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John Calvin and the Brethren of the Common Life

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JOHN CALVIN AND THE BRETHERN OF THE COMMON LIFE: THE ROLE OF STRASSBURG

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In an earlier issue of *AUSS*, I noted certain lines of influence by which ideals of the Brethren of the Common Life reached John Calvin early in his career in France, prior to his reform activities in Geneva.¹ This Brotherhood, a movement with whose schools both Desiderius Erasmus and Martin Luther had had direct contact, established no houses, schools, or dormitories in France. Nevertheless, Calvin there imbibed its influence in various ways, most notably during his stay at the College of Montaigu and through the Fabrisian circle of humanistic reformers.

But such contacts were neither the last nor the only means by which concepts and practices of this northern reform movement reached Calvin. In Strassburg, where the Geneva reformer made his home from 1538 to 1541 (for most of the duration between his First and Second Geneva periods) and where he pastored a group of French refugees and taught in the school system reorganized by Johann Sturm in 1538-39, he definitely felt the impact of ideals fostered by the Brotherhood. This was especially true with respect to matters of educational reform, and may have been true in other ways as well. It is the purpose of the present brief essay to outline some of the highlights of Strassburg's mediating role between the Brethren of the Common Life and Calvin.

1. *Sturm and Educational Reform*

Sturm's program of educational reform in Strassburg, instituted in the very year of Calvin's arrival, combined the various independent schools of the city into one system and utilized a "grade"

¹ See *AUSS* 13 (1975): 67-78.

or "class" structure in which students moved progressively to higher grades or classes according to their achievements. Sturm also introduced Greek into the curriculum and provided for specialization of subject matter at the two highest levels. His work along these lines has often been hailed as a pioneer achievement in the history of modern education, and the influence of that work on the system which Calvin introduced in establishing his famous Geneva Academy in 1558-59 is generally recognized.

What is often overlooked is that Sturm's educational "innovations" were really based on what he himself had learned by first-hand experience from the Brethren of the Common Life in Liège when he was exposed to their educational system during the years 1521 to 1524.² Indeed, he himself in a document dated February 24, 1538, makes this absolutely clear, for in outlining his plan for Strassburg education, he refers to the Liège pattern.³ And Liège, in turn, followed antecedents fostered, or at least influenced, by the Brotherhood, such as the school system in Deventer and John Cele's work in Zwolle.⁴

And what, precisely, was the Liège pattern to which Sturm made reference? What was it that he discovered as he attended the Brethren's school?

By 1515 the Brethren of the Common Life in Liège had been

² See esp. R. R. Post, *The Modern Devotion* (Leiden, 1968), pp. 558-567, for a treatment of the Liège Brethren and their school. In some respects, Post's work must be taken with caution for reasons indicated in my review article in *AUSS* 8 (1970): 65-76.

³ Post makes reference to this document in *The Modern Devotion*, p. 558. For the text and a more complete treatment see G. Bonet-Maury, *De opera scholastica fratrum vitae communis in Neerlandia* (Paris, 1889), pp. 89-95. Also of interest is the document outlining curriculum as given in Karl Engel, *Das Gründungsjahr des Strassburger Gymnasiums 1538-1539* ("Festschrift I," n.p., n.d.), pp. 139-140. A photostatic copy of this curricular outline has been provided in "Appendix A: 1538 Program of Sturm in Strasbourg," in Julia S. Henkel, *An Historical Study of the Educational Contributions of the Brethren of the Common Life* (Ph.D. Dissertation; University of Pittsburgh, 1962), pp. 236-237.

⁴ On the Deventer and Zwolle Brethren's educational interests and John Cele's activities, see esp. Albert Hyma, *The Brethren of the Common Life* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1950), pp. 115-116.

given control of all education in that city.⁵ This school had eight classes, and Sturm outlines the subjects taught in each. Reading, writing, and grammar were taught in the eighth, or lowest class. The ordinary university-preparatory or "gymnasium" type of instruction was given basically in classes 7 through 3. The top two classes furnished instruction similar to what might be found in university liberal arts courses, such as philosophy (Plato and Aristotle) and geometry (Euclid). Greek and rhetoric were additions to the curriculum beyond what was usual in the medieval schools. The latter two subjects were introduced at the "gymnasium" level, but continued to be taught through the 2d class. Theology was taught in the highest class.

It is not at all certain that the teaching of rhetoric at this level made its earliest appearance in Brethren-operated schools or in schools where the influence of the Brethren was significant; but it does seem that the addition of Greek to the curriculum was an innovation by the Brethren, at least in transalpine Europe. Instruction in Greek was in evidence, for example, under Alexander Hegius in Deventer before the end of the 15th century; and it seems also to have been taught in Zwolle by 1516 and in Gouda by 1521.⁶

The addition of theology as a subject at the highest level appears to be an innovation on the part of the Liège Brethren themselves. This is not to say that education generally was not religious. In that age it most certainly was, for the entire curriculum from first to last was pervaded by a basic religious concern; and particularly among the Brethren was such a religious concern in evidence. Moreover, the daily lives of students in Brethren schools or in Brethren dormitories were guided by a strong religious emphasis characterized by prayer and by the reading of Scripture and other religious literature.⁷ Nevertheless, the introduction of

⁵ For a succinct and good summary of the details (noted only very cursorily in the present essay), see Post, pp. 559-560.

⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 562.

⁷ The spiritual emphasis in Brethren houses and schools has been noted by Albert Hyma in several of his major works, including *The Brethren of the*

theology as a specific subject taught in a pre-university educational setting seems to have been an innovation by the Brethren in Liège.

The upper two classes in the Liège school provided for instruction in philosophy, geometry, law, and theology; and it is interesting to note that these are precisely the same subjects which Sturm built into the curriculum of the top two grades of his system in Strassburg. Furthermore, both Liège and Strassburg had basically an eight-grade pattern, with Greek and rhetoric introduced into the curriculum. The Strassburg plan actually refers to nine classes (in this respect somewhat similar to the Brethren's nine-grade school in Amersfoort); but the first or lowest class seems to have been a preliminary year, with the gymnasium proper beginning with the second class.⁸

Shortly before establishing his Geneva Academy, Calvin paid a return visit in 1556 to Strassburg where once again he had opportunity for first-hand observation of Sturm's educational system. Calvin's own institution utilized a nine-grade plan, wherein the training in the lowest seven classes paralleled the training traditionally given in the gymnasia.⁹ This lower division of the Academy was designated as the "schola privata." Each class in it was placed under a "regent"; but as a practical measure for actual instructional purposes, further subdivision into smaller

Common Life (see n. 4, above), and *The Christian Renaissance: A History of the "Devotio Moderna,"* 2d ed. (Hamden, Conn., 1965). In the latter publication the entire text of the original constitution of the Brethren of the Common Life at Deventer is given on pp. 441-474. This is an extremely valuable document which provides first-hand knowledge of the practices of the early Brethren.

⁸ See esp. Henkel, pp. 212-213. (On Amersfoort, see *ibid.*, pp. 68-69, 171-177; and W. van Rootselaar, *Amersfoort 777-1580* [Amersfoort, 1878], 2: 279, 354.) It seems that Sturm originally had in mind a 14-grade system, divided into nine lower classes and five upper classes; but this proposed 14-grade system he apparently never put into effect. What evidently is the main outline of its curricular content has been summarized by Hyma, *Christian Renaissance*, p. 296.

⁹ Williston Walker, *John Calvin: The Organiser of Reformed Protestantism (1509-1564)* (New York, 1908; reprint ed. with introductory bibliographical essay by John T. McNeill, 1969), pp. 365-366, gives a most useful summary, a few highlights of which are indicated herein.

groups seems to have been made. Annually there was a promotion, a sort of "graduation" of students from one class to the next. Interestingly enough, Greek was made part of the curriculum, as was the case in Liège and Strassburg.

The top two classes in Calvin's Geneva Academy were termed the "schola publica," and they provided specialized training. For these highest classes there were "public professors" of Greek, Hebrew, and Philosophy, with Calvin and Theodore Beza serving as teachers of Theology.

In total perspective, the schools of the Liège Brethren, of Sturm, and of Calvin bear striking resemblance to one another in organizational scheme and in curricular content. The similarities, particularly in the context of Calvin's well-recognized dependence upon Sturm and of Sturm's personally acknowledged use of the Liège pattern, indicate that Strassburg played a significant mediating role in impressing the Geneva Reformer with the educational ideals and practices of the Brotherhood of the Common Life.

Although this particular line of educational influence from the Brethren to Calvin is the clearest and the easiest to document, it may not have been the only manner in which the Brethren's educational concepts reached him in Strassburg. In Schlettstadt, Louis Dringenberg had begun as early as 1441 to teach according to ideals fostered by the Brethren in Deventer, where he had studied; and among products of the Schlettstadt school system were the humanist Jacob Wimpheling, who in 1501 founded a gymnasium in Strassburg, and Jerome Gebweiler, who in 1507 went to Strassburg to supervise reform of the cathedral school in the city. Moreover, when Sturm arrived in Strassburg in 1537, the two Latin schools were taught by Otto Brunfels and John Sapidus, further educators of the Schlettstadt tradition. Thus, earlier than Sturm's arrival, education in Strassburg had already been touched indirectly by influences emanating from the Brotherhood, though certainly the impact was not as sweeping as when

Sturm introduced changes based on his first-hand experience with the Brethren's school in Liège.¹⁰

2. *Bucer and Theological Concepts*

Other influences from the Brethren of the Common Life also reached Strassburg. For one thing, the important Strassburg reformer Martin Bucer had been a Dringenberg student in Schlettstadt.¹¹ Moreover, Bucer was profoundly influenced by the writings of Wessel Gansfort, a humanist who had spent most of the last two decades of his life (d. 1489) in close association with the Brethren in Deventer; and Bucer had also been led to a significant change in thinking by a personal visit of Hinne Rode, rector of the school of the Brethren in Utrecht. Indeed, it was Rode who was chiefly responsible for Bucer's adoption of the latter's well-known views on the Eucharist. Of the visit from Rode, which took place in November of 1524, the Strassburg Reformer himself has given the following account:

When the writings of Carlstadt appeared, I was forced to make an investigation. . . . I consulted Luther, who answered me in a friendly manner. . . . In the meantime there came to me a pious man, named John Rhodius. . . . Although he regards Luther as his teacher, he nevertheless owes at times more to Gansfort. I am amazed that we make so little of Gansfort.

This man Rhodius was my guest. He, with the Bible in his hands, discussed consubstantiation with me at great length. I defended Luther's view with all the force at my command, but soon noticed that I could not meet his arguments, and that one cannot maintain the view I sought to uphold, if one adheres to the Bible as the final authority. So I had to relinquish my own view on Christ's physical presence, although I was still in doubt as to the meaning of the words ["This is my body"]. Carlstadt, for more than one reason, could not satisfy me.¹²

It may be of interest to note that Carlstadt had very likely been influenced toward his views on the Lord's Supper by a brief document on the Eucharist written by Cornelius Hoen, an

¹⁰ On the role of Schlettstadt, and for information of the kind that is furnished in the present paragraph, see esp. Hyma, *Christian Renaissance*, pp. 284, 287-288.

¹¹ See *ibid.*, p. 287.

¹² As given in English translation by Albert Hyma, *Martin Luther and the Luther Film of 1953* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1957), pp. 186-187. For further details of the meeting between Hoen and Bucer, as well as for general background, see *ibid.*, pp. 181-190, and Hyma, *Christian Renaissance*, pp. 285-286.

earlier product of the Utrecht Brethren's school, of which Rode was rector. Rode apparently carried this document with him as he made his contacts, not only with Bucer in 1524, but also with Oecolampadius in Basel and with Zwingli in Zurich in 1523.¹³

As for Calvin, it is well known that his theological focus and church administrative insights were significantly sharpened through association with Bucer in Strassburg during the years 1538-1541, even though the basic direction and content of the Geneva Reformer's religious and church-organizational concepts had been developed earlier. As for Calvin's already keen interest in the Eucharist, this was augmented at this time, if his expanded attention to the subject in his second edition of the *Institutes* as well as the production of his *Small Treatise on the Holy Supper* can be taken as evidence.¹⁴ It has been suggested, as well, that Calvin's mature views on justification and on predestination were mediated to him through Bucer, who in turn had gained insights on these matters from northern reformers such as Gansfort and Rode.¹⁵ Indeed, one expert in the field has even declared that "Hinne Rode was more of a 'Calvinist' in 1520 than Calvin was in 1535!"¹⁶

3. In Conclusion

It may be well, in concluding, to reiterate a word of caution similar to that given in the previous essay; namely, that we

¹³ See Hyma, *Martin Luther*, pp. 185-186.

¹⁴ The *Petit Traicté de la Sainte Cene* was prepared in Strassburg, although it was not actually published until 1541, after Calvin's return to Geneva. Its place of publication was the latter city. Walker, p. 230, feels that in Calvin's attention to the Eucharist in his 2d edition of the *Institutes* (1539), as well as in the *Petit Traicté*, there is an irenic spirit; and the very language Walker uses in this regard cannot but make one conclude that somehow Calvin derived this conciliatory sort of attitude from Bucer. In a somewhat different vein, and in dealing with a broader sweep of religious practices and theological concepts, Hyma, *Christian Renaissance*, p. 287, indicates that in a number of particulars, Calvin took with him, when he left Strassburg in 1541, "the local [Strassburg] views." Among items which Hyma notes are such matters as church organization, the use of Psalms in the church service, church-state relations, justification by faith, the Eucharist, etc.

¹⁵ See Hyma, *Christian Renaissance*, pp. 282-288.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

must take care not to overemphasize the role which the Brotherhood of the Common Life may have had in molding Calvin's religious thought and practice.¹⁷ Certainly Calvin absorbed numerous influences from many directions. Nevertheless, his stay at the Montaigu in Paris, his contact with the Fabrisian circle of reformers, and his association with Sturm and Bucer in Strassburg surely were among the more significant avenues through which ideals and concepts fostered by the Brethren of the Common Life did indeed reach him.

Perhaps the most striking, as well as the most clearly demonstrable, line of influence from this Brotherhood to him was that pertaining to educational reforms. Moreover, it was an area of activity that brought well-deserved recognition both to the Brethren themselves and to Calvin. The fame which the Brethren achieved as educators is quite aptly illustrated, for example, in a statement made by the Belgian Jesuit Miraeus about the middle of the 16th century: "Does not the Society of Jesus, following the example of the Brethren, open schools throughout the whole world?"¹⁸ Calvin, on the other hand, did not personally, of course, "open schools throughout the whole world"; but his Geneva Academy soon became "world famous," and its influence reached truly afar. To it and from it streamed a multitude of reform leaders and educators of various European countries—reform leaders and educators who not only carried with them Calvin's Protestant theology of Geneva, but who also fostered and disseminated various spiritual and educational ideals which had, in reality, come to Calvin from that northern reform movement known as the Brotherhood of the Common Life.¹⁹

¹⁷ See *AUSS* 13 (1975): 78.

¹⁸ Quoted in Marcel Godet, *La congrégation de Montaigu (1490-1580)* (Paris, 1912), p. 107, n. (continuation of n. 1, p. 106).

¹⁹ Walker, pp. 366-367, has a useful section on the impact which Calvin's Geneva Academy had from the very first. He points out that in its earliest three years, its students included Florent Chrestien, tutor of Henry IV of France; Thomas Bodley, founder of the Bodleian Library in Oxford; Francis Junius, of University of Leiden fame; and other individuals who have gained significant historical renown.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CALVIN AND THE INFLUENCE OF
THE BRETHERN OF THE COMMON LIFE IN FRANCE

KENNETH A. STRAND

The foregoing article is the second (and concluding) one in my treatment of John Calvin in relationship to the Brethren of the Common Life. The earlier article, in *AUSS* 13 (Spring 1975): 67-78, dealt primarily with (1) the direct influence of the Brotherhood upon Calvin at the College of Montaigu, and (2) the Brotherhood's indirect influence on Calvin through the Fabrisian circle of humanists (including Lefèvre d'Étaples himself). Since the time when I prepared the manuscript for that first article, a valuable book dealing with Calvin's "spirituality" and the roots of that "spirituality" has appeared: Lucien Joseph Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin* (Atlanta, 1974). Because of the importance of this publication, brief attention to it will be given here, specifically in certain matters that relate to the theme of my own earlier article.

First of all, it should be noted that Richard's work takes basically the form of a theological analysis whereas my presentation was more historical in its emphasis. Richard not only deals with salient features of Calvin's thought, however, but also analyzes major thrusts of various forerunners, including the *Devotio Moderna* (of which the Brethren of the Common life formed a central component), Jean Gerson, Francesco Petrarch, Erasmus, and Lefèvre (pp. 12-77). His careful analysis does much toward uncovering—or at least toward pointing in the direction of—various strains of late medieval thought which informed Calvin's "spirituality."

With regard to the *Devotio Moderna*, Richard's summaries of the "inward" type of spirituality evidenced in works by early leaders and writers of the movement (see his pp. 13-39) are basically correct, and they provide a useful compendium for quick reference. Also, he properly acknowledges the influence of this movement in France (see pp. 32, 48-49).

His treatment of the *Devotio* is somewhat imbalanced, however, by his stress on the supposed "anti-intellectualism" and "asceticism" of that movement. His conclusions in this regard seem based largely on his analysis of a relatively few works of devotional type, with special emphasis on the Thomas à Kempis version of the *Imitation of Christ*

(which admittedly reflects the attitude which Richard discerns).¹ But was the "inwardness" of the *Devotio Moderna* really as anti-intellectual and as ascetic as Richard has assumed? Constitutions of early Brother-houses, plus evidence regarding the Brethren's educational work and their book-copying and printing activities—these would seem to indicate otherwise.² One may wonder if Richard has not been unduly influenced by the monumental work of R. R. Post, *The Modern Devotion* (Leiden, 1968), which too tends to minimize the intellectual attitudes and activities of the Brethren.³

Richard seems to feel that an "Erasmian" humanistic influence in France brought theology and spirituality together there, whereas the *Devotio Moderna* had separated the two by its depreciation of the intellectual and theological.⁴ In this regard two important questions must be asked: (1) Was the Erasmian influence as great in France as

¹ Even the *Imitation* itself had appeared in earlier versions that were less anti-intellectual, ascetic, and monastically inclined. For an excellent discussion of this matter, see Albert Hyma, *The Brethren of the Common Life* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1950), pp. 145-194, and also Hyma's English translation of Book I of the *Imitation* as found in the Eutin manuscript: *The Imitation of Christ by Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1950).

² Michael Schoengen has published the early Zwolle constitution in his *Jacobus Traiecti alias de Voecht narratio . . .* (Amsterdam, 1908), pp. 239-273. More readily accessible is the Deventer constitution edited by A. Hyma and included in his *The Christian Renaissance: A History of the "Devotio Moderna"* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1924), pp. 440-474, and reprinted in K. A. Strand, ed., *The Dawn of Modern Civilization: Studies in Renaissance, Reformation and Other Topics Presented to Honor Albert Hyma* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1962, 1964), pp. 361-395 (hereafter cited as *Dawn*), as well as in the 2d ed., enlarged, of *The Christian Renaissance* (Hamden, Conn., 1965), pp. 440-474. The basic treatment of the educational work of the Brethren of the Common Life is Julia S. Henkel, *An Historical Study of the Educational Contributions of the Brethren of the Common Life* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1962); and she has also provided important highlights of this educational work in "School Organizational Patterns of the Brethren of the Common Life," in *Dawn*, pp. 323-338 (reprinted in K. A. Strand, ed., *Essays on the Northern Renaissance* [Ann Arbor, Mich., 1968], pp. 35-50). For a brief but rather comprehensive survey of the printing interests and activities of the Brethren, see my chapter "The Brethren of the Common Life and Fifteenth-Century Printing: A Brief Survey," in *Dawn*, pp. 341-355 (reprinted in *Essays on the Northern Renaissance*, pp. 51-64), and also cf. works cited therein.

³ See my review of Post in *AUSS* 8 (1970): 65-76.

⁴ Two striking quotations from Richard will suffice to illustrate the point: "It is in this new vision of theology that Erasmus' original contribution was made. It is here also that he differed most from the *Devotio Moderna*. Instead of abandoning theology as being a distraction to the spiritual life,

Richard assumes? (2) Was this influence so diametrically opposite to that of the *Devotio*?

Though admitting that Erasmus himself surely did make an important impact on French humanism, we may wonder whether that impact has not been overestimated by Richard—at least with respect to the earliest French humanists. First of all, the various early transalpine humanists tended to draw on *common sources*, such as Italian humanism, and *both* Erasmus and Lefèvre imbibed of influences from the *Devotio Moderna* as well (historical realities recognized by Richard). Second, there was interaction also among early Northern humanists themselves, whether Dutch, French, German, or English—but the process generally was indeed one of *interaction* rather than one-way borrowing (a matter evidently not so readily discerned by Richard). In any event, the following statement by Richard is quite jolting: “A majority of the French Humanists born around 1490 were Erasmusians, men like Lefèvre d’Etaples, Guillaume Budé and others” (p. 57). Lefèvre was born about 1455 (if not earlier), and he had studied classics and had also visited Italy a number of years before Erasmus first began manifesting humanistic interests! And even Budé, born in 1467, was a young adult by 1490, as well as probably being slightly senior in age to Erasmus (if Erasmus was born in 1469, his more likely birth year than the alternatively suggested 1466).

The crucial question that needs attention here, however, is whether or not Richard is correct in his concept that Lefèvre, through Erasmus’s influence, worked to “breach the separation between theology and spirituality” (p. 70) *in contrast to* a separation which presumably the *Devotio Moderna* had made in this respect. Richard recognizes that Lefèvre was “deeply influenced by the *Devotio Moderna*” too, and he properly states that this fact has been “conclusively demonstrated by L. Salley [actually, C. Louise Salley]” (p. 69). But Salley’s work, called to attention in my earlier article, reveals that the *Devotio Moderna* nourished Lefèvre’s religious thought in *very much the same way* in which Richard declares that Erasmus did! It is unfortunate that Richard apparently had access only to the abstract of Salley’s Ph.D. dissertation, not to the dissertation itself, nor even to Salley’s extensive chapter in the Albert Hyma Festschrift

Erasmus integrated theology into it” (p. 67). “But although in continuity with the *Devotio Moderna* in many of its tenets, the spirituality of the French humanists differed from the *Devotio Moderna* in its most original contribution: its integration of the intellectual and spiritual life. This integration of theology and spirituality began under the influence of Erasmus and resulted in the elaboration of a *docta pietas*” (p. 73).

volume *The Dawn of Modern Civilization*.⁵ Moreover, if Richard had dealt more broadly with both Erasmus and the Devotio, the distinction which he has made between the influence of Erasmus and that of the Devotio would certainly be blurred, if not obliterated.⁶

The Northern humanists generally (including Erasmus) and the Devotio both looked back to ancient sources for religious thought as well as for practice, a fact rightly stressed by Richard for Erasmus but apparently not given due consideration by him for the Devotio. However, as far as purely *theological* interests are concerned, we may go a step further: Although both the humanists and the Brethren of the Common Life tended to decry finespun scholastic argumentation, the latter appear to have been more open toward scholastic theology than were the humanists, if the kinds of books used and disseminated by the Brethren may be used as any sort of criterion in this regard.⁷ And in the same connection, one may ponder also the fact that a staunch and conservative theologian Noel Beda, who attacked the Fabrisian reformers, could quite readily be the successor of his mentor Jean Standonck (a disciple of the Brethren of the Common Life) as head of the College of Montaigu. Would such a facile transition have been possible if Beda's predecessor had been a humanist of the

⁵ Her extensive chapter, "Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples: Heir of the Dutch Reformers of the Fifteenth Century," appears in *Dawn*, pp. 75-124.

⁶ Richard's analysis of Erasmus's thought, careful as this analysis is (see his pp. 57-69), rests too heavily on a rather limited range of that humanist's works, especially the *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* (important as that work certainly was in France); certain other major productions of Erasmus, such as the *Praise of Folly* and *Familiar Colloquies*, have been more or less bypassed. As for Richard's treatment of the Devotio Moderna, materials of the kind mentioned earlier in this "Additional Note" (see the references in n. 2, above) would have provided a more adequate and accurate perspective than was obtainable from his attention so exclusively to a limited number of works of devotional type.

Even his treatment of certain pioneer leaders of the Devotio who were responsible for some of these devotional works seems, however, to suffer somewhat too. For instance, Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen (d. 1398), whose *De Reformatione Virium Animae* and *De Spiritualibus Ascensionibus* Richard summarizes quite fairly, surely deserves more recognition for scholarship than what Richard grants him. (Thomas à Kempis, e.g., wrote of Zerbolt in *Vita Ger. Sutph.*, par. 6, that the "scholars and great writers gave him high praise for his learning.")

⁷ See my chapter in *Dawn*, referred to in n. 2, above, and the sources called to attention in that chapter. Works by scholastic theologians, such as Anselm of Canterbury and Bonaventura, were among the kinds of books in which the Brethren of the Common Life took an interest.

"Erasmian" or "Fabrisian" sort? (Then too, there is the case of nominalist theologian Gabriel Biel, who was actually a leader of the Brethren in Upper-Rhenish Germany.⁸)

Finally, a word must be said about Richard's concluding remarks. He states that Calvin's spirituality "differed radically from the *Devotio Moderna* on three essential points: it was a spirituality of service within the world; it was accompanied by a new religious epistemology which made possible a reinterpretation of ecclesiological models and laid sound foundations for individualism in spirituality; and it asserted the inner unity of Christian life and theology" (p. 174). On all three counts, Calvin's spirituality was more similar to, than different from, the emphases of the *Devotio Moderna*. Especially in connection with the first of Richard's three "essential points" of difference, it may be pertinent to add here a fact aptly called to attention by Albert Hyma:

Unlike many of the monks, the Brethren of the Common Life, with rare exception, preferred a busy life of "good works" in the cities to peaceful meditation in the country. "We have decided," wrote the brethren at Zwolle in 1415, "to live in cities, in order that we may be able to give advice and instruction to clerics and other persons who wish to serve the Lord."⁹

The foregoing analysis of Richard's publication is not intended to be a comprehensive review, nor should the questions I have raised be allowed to detract from the real worth of this book. I have dealt specifically with issues relating to the topic treated in my own article on the Brethren's possible impact on Calvin in France; and in this matter, Richard's work has failed to take into account several important matters. However, it is well to repeat here two cautions set forth in my original article: (1) the need to take care, in harmony with Salley's suggestion, not to consider Lefèvre as a "Protestant before the Reformation"; and (2) the necessity to remember, as I emphasized (reiterated also in my second article), that both "Lefèvre and Calvin were certainly influenced by factors from more than one direction," the latter's religious development being "especially complex."¹⁰

Richard's work is valuable in that it cuts new ground in the per-

⁸ William M. Landeen has treated Gabriel Biel in a number of publications. For a brief summary of pertinent information, see Landeen's article "Biel, Gabriel" in *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 1: 161-162.

⁹ A. Hyma, *Renaissance to Reformation* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1951), p. 131.

¹⁰ *AUSS* 13 (1975): 77-78.

spective from which it presents and analyzes various important aspects of Calvin's theology. But it is important too, as indicated earlier, in pointing toward some of the varied medieval backgrounds which informed and nurtured Calvin's "spirituality."¹¹ (A more general review of Richard's *The Spirituality of John Calvin* will appear in the "Book Reviews" section of a forthcoming issue of AUSS. This will take note particularly of several pertinent matters not dealt with in the foregoing discussion.)

¹¹ On p. 51, above, I have indicated the main "forerunners" mentioned by Richard. His analysis could probably well have been expanded to include Nicholas of Cusa (1401-64), whose work influenced Lefèvre; and in my own article too, perhaps at least a passing reference to this important cleric would have been appropriate.

Indeed, as early as 1490 Lefèvre was acquainted with Nicholas of Cusa's writings. The latter, in turn, had been influenced by the Brethren of the Common Life, having attended school in Deventer and also having had later contacts with the Devotio Moderna. Shortly before his death, he provided funds for the establishment of a dormitory in Deventer, where the pupils were to dress like the Brethren. See Hyma, *Christian Renaissance*, p. 262, for these and other details.