, to whom he has
granted, by nature, freedom of action, but rather the things he performs or purposes
 singly and by himself,” such as the creation of the world (I.3/CPW VI 153-4).81 Thus
God manifests the general decree through creation and providence. This resembles both
Calvin and Ames superficially insofar as God’s decree is realized in creation and, in turn,
through experience as providence; the key difference, however, is that Milton, marking a
distinction between general and special decrees, relegates providence and creation to
God’s general decree. God’s general decrees, however, do not extend to men, or at least
not to those men who retain freedom of action: “God made no absolute decrees about

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80 “GENERALE est quo DEUS OMNIA AB AETERNO QUAE QUIDEM VOLEBAT
AUT FACTURUS IPSE ERAT, LIBERRIME, SAPIENTISSIME, SANCTISSIMEQUE
DECREVIT” (DC 22).
81 “Nimirum quae ipse quidem solus agit, et vult; non quae agunt caeteri omnes, aut ipse
cum iis quibus liberae agendi naturam ac potestatem concessit” (DC 22).
anything which he left in the power of men, for men have freedom of action” (I.3/CPW VI 155). Note the subtle shift in terms here where Milton, in an investigation of general decrees, affirms unconditionally that God made no absolute (rather than general) decrees—a term which asks us to recall Milton’s treatment of the nature of God in I.2, as eternal, immutable, incorruptible, omnipresent, one. Milton asserts this in order to emphasize that necessity is not among his attributes: “From the concept of freedom, then, all idea of necessity must be removed. No place must be given even to that shadowy and peripheral idea of necessity based on God’s immutability and foreknowledge” (I.3/CPW VI 161-2). Here he severs necessity from foreknowledge under the condition that God’s foreknowledge is simultaneous with his decree, asserting that it is “absurd…to separate God’s decree or intention from his eternal resolution and foreknowledge and give the former chronological priority. For God’s knowledge is simply his wisdom under another name, or that idea of things which, to speak in human terms, he had in mind before he decreed anything” (I.3/CPW VI 154). His language deliberately recalls the debates among Arminians and Dutch Reformed Orthodox, between Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants at the Synod of Dort, concerning human agency, divine decree, and God’s foreknowledge of election and reprobation (as opposed to his will to them).

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82 “Nihil itaque Deus decrevisse absolute censendus est, quod in potestate libere agentium reliquit” (DC 23).
83 “Omnis igitur a libertate necessitas removenda est; et ne illa quidem immutabilitatis aut praescientiae umbratica et externa admittenda” (DC 26).
84 Qui igitur decretum seu voluntatem Dei ab ejus aeterno consilio et praecognitione sejungunt, aut ordine prius ponunt, absurde faciunt; praecognitio enim Dei, mutato solum nominee, sapientia ejus est, sive illa rerum omnium idea quam, ut humanitus loquar, prius in mente habuit quam quicquam decerneret] (DC 23).
to whom Milton attributes omniscience in I.2, knows and decrees at once. It is merely an accommodation to articulate these as two separate operations, in the service of our understanding. Milton appeals to reason in an attempt to cement this point beyond doubt, making the case that people generally recognize something before expressing it in language:

Those, then, who argue that man’s freedom of action is subordinate to an absolute decree by God, wrongly conclude that God’s decree is the cause of his foreknowledge and antecedent to it. But really, if we must discuss God in terms of our own habits and understandings, it seems more consonant with reason to foresee first and then decree, and indeed this is more in keeping with scripture, and with the nature of God himself, since...he decreed everything with supreme wisdom in accordance with his foreknowledge (I.3/CPW VI 163).

God foresees events at the same time that he decrees them; it is only in the interest of human understanding to render this equivalence in terms of efficiency and causality, struggling to express God’s eternal and infinite nature.

Milton is thus eager to identify God’s foreknowledge with his decrees while at the same time exempting free human actors from the conditions of such a general or absolute decree. Hence “nothing happens because God has foreseen it, but rather he has foreseen each event because each is the result of particular causes which, by his decree, work quite

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85 “Perperam igitur, qui decreto absoluto libertatem agendi subjiciunt, decretum Dei causam esse ejus praescientiae, et ordine praecedere, statuunt. Etenim si pro nostro more et capit loquendum de Deo est, praescisse prius, tum decrevisse, ratione magis consentaneum videtur; immo vero scripturae, ipsique Deo; quippe qui ex praescientia, quod modo probavimus, sapientissime omnia decreverit” (DC 27).
freely and with which he is thoroughly familiar” (I.3/CPW VI 164). God is familiar with his decrees which he speaks from eternity and which he foresees from eternity, in his omniscience. But such general decrees, foreseen or not, only effect human freedom insofar as they enable, in the most general way, free action. The general decree does not extend to individual free acts but only to the possibility for such acts, to the general concept “human freedom” rather than to the specific acts themselves. Thus “the outcome does not rest with God who foresees it, but only with the man whose action God foresees” (I.3/CPW VI 164).

Of God’s special decree Milton has considerably less to say at this juncture, save that “God’s first and most excellent SPECIAL DECREE of all concerns HIS SON: primarily by virtue of this he is called FATHER” (I.3/CPW VI 166). This determination of God’s special decree, however, structures the *ordo docendi* of *De Doctrina Christiana* as Milton extends his treatment of Christ under the next heading, *De Praedestinatione*. Milton’s definition follows:

The principal SPECIAL DECREE of God which concerns men is called PREDESTINATION: by which GOD, BEFORE THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE WORLD WERE LAID, HAD MERCY ON THE HUMAN RACE, ALTHOUGH IT WAS GOING TO FALL OF ITS OWN ACCORD, AND, TO SHOW THE GLORY OF HIS MERCY, GRACE, AND WISDOM, PREDESTINED TO

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86 “neque enim quicquam evenit quia Deus praevidit, sed unumquodque praevidit Deus, quia ex causis propriis ipsius decreto libere agentibus, ipsique notissimis, ita est unumquodque eventurum” (DC 28).
87 “et eventus quidem ille non est in Deo qui praevidet, sed in eo solo qui praevidetur” (DC 28).
88 “DECRETUM Dei SPECIALE omnium primum ac praesentissimum est de FILIO SUO: unde et PATER primario dicitur” (DC 29).
ETERNAL SALVATION, ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE or plan IN
CHRIST, THOSE WHO WOULD IN THE FUTURE BELIEVE AND
CONTINUE IN THE FAITH (I.4/CPW VI 168). 89

In *De Doctrina Christiana* predestination is merely a special decree of God, distinct from
God’s general decree. This is another Miltonic innovation. It is as if the special and
general decrees pertain to different groups of people; where some are predestined to
election through the special decree, others succeed or fail to merit salvation under the
terms of the general decree. For Calvin and Ames predestination is certainly
conceptually distinct from providence and from God’s will; here, however, Milton
exaggerates these conceptual distinctions to make the difference not one of degree but of
kind. Providence and God’s will fall under the general decree while predestination is
under the special decree. The Son merits salvation for those who are predestined to
eternal salvation but only in his capacity under God’s special decree. Moreover,
predestination, as the principal special decree of God, *only* includes election and
salvation. Predestination, for Milton, does not concern reprobation and damnation; it is
not double predestination. Rather, Milton departs from numerous competing varieties of
Calvinism, including Calvin’s own explication of predestination in Book III, Chapter 21
of the 1559 *Institutio* and Ames’ *Medulla*. Milton also breaks decisively with Arminius

89 “DECRETUM Dei SPECIALE de HOMINIBUS praecipium, PRAEDESTINATIO
nominatur: qua DEUS, ANTE JACTA MUNDI FUNDAMENTA, GENERIS HUMANI,
QUAMVIS SUA SPONTE LAPSURI, MISERTUS, AD GLORIAM
MISERICORDIAE, GRATIAE, SAPIENTIAEQUE SUAE PATEFACIENDAM,
JUXTA PRAESTITUTUM, sive proposituum SUUM IN CHRISTO, EOS QUI
CREDITURI ESSENT ATQUE IN FIDE PERMANSURI, AD SALUTEM
AETERNAM PRAEDESTINAVIT” (DC 31).

375
who in a public declaration delivered in 1608 at the Hague affirms in no uncertain terms that the predestination of God concerns the election of men to salvation as well as the reprobation of sinners to destruction.\textsuperscript{90} Milton is no Arminian; on the contrary, he adapts and exaggerates Arminius’ fourfold division of decrees by introducing the additional Ramist distinction general/special. Arminius distinguishes between a first “absolute” decree concerning salvation through Christ; a second “precise and absolute” decree concerning election and reprobation; a third “divine” decree by God “to administer in a sufficient and efficacious manner the means which were necessary for repentance and faith”; and a fourth decree regarding God’s foreknowledge of election and reprobation.\textsuperscript{91} All of these, however, are parallel insofar as they proceed from his chief assertion that God’s decree concerning salvation through Christ is absolute. Milton’s theology only \textit{seems} Arminian because of his interest in free will and the similarity between the language of Arminius’ \textit{Declaration of Sentiments} and that of \textit{De Doctrina Christiana}. Milton, however, is not an Arminian, even if the \textit{ordo docendi} of \textit{De Doctrina Christiana} suggests that he, like Ames and Arminius, understands predestination as “The foundation of Christianity, and of salvation and its certainty.”\textsuperscript{92} Despite substantial differences, Calvin, Perkins, Arminius, and Ames all agree that “Predestination is a decree of God [\textit{decretum Dei}] concerning the eternal condition

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 247-8.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 248. Maurice Kelley notes Milton’s departure from Arminianism in CPW VI 84.
of men which shows his special glory \([specialis\ gloriae\ suae]\)" \((\text{Marrow} 152).\)

Milton changes this significantly. He aligns “special” with “decree” rather than “glory” and thus changes the status of God’s will in relation to predestination. Ames (following Calvin and Arminius) affirms that predestination proceeds entirely from God’s will, that

“Predestination does not necessarily presuppose that either its end or object exists; rather it causes it to exist. Predestination orders that it should be… Hence it depends upon no cause, reason, or outward condition, but proceeds purely from the will of him who predestines” \((\text{Marrow} 153).\)

Milton does not follow suit but rather draws a distinction between predestination as a special decree and God’s “absolute and inscrutable will.” For Milton, “Since God has so openly declared that predestination is the effect of his mercy, love, grace, and wisdom in Christ, we ought not attribute it, as is usually done, to his absolute and inscrutable will, even in those [scriptural] passages which mention will alone” \((\text{I.4/CPW VI 175-6}).\)

Predestination, rather, only follows from part of God’s will, as a special decree. This buttresses Milton’s theology of free will as well as his poetic approaches to both human and angelic devotion. God wills, through his general decree, that humans exercise free will, categorically.

\[93\] “\textit{Praedestinatio haec est decretum Dei de specialis gloriae suae manifestatione in hominum statu aeterno}” \((\text{Medulla} 123).\)

\[94\] “\textit{Praedestinatio enim, nec terminum, nec objectum suum necessario praesupponit ut existens, sed point ut existat: ita ut vi praedestinationis ordinetur ut sit… Hinc etiam a nulla causa, ratione vel conditione externa pendet, sed pure proficiscitur a praedestinantis voluntate}” \((\text{Medulla} 124).\)

\[95\] “\textit{et praedestinationem quidem cum Deus effectum esse misericordiae, dilectionis, gratiae, sapientiaeque suae in Christo tam aperte declaraverit, eam non debemus voluntati ejus, ut fere fit, absolutae atque arcanae attribuere, ne in iis quidem locis ubi solius voluntatis fit mentio}” \((\text{DC 35}).\)
The condition upon which God’s decision \[decreti\] depends, then, entails the action of a will which [God] himself has freed and a belief \[fides\] which he himself demands from men. If this condition is left in the power of men who are free to act, it is absolutely in keeping with justice and does not detract at all from the importance of divine grace. For the power to will and believe \[velle et credere\] is either the gift of God or, insofar as it is inherent in man at all, has no relation to good work or merit but only to the natural faculties \[facultatis...naturalis rationem\]. God does not then, by my argument, depend upon the will of man, but accomplishes his own will, and in doing so has willed that in the love and worship of God, and thus in their own salvation, men should always use their free will. If we do not, whatever worship or love we men offer to God is worthless and of no account (I.4/CPW VI 189).  

Milton certainly emphasizes human reason as well as the proper exercise of the will. At the same time, he artfully avoids charges of Pelagianism, insisting first that “the power to will and believe” is the general gift of God \[donum Dei\] and, second, that this categorical power to will and believe—in other words, faith \[fides\]—is not related to “good work or merit but only to the natural faculties” \[nullam boni operis aut meriti sed facultatis duntaxat naturalis rationem\]. God accomplishes his own will, in the most general sense, by mandating the free exercise of human will. Milton draws due attention to the status of faith, to which I turn below, but let it here suffice to note that faith, like free will, is named as a gift in the general sense and a demand in the most specific sense, in relation

\[Quod si conditio decreti, voluntas nempe ab ipso liberata, et fides, quae ab hominibus postulatur, in potestate hominum libere agentium relinquitur, id, cum aequissimum est, tum gratiae nihil derogat: quandoquidem velle et credere aut donum Dei est, aut, quantum ejus est in homine situm, nullam boni operis aut meriti, sed facultatis duntaxat naturalis rationem habet. Neque idcirco Deus voluntate pendet humana, sed voluntatem ipse exsequitur suam, qua voluit homines in amore atque cultu Dei, adeoque in salute sua, suo semper uti arbitrio; quo nisi utantur, quem cultum, quem amorem praebeamus Deo, nihilis profecto est, nullius pretii” (DC 45).
to human behavior. God grants men the categorical power to believe and demands that these men, in turn, demonstrate this belief through works. It is not reducible to works.

In the sections on general decree, special decree, and predestination in *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton treats concepts proper to God’s internal efficiency—“that which begins and ends within God himself” [*INTERNA est quae intra Deum terminatur*], or, in other words, that which pertains to his nature as opposed to ours. His definition of external efficiency follows the chapter on predestination, under the heading “On the Son of God” [*De Filio Dei*]. God’s external efficiency is the execution of his general and special decrees, each proper to his internal efficiency; “By this he effects outside himself something he has decreed within himself” [*EXTERNA est decretorum executio, qua aliquid apud se decretum, extra se efficit*] (I.5/CPW VI 205/DC 58). When we look at a graphic depiction (Figure 4) of the first four chapters of *De Doctrina Chrisitana* we notice two discrete paths to salvation: one under the heading “Election,” proper to God’s predestination effected through his special decree, salvation in the Son; and another proper to his general decree through which he affirms free action categorically and enables believers to demonstrate, in concert with the will of the Father, their merit. Both paths proceed from God, under the larger heading of his efficiency.
This depiction of election and reprobation is drastically different from that given by William Perkins in Chapter 52 ("Of the decree of Reprobation) of *A Golden Chain*.
where both election and reprobation proceed directly from God’s decree, “whereby…all men should be saued in Christ” (Figure 5).\footnote{See William Perkins, \textit{A Golden Chain, Or, The Description of Theologie, containing the order of the causes of Salutation and Damnation, according to God’s word} (London: Printed by Edward Alde, 1592), Chapter 52. From the copy held at the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery. Available through Early English Books Online.}
Notice, first, how Perkins begins with “God’s decree,” as a unity, identical with the assertion that “all men should be saued in Christ.” There is no division between general and special decree, as in Milton’s depiction, nor is Christ (the subject of Milton’s special decree) separate from God the Father. For Perkins, as for Ames, Arminius, and Calvin, both election and reprobation are proper to predestination; they both follow from God’s decree. It is thus difficult to conceive of human history or agency outside of this scheme. For Milton, however, the division between God’s general and special decrees creates two discrete paths to salvation: one through election under the special decree and another, still according to God’s will, under the general decree, through the categorical freedom of action endowed by the Father. Neither path is an unqualified freedom divorced from God’s will. However, if we trace the logic of the distinction between general and special decrees, we begin to see the foundations of Milton’s antitrinitarianism, even prior to his treatment of the Son in I.5. God the Father is the source of both decrees, including the special decree of predestination—but this implies that the Son of the special decree is, in other words, decreed, spoken, not identical with the Father.98 Moreover, it is not enough

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98 This claim challenges otherwise compelling studies of Milton’s theology which confirm his (albeit peculiar) attempt to render the Trinitarian Godhead through reason. Arguments such as Patrides’ and Hunter’s probe the terms and vocabularies of Arianism against Milton’s own investigations of the Trinity in *De Doctrina Christiana* and *Paradise Lost*. Few studies, however, treat the Trinity with respect to Milton’s theology of decree and predestination, nor do such classic studies extend beyond *De Doctrina Christiana* and *Paradise Lost* to include the 1671 poems. See C. A. Patrides, “Milton on the Trinity: The Use of Antecedents,” in W. H. Hunter, C. A. Patrides, and J. H. Adamson, *Bright Essence: Studies in Milton’s Theology* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1971), 3-14; W. B. Hunter, “Milton’s Arianism Reconsidered,” 382.
to describe the Son as merely subordinate to the Father in the Godhead. When we consider how the doctrine of the Trinity usually works with respect to human salvation, accomplished by God through God, Milton’s version of predestination and salvation by decree renders the Son unnecessary for human salvation. He is capable of effecting salvation and certainly might, through predestination, elect all men to salvation by special decree, but this is unnecessary: salvation might just as easily and logically fall under God’s general decree, effected through nature and providence, independently of predestination and the Son. This is precisely the situation in *Samson Agonistes* where Milton, through the term *lustratio*, points to Samson’s “sacrifice” under the general decree, his despair and suffering, in place of Christ’s own under the special decree.

**Despair and Sacrifice in *Samson Agonistes***

God’s goodness is absent across *Samson Agonistes*; there is no sense that the events depicted proceed from God’s benevolence, nor do any of the figures demonstrate adequate consolatory knowledge of providence, predestination, or election. Necessity and reprobation are rendered ambiguous, proper to human action as well as God’s will. But Milton does emphasize, across several dissonant and disparaging approaches to providence and predestination, the excruciating human experience of God’s will.

O that torment should not be confin’d

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To the bodies wounds and sores
With maladies innumerable
In heart, head, brest, and reins;
But must secret passage find
To th' inmost mind,
There exercise all his fierce accidents,
And on her purest spirits prey,
As on entrails, joints, and limbs,
With answerable pains, but more intense,
Though void of corporal sense.
My griefs not only pain me
As a lingring disease,
But finding no redress, ferment and rage,
Nor less then wounds immedicable
Ranckle, and fester, and gangrene,
To black mortification.
Thoughts my Tormenters arm'd with deadly stings
Mangle my apprehensive tenderest parts,
Exasperate, exulcerate, and raise
Dire inflammation which no cooling herb
Or medicinal liquor can asswage,
Nor breath of Vernal Air from snowy Alp.
Sleep hath forsook and giv'n me o're
To deaths benumming Opium as my only cure.
Thence faintings, swounings of despair,
And sense of Heav'ns desertion.99

Samson’s description of his suffering is desperate and intense, particularly where he describes his “wounds immedicable,” his “ Dire inflammation which no cooling herb/ Or medicinal liquor can asswage,/ Nor breath of Vernal Air from snowy Alp.” He insists that there can be no relief for his physical and mental pains, a claim that contradicts an entire tradition of writing on faith, predestination, and consolation stretching back at least to Ann Lock’s Sermons of John Calvin, Upon the Songe that Ezechias made after he had bene sicke, and afflicted by the hand of God, conteyned in the 38. Chapiter of Esay

99 SA 41-2; ll. 606-32.
Where Lock, after Calvin, celebrates the assuaging power of Scripture and faith, Milton’s Samson writhes in despair. Where Lock demonstrates faith in God’s benevolence, Samson expresses the overwhelming “sense of Heav'n's desertion.” The Chorus soon comments on Samson’s “faintings” and “swounings of despair,” noting that “Little prevails…Unless he feel within/ Some source of consolation from above; Secret refreshings, that repair his strength,/ And fainting spirits uphold.” This emphasizes “Secret refreshings” as the only medicaments against the “sense of Heav'n's desertion” before him. But “faintings” and “swounings of despair” also recalls Calvin’s depiction of Christ’s suffering in his 1555 *Harmonia ex tribus Evangelistis composita, Matthaeo, Marco et Luca* [A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke]. Milton, however, displaces Christ’s exceptional despair, the pain of his sacrifice [*lustratio*], from the Savior to Samson. Samson’s death is not satisfying for the sins of the world. In Milton’s understanding of predestination, however, neither is Christ’s. This follows his division between predestination under the special decree, where Christ is the object of sacrifice, and “election” or salvation under the general decree, where all men are subject to God’s will and are prone to experience the excruciating pain and despair usually reserved (across forms of Reformed Orthodoxy) to Christ alone. Christ is perhaps able to merit salvation for all men but it is unclear, in *De Doctrina Christiana*, whether or not believers can come to the Father through merit, outside of the special decree of predestination. *Lustratio*, insofar as it structures *Samson Agonistes*, refers to a purging or

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100 See Chapter 1.
101 *SA* 43-4; II. 661, 663-66.
102 See Chapter 2.
expiation that is common to all men just as wandering and error are proper to mankind after the Fall.

Milton makes this determination of *lustratio* more clear in his insistence on the commonality of passion, on the fact that “patience is more oft the exercise/ Of Saints, the trial of thir fortitude,/ Making them each his own Deliverer,/ And Victor over all/ That tyranny or fortune can inflict.”

Whereas Christ’s Passion is the subject of the Special Decree in *De Doctrina Christiana*, a more quotidian and diffuse passion—“patience,” from the deponent verb *patur*, to bear, support, undergo, suffer, endure—is the subject of the general decree. This “patience” is the saintly response to God’s will, particularly where human beings experience this will in despair, as a series of trials. This is certainly Samson’s lot where, in his desperation, the Chorus notes that, due to his circumstances, fortune “May chance to number thee with those/ Whom Patience finally must crown.”

Again, Fortune speaks the language of Stoicism, invoking fortune and chance against Samson’s consolation; moreover, they number him among the saints for whom patience may make “them each his own Deliverer.”

The description of Samson’s final act confirms this determination of *lustratio*, where human wandering and the common experience of despair is bound together with expiation, sacrifice, and deliverance. In other words, Samson realizes his status as elect through patience, through a parallel theology of sacrifice and expiation according to Milton’s division between general and special decrees. Although Christ’s sacrifice is not

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103 *SA* 77; ll. 1287-91.
104 Lewis and Short, *patur*.
105 *SA* 77; ll. 1295-6.
necessary to effect Samson’s deliverance—or to any act of merit—the scene at the
festival of Dagon explicitly recalls the Passion and Crucifixion. Samson is not a type of
Christ, nor is the poem an allegory of Christ’s sacrifice. On the contrary, Milton
expresses Samson’s effective sacrifice, according to God’s (general) decree, his
demonstration of patience as suffering in the depths of despair. Samson proceeds,

patient but undaunted where they led him,
Came to the place, and what was set before him
Which without help of eye, might be assay'd,
To heave, pull, draw, or break, he still perform'd
All with incredible, stupendious force,
None daring to appear Antagonist.
At length for intermission sake they led him
Between the pillars; he his guide requested
(For so from such as nearer stood we heard)
As over-tir'd to let him lean a while
With both his arms on those two massie Pillars
That to the arched roof gave main support.
He unsusiptious led him; which when Samson
Felt in his arms, with head a while enclin'd,
And eyes fast fixt he stood, as one who pray'd,
Or some great matter in his mind revolv'd.
At last with head erect thus cryed aloud,
Hitherto, Lords, what your commands impos'd
I have perform'd, as reason was, obeying,
Not without wonder or delight beheld.
Now of my own accord such other tryal
I mean to shew you of my strength, yet greater;
As with amaze shall strike all who behold.\textsuperscript{106}

Milton depicts Samson propped “With both his arms on those two massie Pillars,”
outstretched, deliberately recalling Christ’s cruciform pose. He proceeds, moreover,
“with head a while enclin’d,/ And eyes fast fixt he stood, as one who pray’d,/ Or some great matter in his mind revolv’d,” recalling Christ’s disposition upon the cross as well as his final prayer, from Psalm 22: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” In *Paradise Regained*, this verb “revolve” is twice used to describe Jesus’s action, first in Book I, Line 185, and again in Book I, Line 259, as the young Jesus “revolv’d/ The Law and Prophets, searching what was writ/ Concerning the Messiah.” Working across the 1671 poems, Samson follows Jesus insofar as “some great matter in his mind revolv’d”; This verb bears great weight, the sense of the Latin *revolvo*, to revolve, return or experience again as well as to contemplate. It describes Jesus’ contemplation of his identity as the Christ, the Messiah. In *Samson Agonistes*, as Milton undermines Christ’s exceptional status, the verb appears where the Chorus describes Samson’s last patient act leading up to his (no less patient) suicide. His last words, addressed to the Philistines within the temple—“Hitherto, Lords, what your commands impos’d/ I have perform’d, as reason was, obeying,/ Not without wonder or delight beheld./ Now of my own accord such other tryal/ I mean to shew you of my strength, yet greater;/ As with amaze shall strike all who behold”—work to express and extend the weight of his contemplation, the degree to which the Philistines establish the conditions of their demise. Samson, like Christ, does not violate their laws prior to this admission. On the contrary, he obeys and performs their “impos’d” laws “as reason was,” effecting his deliverance through the circumstances they create, not unlike Reformed Orthodox determinations of Christ’s fulfillment of the Law. Again, Samson is neither type nor allegory but rather a patient
subject of God’s will, subject to his general decree. His final act is accomplished under this decree and not through Christ’s exceptional lustratio proper to predestination.

Samson, in the face of the overwhelming “sense of Heav’ns desertion” depicted across the poem, demonstrates patience in life and death. The final lines of the poem, moreover, tie the terms of tragedy together with the experience of God’s will throughout, where “His servants he with new acquist/ Of true experience from this great event/ With peace and consolation hath mismist,/ And calm of mind all passion spent.” Milton, after Aristotle, emphasizes Samson’s desperation and depravity; in turn, he evokes pity and fear—not merely in his depiction of Samson but also, in a more enduring sense, in the unknowable status of God’s will. If Samson Agonistes is a poem about faith, the relationship between faith and tragedy remains unclear at the end. But if the definition of tragedy centers on the perfection pity and fear, Milton points to the project of Samson Agonistes in his substitution of affectus. Affectus is distinct from Heinsius’ perturbatio as well as the “passion” of the final line insofar as it points to the perfection [perficiens] of these latter terms as well, their shift from passivity to activity. Samson experiences despair and fear; in the process, he accomplishes his deliverance through lustratio, affirming his status as active participant.

As in Calvin’s reading of Paul, neither the fear of God’s just punishment proper to the heart nor the knowledge of earthly causes proper to the mind comprise faith; these are not enough to deliver Samson from pain and despair. Milton, in his translation of

108 SA 101; ll. 1755-8.
Aristotle, points to a third term, to *affectus*, in his struggle to understand faith in God’s unknowable design. For Milton, neither faith nor *affectus* proceed from an adequate understanding of God’s benevolence. *Affectus*, rather, exceeds heart and mind, emotion and knowledge, through perfection, through some “source of consolation from above;/ Secret refreshings, that repair his strength,/ And fainting spirits uphold.”

It is the product of a relationship between God and man, not constitutive of it or prior to it. *Affectus* is secret, the stuff of inspiration and enthusiasm. It is duly individual and descriptive, not constitutive of collectives or relationships as in Calvin, Donne, or Spinoza. God is the source of *affectus* and, through the dispensation of his will, the means through which *affectus* are perfected—for Samson within the poem and for the reader without.

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109 *SA* 44; ll. 664-66.
Conclusion: Affectus Comprime!

Affectus is too often understood as a mere emotion or feeling. The emblem “Affectus Comprime” in the 1619 Emblemata Politica, however, offers a version of affectus that follows from the 1559 Institutio and encapsulates the tension I identify across this project.¹ The poetic text beneath the image suggests a typical approach to the passions, emphasizing the importance of reason and our capacity to restrain our passions in the interest of morality.² The text follows:

Affectus Comprime
REGINA RATIO recta Regibus imperat,
Et dictat affectus cohercere improbos.
Pareto rationi; catenis, vinculis
Cohibe [pathos], tibi ut secundae res eant.

[Restrain the Affects: Queen Reason rules properly over her subjects and decrees that disparate affectus be made to agree with one another. Yield to reason; bind your passions together with chains and fetters as good fortune is apt to swim away from you.]

Much of the text is in the imperative, demanding that the rational reader restrain their affects and yield to reason. Affectus takes shape here initially as a synonym for passio, as another name for passion; one is led to assume certain control over one’s passions, to

¹ Peter Isselburg, “Affectus Comprime,” Emblemata Politica (Nuremburg, 1619 [First Edition 1617]), 66. A 1619 version of the text is available electronically through the German Emblem Books Project, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
realize affects as subjective effects that are entirely within the purview of moral philosophy. The accompanying image, however, tells a very different story.

Figure 6: “Affectus Comprime” from the *Emblemata Politica* (1619). Reproduced with permission from the German Emblem Books Project, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
A heart is pressed firmly between the ends of pincers held by an arm emerging from billowing clouds. The heart-pincers apparatus is suspended between the motto “Affectus Comprime” and the image of the temple, prominent in the cityscape depicted in the image. The tool emphasizes the strong sense of “Comprimo” as a physical act, a squeezing or compression. The hand, however, seems calm; its grasp of the pincers, effortless. Its relaxed posture, together with the fine quality of the cloth (and the degree to which the clouds resemble an elaborate sleeve) suggests that it is God who retains control of the heart and the affectus—a striking contrast to the imperative statement “Restrain the affects!” It is unclear, in the image, how one might accomplish what the motto demands. The depiction of affectus exceeds the subject in this respect and points to a relational and generative determination. Agency, with respect to the affectus, is suspended between man and God and structures the relationship. In the 1559 Institutio this is precisely the structure of faith, rendered in rhetorical terms. In Donne’s Devotions, this is the larger body of Christ. In Milton’s Samson Agonistes, this is the determination of affectus revealed in his meditation on tragedy, in the relationship between Samson and God. In Spinoza’s Ethica, moreover, affectus are not reducible to feelings or emotions. Affects, rather, exceed, reconfigure and reorganize bodies and subjects; they are thus constitutive of, and integral to, a dynamic economy of activity and passivity. In the Emblemata Politica a similar definition of affectus is revealed in the tension between the Latin poetry and the image—between the determination of affectus as a passion within the subject’s control and its status in a larger divine economy, the province of God, exceeding the limits of human agency.
Affect Before Spinoza demonstrates the degree to which affects are productive; it is only when they are experienced passively that they seem otherwise. Affect suspends and transforms questions of agency to privilege relation. Calvin’s important contributions in the *Institutio* reveal the theological import of these questions, particularly prescient across sixteenth- and seventeenth-century controversies concerning providence, predestination, election, reprobation, and the terms of the human will. Where the poetry accompanying the image “Affectus Comprime” seems to emphasize human control over the affects as passions, exhorting the reader to bind disparate affectus together lest they swim apart and thwart any attempt to follow good fortune, it is as if the engraver had another more precise determination of affectus in mind. The title “Affectus Comprime” is altered to fit the frame; “Affectus” is prominent and intact while “Comprime” is extended over two lines, splitting “Com-” from “prime.” This is an artful enjambment, drawing our attention to “prime” that is centered directly above the heart in the image. “Prime” is not the proper Latin term for “first” or “foremost.” The correct adjective prima is a first or second declension word that would never end in an “-e.” Nevertheless, it is close enough to the proper term to emphasize the importance of affectus in an economy of activity and passivity, its primacy, its priority. Affectus are the stuff of the relationship between man and God, irreducible to mere emotions or passions. Intended or not, this is the lesson we take from the emblem “Affectus Comprime.”
Appendix I: Calvin with and against Melanchthon: Faith in the Loci Communes (1521)

Given my emphasis on Calvin’s treatment of faith in the 1559 Institutio it is instructive to consider alternative Reformation determinations that bore considerable influence across Northern Europe. In this case, the most pressing comparison is perhaps Philip Melanchthon’s 1521 Loci Communes which, when read alongside Calvin’s 1559 Institutio, sheds further light on the development of affectus in the latter text. In the Loci Communes, faith takes shape as one of the chief topical headings, a name under which important theological matters are organized [rerum theologicarum haec fere capita] (Introductio 4.4/18).¹ Faith is, in its earliest iteration in the text, a knowledge of God’s benevolence; moreover, where “the existence of God, his wrath and his mercy are spiritual concepts,” such matters “cannot be known by the flesh” (H 173).² Of this Melanchthon is very clear, that “whatever nature knows of God without the Spirit of God renewing and enlightening our hearts, whatever it may be, I say it is but a frigid opinion

¹ All Latin references to the 1521 Loci Communes are taken from the parallel text edition (Latin and German) published by Gütersloher Verlagshaus. I refer Latin quotations to the text with respect to Heading and Section, followed by the page number in the parallel text edition (separated by a slash). English translations—either from the 1944 Charles Leander Hill edition or my own—are marked accordingly (Hill cited in text as H and not cited when mine). See Philipp Melanchthon, Loci Communes (1521): Lateinisch—Deutsch (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1997); and The Loci Communes of Philip Melanchthon, trans. Charles Leander Hill (Boston, Massachusetts: Meador Publishing Company, 1944).
² “Esse deum, dei ira, dei misericordia spiritualia sunt, non possunt igitur a carne cognosci” (De iustificatione et fide 3.9/210).
and not faith” (H 173).³ Albeit in a different idiom, this certainly looks forward to Calvin’s definition of faith and is likely a key source for the 1559 *Institutio*. In Melanchthon’s work, as in Calvin’s, faith is “something greater and more certain than what the flesh can comprehend” (H 175); it is “nothing other than reliance upon the divine mercy promised in Christ,” a “reliance on the benevolence and mercy of God [that] first pacifies the heart, and then incites us to give thanks to God for his mercy, so that we of our own accord and joyfully do the law” (H 177).⁵

According to the *Loci Communes*, “only the just believe the physical promises from the heart, and God has declared his mercy by the promise of physical things” (H 183).⁶ Faith is thus “not a frigid opinion about the creation of things, but is a most lively knowledge both of the power and goodness of God pouring itself out upon all creatures, ruling, and administering all creatures” (H 186).⁷ Within this same sentence, he poses a rhetorical question—“If I could explain it as the dignity of the case demands, how many

³ “Proinde quidquid de deo cognoscit natura sine spiritu dei instaurante et illustrante corda nostra, quaecunque sit, frigida opinio est, non fides” (De iustificatione et fide 3.9/210).
⁴ “Maius omnino et certius fides est, quam quod posit comprehendere caro” (De iustificatione et fide 3.13/212).
⁵ “Est itaque fides non alius nisi fiducia misericordiae divinae promissae in Christo adeoque quocunque signo. Ea fiducia benevolentiae seu misericordiae dei cor primum pacificat, deinde et accendit velut gratiam acturos deo pro misericordia, ut legem sponte et hilariter faciamus” (De iustificatione et fide 4.22/216-8).
⁶ “Sic enim sentio nec promissionibus corporalibus credere ex corde nisi iustos et corporalium rerum promissione misericordiam suam declarasse deum” (De iustificatione et fide 6.51/228).
⁷ “Haec fides est de rerum conditione non frigida opinio, sed vivacissima cognitio tum potentiae tum bonitatis dei effundentis se in omnes creaturas, regentis et administrantis omnes creaturas, quam si possem explicare, ut rei dignitas postulat, quantum chartarum insumerem in hunc unum locum?” (De iustificatione et fide 6.65/232).
pages would I use on this topic [locum] alone?” (H 186)\(^8\)—which foregrounds the limits of the method, the degree to which an apt understanding of faith may exceed its status as a locum among others or, at the very least, tests the limits of any human understanding of faith in human language. But Calvin’s and Melanchthon’s approaches diverge here. Where Calvin develops a different affective language in order to treat this difficulty, Melanchthon yields to the additive understanding of faith that Calvin specifically rejects in the Institutio, where affectus is something added to the will, even as a sort of intention. This additive understanding of faith is at work in the Loci Communes where Melanchthon attempts to balance justification and faith under one heading. Here, as he weaves together faith, justification, and a treatment of works, Melanchthon claims that

Scripture speaks not only of external appearance of a work or of its “disguise” and “rouge,” but of the work as a whole. That is, it speaks both of the external work and then especially of the will or of the affection that is the author of the work. Scripture calls a good work an “external simulation” not of the work, but the whole work: that is, the good affection and the fruit of that affection, none otherwise than as common sense customarily speaks of it… The principle is generally accepted in the schools and common sense teaches, that no work is good without the affection. Let them consult common sense who interpret Scripture with respect to part of a work and not the whole (H 199-200).\(^9\)

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\(^8\) See previous footnote, on De iustificatione et fide 6.65/232.

\(^9\) “Respondeo paucis scripturam non de specie tantum externa operas seu de fuco loqui, sed de toto opere, hoc est, cum de externa specie tum maxime de voluntate, auctore operis seu de affectu. Bonum opus vocat scriptura non simulationem tantum externam operis, sed totum opus, hoc est, bonum affectum et eius affectus fructum, non aliter atque communis hominum sensus loqui solet… Recepta etiam vulgo in scholis sententia est, et communis naturae senus docet nullam esse bonitatem operis praeter affectum. Communem sensum consulant, qui de parte operis, non de toto opere scripturam interpretantur” (De iustificatione et fide 6.124-5, 127/254, 256).
This treatment is, for Calvin, specious at best, reducing affect to something akin to intention rather than as constitutive of the primary transformative relationship with God, faith. For Melanchthon affectus occupies a very different theoretical locus. Of affectus we are told that “The Schools do not deny the affections, but call them a weakness to human nature” (H 79), a thesis that Melanchthon immediately complicates insofar as “the heart together with its affections, constitutes the highest and most powerful part in man” (H 79) but which, ultimately, he affirms in stating that

If you refer the will to the affections, even from the point of view of natural judgment there is plainly no liberty.
Now when an affection has begun to rage and to burn, it cannot be restrained from bursting forth (H 81).

Melanchthon ultimately treats the affections in terms of the will. In his treatment of faith, he gives the example of Saul who, in his “heart affections…neither feared the wrath of God nor trusted God’s benignity” (H 174).

Melanchthon certainly influenced Calvin’s determination of faith in the Institutio where faith in the Loci Communes is the “reliance on the good will of God [that] is to be extended throughout the whole life, throughout all our works, throughout all corporal and

10 “Non negant affectus scholae, sed vocant infirmitatem naturae” (De hominibus viribus 5.56/40).
11 “cor cum suis affectibus summam ac potissimam hominis partem esse” (De hominibus viribus 5.57/40).
12 “Si ad affectus referas voluntatem, nulla plane libertas est, etiam naturae iudicio. Iam ubi affectus coeperit furere et austuare, cohiberi non potest, quin erumpat (De hominibus viribus 5.68-9/44)
13 “Nam de cordis affectu loquor, nec timebat iram dei nec fidebat benignitate” (De iustificatione et fide 3.10/212).
spiritual temptations” (H 182). He influences Calvin in naming Scripture as an affective medium, in opposition to philosophy: “Philosophy looks only upon the external masks of man, whereas Holy Writ discerns the innermost and incomprehensible affections. When a man is dominated by these, Holy Writ judges his works according to these affections. For since in all our works we seek our own personal gains, our works are necessarily true sins” (H 89). Moreover, just as Calvin’s definition of faith as a knowledge of God’s benevolence proves Melanchthon’s influence, the very organization of the *Institutio* follows Melanchthon’s *ordo docendi* insofar as faith immediately precedes justification in the 1559 text, in Book III. Calvin even retreads Melanchthon’s steps in many cases, rehearsing and disputing the incapacitating distinction between “formed” and “unformed” faith and resting briefly upon the power of faith in the struggle against temptation. Nevertheless, it is important to mark two key distinctions between the *Loci Communes* and the *Institutio*. First, Calvin insists that his is not an additive determination of faith but rather a more dynamic relationship between knowledge, certainty, and *affectus*, a relationship that he registers carefully in the language of *persuasio* and *affectus* adapted from rhetoric. He does so in direct contrast to Melanchthon’s additive understanding of faith in the *Loci Communes*. Second, Calvin counters Melanchthon’s strategy by locating his most careful treatment of affect and of the knowledge of the heart explicitly in his

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14 “Haec fiducia bonae voluntatis dei spargitur in omnem vitam, in omnia opera, in omnes tentationes corporals et spirituales” (De iustificatione et fide 5.48/226).
15 “Philosophia non respicit nisi externas hominum larvas. Sacrae literae penitissimos et incomprehensibles affectus observant, quibis cum regatur homo, de operibus pro affectuum ratione iudicant. Et cum in omnibus operibus nostra queramus, necesse est ea revera peccata esse” (De peccato 5.45/62).
definition of faith, whereas Melanchthon locates this material earlier in his study, under
the topical headings “The Powers of Man” and “Sin.” Melanchthon locates affectus and
afficere directly in Scripture, in Romans 8: “Qui secundum carnem sunt, quae carnis sunt,
affectant, qui vero secundam spiritum sunt, quae sunt spiritus, affectant. Nam affectus
carnis mors est, affectus autem spiritus vita et pax” (De peccato 5.69/70). Following this
determination of affectus, under the general heading of “Sin” within the organization of
the Loci Communes, Melanchthon summarizes the section by stating that “Peccatum est
affectus contra legem dei” (De peccato 5.118/92)—that sin is any affectus against the law
of God. Affectus, in Melanchthon’s treatment, is less precise than in the Institutio and is
synonymous with “passion” or “feeling” whereas for Calvin affectus is constitutive of
faith and inextricable from piety and knowledge of the heart. In this way, Calvin’s
affectus are prior, conceptually, to passions and feelings in the broader sense.
Appendix II: The Synod of Dort (1618/9)

The theological and political divisions precipitating the Synod of Dort took first shape in local debates over church authority in the wake of Dutch independence from Spain.¹ In the decades following the emergence and consolidation of the Dutch Republic in the 1570s and 1580s, membership in the Reformed Church grew steadily; unlike Catholicism, Lutheranism, Anabaptism, and Judaism, all of which faced significant institutional opposition and intolerance after the defeat of the Spanish and the Union of Utrecht in 1579, the Reformed Church was sanctioned by the young Republic and took shape in the Netherlands as a sort of state church, yet with limited influence over secular affairs.¹

¹ According to Jonathan Israel, “As the public, and only, Church protected, and promoted, by the city councils, provinces, and States General—and upheld by all seven provinces—the Dutch Reformed Church was, in some respects, a state Church… [lacking only] the power to enforce church attendance and [with] no representation in Generality and provincial colleges and assemblies.” See Jonathan I. Israel, The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 368. Despite the unprecedented scope and reach of Calvinism in the nascent Dutch Republic, the limits of Reformed orthodox involvement in state affairs would largely define the shape of internal politics until the Synod of Dort in 1618/9. As early as the first National Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church at Dordrecht (Dort) in 1578, Reformed officials advocated that they be able to appoint preachers and make final decisions regarding orthodoxy and heresy; in 1585, Reformed officials attempted again to secure autonomy upon the arrival of the Earl of Leicester in the Netherlands—the first of many collaborations between English and Dutch in matters of religion and statecraft, demonstrating the inextricability of these polities in emergent histories of Reformed Orthodoxy. Leicester, a Calvinist himself, supported the extension of Reformed order by attempting to divest town councils of control over Church matters, working to secure stronger state support for the Church, and challenging existing habits of toleration and Erastian authority. Nevertheless, Leicester failed to resolve questions of church authority and the relationship between the Dutch Reformed Church and the government of the States General remained an incendiary partisan struggle well into the seventeenth century, coming to a head in the divisive Arminian controversy precipitating the Synod of Dort in 1618/9.
politics. The divisive struggle between Reformed Orthodoxy and its discontents intensified after the appointment of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) to a chair of theology at the University of Leiden in 1603. Arminius, supported by the influential statesman Johan van Oldenbarnevelt (1547-1619), Johannes Uyttenbogaert (1560-1609), and Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), challenged the Dutch Reformed Church by questioning what had become the central tenet of institutional Calvinism by the turn of the seventeenth-century: predestination. Yet Arminius still held an important public position sanctioned by the States General, an affront to the Reformed Church insofar as his prominence pointed to the limits of Orthodox influence in affairs of state.

After Arminius’s death in 1609, the situation in the Netherlands became more divisive with the emergence of an Arminian party within the larger edifice of the Dutch Reformed Church. Named after a formal Remonstrance to the States General (drafted by Uyttenbogaert and submitted by Oldenbarnevelt in 1610), this group of Remonstrants


3 For what remains the most thorough account of the life and work of Jacobus Arminius (or, in Dutch, Jacob Harmensz), see Carl Bangs, Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1971).

4 As Advocate of Holland, Oldenbarnevelt negotiated armistice in 1607 as well as the Twelve Years Truce between the United Provinces and Spain, from 1609 to 1621.

5 Simon Episcopius (1583-1643), Arminius’s best student, is also included among the Dramatis Personae of the Synod of Dort; while I do not deal with him in this chapter, I return to Episcopius in Chapter 4 insofar as he is an important figure in Spinoza’s historical recuperation of the events coming to a head at the Synod of Dort.
posed an institutional challenge to Reformed Orthodoxy by affirming three theological points: “(1) the election of those who believe by the grace of the Holy Spirit and who persevere in their faith; (2) the universality of Christ’s atonement, the salvific consequences of which are nonetheless restricted to those who believe; and (3) the resistability of grace.”

The Remonstrance, signed by forty-four preachers of the public Reformed Church, was immediately countered by a Counter-Remonstrance, the product of an anti-Arminian party. Named after Arminius’s noted colleague at Leiden, the strict Reformed preacher Franciscus Gomarus (1563-1641), the Gomarist Counter-Remonstrants advanced their position by “setting out the anti-Arminian position, rejecting amendment of the Netherlands [Belgic] Confession, restating Gomers’ position of predestination, and condemning the Remonstrants’ plea that nothing should be decided by provincial synods, until the controversy had been resolved by a National Synod,” i.e. the Synod of Dort.

The crisis was theological and political in the sense that both Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants advocated competing determinations of federalism, with the former emphasizing the power of local classes and congregations to decide matters of doctrine and the latter proposing a more encompassing National Synod to unite the Dutch Reformed Church across states and classes. The Counter-Remonstrant (or Gomarist) position prevailed insofar as the Synod of Dort was a National Synod convened to set policy and orthodoxy, to guide the subordinate decisions of provincial classes. Hence, during the second decade of the seventeenth century, the quarrel between

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7 Israel, The Dutch Republic, 425.
Arminius and Gomarus became a larger political and doctrinal struggle between Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants in the States of Holland, and larger yet as the controversy came to affect Dutch citizens outside of Holland and Utrecht and Europeans at large.

Even before the Synod of Dort itself, the theological battle between Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants attracted international attention once James VI and I intervened in the series of events known as the Vorstius Affair. In a situation analogous to the earlier controversy surrounding Arminius’s appointment to the chair of theology at Leiden, the English king worked to block Arminius’s Remonstrant successor Conrad Vorstius (1569-1622) from occupying the same position in 1611/2.\(^8\) As part of a larger trend of involvement across national and confessional lines, culminating in the English embassies to the Synod of Dort and to Germany and Bohemia in the days preceding the outbreak of the Thirty Years’ War, James adamantly opposed the appointments of “‘seditious and hereticall preachers’” such as Vorstius on the grounds that “he feared a contagion, which ‘dispersing it selfe, might infect, not onely the bodie of their State, but all Christendome also; the danger whereof was so much greater to our Dominions than to many others, by how much the Provinces of the said States [the Netherlands] are neerer

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James did not cease to be interested in the affairs of the United Provinces after Vorstius was denied the Leiden appointment and, in 1617, the English king, in league with Counter-Remonstrant demands, “urged that a national synod of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands be held under the supervision of the States-General.” For James as well as a generation of English theologians and divines, the Synod of Dort did not merely address Dutch Reformed hegemony over internal affairs. On the contrary, the Synod brought together delegates from Reformed Churches across Europe in an effort to establish a shared Reformed Orthodox language, including several German principalities, Geneva, Emden, England and Scotland.11

Much of the political conflict precipitating the Synod of Dort was resolved before the proceedings began in 1618. While Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants continued to argue over the theology of predestination and the shape of institutional Calvinism in the Netherlands, the Oldenbarnevelt regime that supported the Remonstrant cause was defeated by 1618. The Stadholder Maurits of Nassau (later Prince of Orange, after the death of his brother Philips Willem in 1618) aligned himself with the Counter-Remonstrants against Oldenbarnevelt’s assertion that “sovereignty, in the United

9 See Patterson, King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom, 262-3.
10 Ibid., 263.
Provinces, lay entirely in the provinces” and not in the Union of states—a political
program which supported limited tolerance, Erastian statecraft, and a less rigid version of
federalism and which would soon become obsolete.\(^\text{12}\) Insofar as this approach buttressed
a Remonstrant program of reform, such efforts began falling apart upon the arrest of
Oldenbarnevelt (and his mouthpiece, Grotius) for treason. Oldenbarnevelt was found
guilty and executed in May 1619. While the Synod of Dort convened in November 1618,
just months before Oldenbarnevelt was beheaded, most of Maurits’s political opponents
had already been removed in what one prominent historian has named a “Calvinist
Revolution.”\(^\text{13}\)

The Remonstrants were left without political advocates; hence, “That the National
Synod would condemn Arminius and Remonstrantism was scarcely in doubt.
Nevertheless, such a gathering could not proceed to do so until all aspects of the matter
had been thoroughly considered.”\(^\text{14}\) Whether or not they were given due process at the
Synod of Dort, the lengthy proceedings suggest that the doctrines associated with
Arminius and the Remonstrants were meticulously read and answered in detail:

It was not until the 137\(^{\text{th}}\) sitting of the synod, in May 1619, that the assembly
finally condemned the Remonstrants as heretics, disseminators of false doctrine,
and ‘perturbateurs’ of state and Church. A list of Arminian preachers was drawn
up together with a formula for submission to which those prepared to recant (and
keep their livings), and remain within the public Church, would have to subscribe.
The formula pledged adherance to the Netherlands Confession and the Heidelberg
catechism, and acceptance of the Acts of the National Synod… In all about 200

\(^{12}\) Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 441.
\(^{13}\) Ibid., 433.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., 462.
Remonstrant preachers were deprived of their livings and the right to preach by the Dutch provincial and civic authorities during 1619. Of these, around forty were subsequently rehabilitated after complying with the formula for submission. Another seventy or so were permanently stripped of their pulpits but allowed to live quietly as private citizens after signing a promise not to preach or engage further in theological dispute. The rest, those who refused to sign, or remain silent, totaling over eighty, were banished from the Republic, their expulsion being entrusted to the Gecommitteerde Raden and Delegated States of the respective provinces. Those who sought to evade expulsion, and continue preaching clandestinely, could expect to be hunted and, if caught, imprisoned.  

The political events leading up to the Synod of Dort were of special interest to English audiences. Several studies emphasize James’s involvement, the importance of the English Delegation (George Carleton, Joseph Hall, John Davenant, and Samuel

15 Ibid., 462-3.  
16 The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnavelt (1619), a dramatic work in manuscript attributed to John Fletcher and Philip Massinger, emphasizes the corruption of the Oldenbarnewelt regime and the innate depravity of Arminianism over the complexity of theological disputation at Dordrecht. Here Oldenbarnewelt’s own henchmen (including Grotius) confess to each other that religion is merely an ideological tool, and an imprecise one at that. When Oldenbarnewelt’s compatriot Modesbargen addresses their strategy with reluctance, claiming that “where Religion/ is made a cloke to [our] bad purposes/ they seldom haue succes,” Oldenbarnewelt answers cynically: “[you] are too holly/ we live not now [with] Saincts, but wicked men,/ and any thriving way, we can make use of/ what shape soere it weares, to crosse their arts/ we must embrace, and cherish: and this course/ (carrying a zealous face) will countenaunce/ our other actions.” The contest between two personalities, Oldenbarnewelt and Prince Maurits, seems to take precedence over the theological matters at stake in the conversations at and around the Synod of Dort. But this depiction of Dort, Arminianism, and the struggle between Remonstants and Counter-Remonstrants, tailored to fit the limits and generic conceits of popular Jacobean news-theater, seems idiosyncratic in comparison to the overwhelming English interest in the theological matters debated and decided at the Synod. See The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnavelt, ed. Wilhelmina P. Frijlinck (Amsterdam: H. G. van Dorssen, 1922), 8-9. Frijlinck’s edition is exemplary in its detailed transcription of the manuscript material; it is notable, however, that she names the work as an anonymous Elizabethan play while other critics and editors attribute the work to the Jacobean authors John Fletcher and Philip Massinger. See T. H. Howard-Hill, “Buc and the Censorship of Sir John Van Olden Barnavelt in 1619,” Review of English Studies, New Series 39.153 (February 1988), 39-63.
Ward) to the Synod, and the contributions of leading English theologians and polemicists in related conversations and disputes (if not the proceedings themselves), including William Ames, Lancelot Andrewes, John Overall, and Richard Montagu.\(^\text{17}\) With the defeat of Arminianism and the Remonstrant vision of reform, the theologians presiding over the Synod of Dort established an influential Reformed Orthodox language that emphasized, above all else, “the force of divine grace and the consoling aspects of the doctrine of predestination.”\(^\text{18}\) While the causal relationship between Dutch and English forms of Arminianism is debatable, the preoccupations and conversations at Dort certainly spoke to like concerns across both cultures.\(^\text{19}\) By the 1590s, the leading Reformed theologian in England and across Northern Europe, William Perkins, located predestination at the center of his declaredly Calvinist theology.\(^\text{20}\) Insofar as Perkins was Arminius’s chief interlocutor, the doctrinal crises involving the Dutch Reformed Church


\(^\text{18}\) Benedict, 311.


at the turn of the seventeenth century can accurately be traced to English conversations and disputations. Predestinarian debates and disputes had been held around Cambridge for decades, becoming particularly heated after Regius Professor of Divinity William Whitaker and company drafted the Lambeth Articles to amend existing doctrine by supplementing open statements on providence with stricter articles on double predestination.\(^2\) In English and Scottish circles, the Calvinist doctrine of double predestination had long been among the most prominent issues Reformation theology, if not the most important and divisive tenet. Thus the Synod of Dort gave voice to English proponents and opponents of strict predestinarian theology alike, staging an already-heated debate concerning the shape and scope of Reformed Orthodoxy under a larger, transnational banner.

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Glossary

Arianism

Arianism, named after Arius (250-336), is generally understood as a form of antitrinitarianism. It certainly survived beyond the debates resolved in the First Council of Nicea in 325 as Arius and his followers, who believed that the Son is not one with the Father in the Trinity, influenced successive generations of antitrinitarianism. Nevertheless, there is considerable doubt concerning what Arius and the Arians actually believed as well as the historical trajectory of the heresy (see Rowan Williams). For the purposes of this dissertation, however, I emphasize how early modern theologians and controversialists readily identified Arianism with Socinianism and other forms of antitrinitarianism or aberrant theology.

Calvinist

I seldom use the term “Calvinist” because of the wide variety of interpretations and institutional approaches to Calvin’s own writing. It is an imprecise term. When it does appear, I use it in the most general sense, to designate those works or individuals that proceed in (what they imagine to be) fidelity to Calvin’s work and thought.

Christology

Topics having to do with the life and nature of Jesus Christ—including the Incarnation, his death, descent into hell, and resurrection—are collected under the more general term Christology. Christology is arguably the center of Christian theology insofar as it includes the redemption and salvation of mankind.

Collegiant

“Collegiant” is not a designation of faith or confession. The name, rather, refers to the practice of attending study groups or “colleges” where religious concepts were discussed and debated with relative freedom. Spinoza, for instance, attended such meetings, as did Anabaptists, Remonstrants, Socinians, Quakers, Lutherans, Jews, and any number of other confessions. Collegiants began gathering together after the Synod of Dort, where tolerance and freedom of religion were restricted in the United Provinces (of the Netherlands); what drew participants together were not necessarily shared religious
beliefs but rather a community of intellectual and spiritual resources and a culture of study and debate.

**Contra-Remonstrant**

“Contra-Remonstrant” is a term for the strict Calvinist members of the Dutch Reformed Church. It emerged in opposition to Arminianism (of the Remonstrants) at the beginning of the seventeenth century and eventually triumphed at the 1618/19 Synod of Dort. During Spinoza’s life Contra-Remonstrancy virtually defined the orthodox position of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands.

**Huguenot**

A Huguenot is a member of the Reformed Church of France—essentially, a French Calvinist.

**Orthodoxy**

The term “orthodoxy” is usually deployed to describe the “right” or “correct” approach to a given body of theological topics. However, even the firmest orthodoxies are not without debate and dissent; I emphasize, across the dissertation, the degree to which orthodoxy is active, emerging and transforming through processes of evaluation, discussion, and experiment. Orthodoxy accounts for heresy, as in Augustine’s description of the relationship between doctrine and dissent: “The rejection of heretics brings into relief what your Church holds and what sound doctrine maintains. ‘It was necessary for heresies to occur so that the approved may be made manifest’ among the weak” (Augustine, *Confessions*; contains an embedded quotation from I Corinthians 11:19).

**Predestination**

Predestination refers to God’s judgment of mankind. While many approaches to predestination only deal with the election of men to salvation, Calvin advances a theology of double predestination that accounts for both salvation (election) and damnation (reprobation). It is important to consider the wide varieties of predestinarian theology which emerge in relation to debates concerning when God predestines men (from outside of human time or within it); whether predestination preceded or followed the Fall of Adam and Eve; the terms of God’s foreknowledge of sin; and how human agency factors in.
Providence

Providence describes God’s sovereignty and government over creation and human history. Although it is certainly related to predestination and other soteriological concepts, providence emphasizes God’s plan for creation as opposed to the election and reprobation of nations or individuals. The etymology of providence is instructive insofar as the term comes from the Latin pro (before) with videre (to see).

Ramism

Ramism, named after Petrus Ramus (1515-1572), is a method of logic that changed the shape of rhetorical and dialectical instruction in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Ramus and his followers worked to reorganize the disciplines or faculties according to a universal subordinating dialectical method. Ramist logic proceeds by splitting topics in increasingly-precise parts, as in the distinction between “general” and “particular.” An example of Ramist logic can be found in the diagram of Cicero’s life and work which begins by marking the distinction between his life and death and proceeds accordingly, via a series of distinctions which illuminate all of the aspects of his work particular to his life. Critics, however, attacked Ramist logic for its lack of subtlety and for its easy distinctions. It is difficult to tell whether Ramism gained purchase among early modern philosophers and theologians because of its efficacy or because of the circumstances of Ramus’ life and death. A Protestant convert, Ramus rejected the Aristotelian logical methods used among Catholic schoolmen. He was also martyred in the St. Batholomew’s Day Massacre at Paris in 1572, an historical event which cemented his reputation among Protestant theologians (including Calvin’s successors Theodore Beza and William Perkins).

Reformed Orthodox

“Reformed Orthodox” is a term used to designate the most prominent institutional form of Calvinism across Europe and the New World during the seventeenth-century. After the Synod of Dort, for instance, the Contra-Remonstrant position was also the Reformed Orthodox position.

Remonstrant

Remonstrants are Arminians—i.e. proponents of the theology of Arminius—who posed a significant challenge to the dominant approaches to Reformed Orthodoxy during the first decades of the seventeenth century. The debates between Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants came to a head at the Synod of Dort. Remonstrants are Calvinists and like their Reformed Orthodox neighbors believed in predestination and followed the writing
of John Calvin. However, Remonstrants argued, after Arminius, several incendiary theological points—namely, that predestination is conditional, that man is able to resist God’s grace and that Christ’s death was intended for the atonement of the sins of all mankind (not merely the elect). Essentially, Remonstrants ascribed a different, less-limited sort of agency to mankind than the more strict Reformed Orthodox Contra-Remonstrants.

**Socinianism**

Socinianism, named after Faustus Socinus (1539-1604), originated among the Polish Brethren at Rakow and spread north through Amsterdam over the course of the seventeenth century. The most thorough statement of Socinian doctrine is the Racovian Catechism (1605; licensed for publication, incidentally, by John Milton in 1652). The Racovian Catechism reveals an approach to Christian exegesis and ethics emphasizing reason and strict literalism. Socinians, in turn, denied Christ’s identity as the second person of the Trinity. It is generally understood as an early modern form of antitrinitarianism and ranks among the most controversial and incendiary theological developments of the period.

**Soteriology**

Soteriology names those theological concepts that deal with human salvation. Such topics as Christ’s atonement, predestination, election, and reprobation fall under this category.
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Biography

Russ Leo was born in Rochester, New York. After majoring in English at SUNY Fredonia he attended Duke University as a PhD candidate in the Program in Literature. At Duke University he was the recipient of a Julian Price Endowed Dissertation Research Fellowship in Humanities and History and a Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies Dissertation Fellowship. In Fall 2009 he will begin a three-year tenure as a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Princeton University Society of Fellows in the Liberal Arts.