is, of course, the very Calvin who emerges from even a cursory reading of his Institutes and other writings, and it is unfortunate that so much contemporary scholarship on Calvin must serve no other function than clearing away layers of misinformation.

Lane’s essay is concerned for the most part with extolling Calvin’s virtues as an exegete, but others approach head-on the side of Calvin’s career often minimized by his most fervent admirers. His confrontations with his opponents—among them, Anabaptists and other sects who occupied the fringes of the Reformation—are considered in depth by Luce Albert (“Calvin contre Les Phantastiques”) and Daniel Ménager (“Calvin et le Langage de ‘Libertins Spirituels’”). Albert’s and Ménager’s essays explore, respectively, the inner and outward aspects of heresy as understood by Calvin. Albert offers readers a survey of Calvin’s remarks on the psychology of heresy; for Calvin, it is the symptom of an excessive absorption in one’s own subjective states, evidence of fantasy unrestrained by the correctness of reason or scripture. Ménager considers instead, and in a manner perhaps more sympathetic to groups he labels “victimes de Calvin,” the vice Calvin imputes to the radical wing of the Reformation: a traffic in esoteric jargon that ultimately constitutes a perversion of the divine gift of language, meant for plain and guileless communication. Ménager concludes that the portraits of these groups that one finds in Calvin’s writings should perhaps not be taken too seriously. Calvin’s debt to Augustine is emphasized in Olivier Millet’s study, “Les vertus des païens dans l’Institution de la Religion Chrétienne,” and his most notorious inheritance from the Bishop of Hippo finally arrives in Cécile Huchard’s “Providentialisme Calvinien et écriture historique.” Like many contributions to this collection, it consists of almost equal parts of lengthy quotations from Calvin’s writings and scholarly commentary; what remains of the paper considers the effects of Calvin’s thinking on the nature of providence upon historians of the sixteenth century who were influenced by him. Huchard’s essay begins a series of final contributions that consider the reception of Calvin’s thought in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, most of which will be of interest to specialist readers. Jan-Dirk Müller considers the tragedies of Andreas Gryphius as responses to Calvinist political thought in the aftermath of the execution of Charles I. Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud deals briefly with the reception of Calvin’s Traité des Reliques, whose influence, as she observes, was far-reaching. The volume concludes with a valuable bibliography of writings by and about Calvin. It is hard to overstate the excellence of this collection as a whole, and the sole regret of this reviewer is that so few of his students will have good enough French to make use of it.

The Genevan School of the Prophets: The congrégations of the Company of Pastors and Their Influence in 16th Century Europe. Erik de Boer.

Reviewed by: Kirk R. MacGregor
Carthage College

In this provocative volume, Erik de Boer skillfully analyzes the self-perception, purpose, and function of the so-called congrégations, the weekly Friday meetings in which all ministers of Geneva and its neighboring villages along with any interested laypeople gathered to study the Bible. This book handles creatively and responsibly the primary sources in the forthcoming Congréagions et disputations (volume 21 of the Opera Exegetica series). Chapter 1 assesses the self-perception of the congrégations, arguing persuasively that the ministers regarded themselves as fulfilling the office of the New Testament prophet. Unlike the Old Testament “thus saith the Lord” style of prophecy, which mediated new divine
revelation to Israel, Calvin and his colleagues understood prophecy in the New Testament as the ability to interpret the scriptures in their original languages and then accommodate their message to the present situation via brief talks to a gathered assembly. On the same score, Calvin and his colleagues viewed "speaking in tongues" (1 Corinthians 14:6, 39) as the ability to speak and translate Hebrew, Greek, and possibly Latin, the three sacred languages. Chapter 2 maintains that the purpose of the *congrégations* was the preservation of "purity and concord in doctrine" among the ministers (48). Such a purpose was achieved by exegesis of biblical books in *lectio continua*, homiletical training, disputations of doctrinal propositions, and brotherly censure of the pastoral prophets who expounded scripture on the model of 1 Corinthians 14:26-33. Chapter 3 catalogues the pastors who took part in the *congrégations* and explores the topics chosen for their disputations, as often by the lay attenders as by the pastors. These topics included philosophical questions on the eternity of the creation and predestination; ethical questions on vows, lies, and the right of marriage; practical questions on whether Christians may ward off force with force; and polemical questions on persistent issues of Roman Catholic doctrine and piety.

Perhaps of greatest interest to social historians is chapter 4, which describes the presence and participation of laypeople at the *congrégations*. More than 60 percent of the approximately fifty to sixty attenders each week were laypeople, mostly artisans, schoolmasters, physicians, lawyers, and printers but also some individuals of humble status. The *congrégations* functioned to empower laypeople with the ability to ask their ministers questions on the Bible and even to challenge their scriptural interpretations in a safe environment. Hence the *congrégations" helped lay understanding and so influenced the reformation of the city" (112). Chapter 5 forms a case study of a special *congrégation*, namely, the 18 December 1551 *Consensus Genevensis* intended to reinforce the Reformed position on election among the laity during the infamous Bolsec trial. Chapters 6 through 8 explain the relationship between the discussions of the *congrégations* and Calvin's biblical commentaries. Although a tidy cause-and-effect relationship does not here emerge, it is safe to say that a symbiotic relationship existed between the two. Sometimes the insights of the prophetic speakers on various scriptures directly contributed to Calvin's commentaries. Sometimes Calvin, when a speaker, used the *congrégations* as a sounding board for partially formulated exegetical ideas in order to gain peer feedback before expounding these ideas in his commentaries. Sometimes the *congrégations* based their study of a particular biblical book on a recently published Calvin commentary, where Calvin's observations would feature prominently in the ensuing prophetic talks. Chapters 9 and 10 trace the exportation of the *congrégations* from Geneva to Reformed churches in France, Scotland, England, and the Netherlands. Whereas these instances of so-called *prophétie* proved successful for the first few decades of their existence, the fact that pastors outside Geneva did not appreciate lay participation in what they felt should essentially be their private Bible studies caused the groups eventually to die out.

This volume performs a valuable service in dispelling a common misconception of Calvin, prominent especially among Reformed and Charismatic/Pentecostal Christians. Unlike later Reformed theologians, Calvin did not believe that the prophetic office or the gift of tongues was restricted only to the apostolic age. Rather, he affirmed that both were divinely ordained mainstays in the church. Calvin differed from the sixteenth-century Spiritualists and their theological progeny in his definitions of prophecy and tongues. Though rejecting the notions that prophecy in the church age conveys fresh divine revelation and that tongues constitute private, Spirit-inspired prayer languages, Calvin asserted that,
properly understood, he and his colleagues among the Company of Pastors possessed both
gifts, which must be utilized for the strengthening of the church. In fact, De Boer success-
fully demonstrates that Calvin presented much of his preaching as prophecy, which led the
transcribers and publishers of his sermons to apply the well-known biblical injunction that
nothing was to be added or taken away from his words (Deuteronomy 4:2, 13:1; Revelation

Notwithstanding its many strong virtues, this book displays two minor defects. First, it
does not answer the seemingly pressing question of whether Calvin innovated his concepts
of prophecy and tongues or whether there exist medieval and/or early modern anteced-
ents upon which Calvin drew for these concepts. While De Boer does show that Calvin
parted company from Augustine on these concepts, there is obviously a wide gap between
Augustine and Calvin that he makes no attempt to cross. Second, the book exhibits rela-
tively infrequent but noticeable errors in spelling and grammar throughout its pages.

This reviewer heartily recommends De Boer’s book to Calvin experts and to all scholars
and students interested in the development of sixteenth-century Reformed social history.

978-2-600-01542-4.

REVIEWED BY: James R. Smither
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While Étienne Dolet (1509–46) is a familiar figure to students of the French Renaiss-
sance, much about his life and career remain elusive, in part because of his relatively brief
public career as a humanist scholar, author, Latinist turned advocate of the vernacular
French language, and publisher, and in part because of the nature of his death by public
execution on the Place Maubert in Paris, where he had been convicted of heresy. For
historian Lucien Febvre, Dolet symbolized the “problem of unbelief” in the age of Rabelais.
Literary scholars, most notably Claude Longeon, have chronicled his career more carefully,
but as the articles in this collection demonstrate, there is still a good deal that remains to
be sorted out.

The first section of the collection focuses on biographical issues. The early years of
Dolet’s life are relatively obscure. He was born in Orléans in 1509, received a humanist
education in France and Italy, served as secretary to Jean de Langeac, French ambassador to
Venice, and then studied law in Toulouse from 1532 to 1534, when he moved to Lyon and
became part of the remarkable collection of printers, editors, and authors based there. One
of Dolet’s earliest publications was a set of poems attacking Toulouse for its backwardness
and hostility to humanism and classical scholarship, but Didier Foucault contextualizes the
problem, demonstrating that most of Dolet’s difficulties at Toulouse arose from ongoing
tensions between town and gown, worsened by Dolet’s aggressive leadership of the northern
French minority in the student body, while the wealthier citizens of the town embraced clas-
sical architectural designs in building their homes, indicating that they were somewhat less
philistine in their outlook than Dolet made them out to be. Dolet seems to have arrived at
Toulouse highly regarded, quickly won friends and importance, and then worn out his wel-
come, a pattern that seems to have repeated itself multiple times in his life. His more lasting
friendships, such as those with the du Bellay brothers examined by Richard Cooper, seem
to have been conducted from a distance, and he seems to have alienated many of those with