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# After Calvin

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*Studies in the Development  
of a Theological Tradition*



RICHARD A. MULLER

After Calvin

OXFORD STUDIES IN HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

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## Preface

The essays in this volume were researched and written in the course of some two decades of study on the subjects of the thought of the Reformers of the sixteenth century and their relationship to the later forms of Reformed thought identified by the terms “orthodoxy” and “scholasticism.” With one exception beyond the new introduction and afterword, earlier versions of these essays have appeared previously—all of these older studies, however, have been reviewed, bibliographies updated, and arguments recast for the sake of the shape and direction of this book. The earliest of the group, “The Debate over the Vowel-Points and the Crisis in Orthodox Hermeneutics,” dates from 1980, the most recent, “Protestant Scholasticism: Methodological Issues and Problems in the Study of Its Development,” now a section of chapter 2, from 1999. Both in their subject matter and in their actual composition they parallel and supplement the research and writing that eventuated in a series of independent monographs, namely, *Christ and the Decree* (1986), *God, Creation, and Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius* (1991), *The Unaccommodated Calvin* (2000), and *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1720*, volumes 1 (1987), 2 (1994), and 3–4 (2003). Although, moreover, the conclusions of these studies have consistently enlightened the research that contributed to the larger monographs, virtually none of the material found here was incorporated in full in any of the book-length studies.

Both in form and substance, the essays in this volume stand as a sequel to *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* and as a methodological statement in parallel with the *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* volumes. I have indicated the relationship to the book on Calvin in the subtitle, *Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition*. Where *The Unaccommodated Calvin* attempts to look at Calvin’s theological works in their historical context and to strip away various twentieth-century theological grids that have clouded our perceptions of the work of the Reformer, these essays carry the approach forward in an attempt to overcome a series of nineteenth- and twentieth-century theological grids characteristic of much of the scholarship on Reformed orthodoxy or what one might less accurately call “Calvinism after Calvin.”

The opportunity to revise and edit these essays has enabled me not only to update the bibliography and, as that has proceeded, to work with the insights of more recent scholarship, it also has pressed me, particularly when recasting the older essays, to raise the question of method from the perspective of several decades spent learning the subject. I have been able to remind myself just how much my own approach to the material has changed, particularly with reference to the establishment of a context of interpretation. My earliest work, whether articles written between 1978 and 1987 or the initial monograph, *Christ and the Decree*, recognized the necessity of identifying medieval backgrounds, noting the relative lack of originality in many of the doctrinal statements of the Reformers and their successors, and examining a fairly broad spectrum of writers in a given era in order to begin to grasp the meaning of texts. From the outset, I saw the need to resist both nineteenth- and twentieth-century doctrinal constructs as keys to understanding sixteenth-century texts and the need to do more than simply read a basic text—such as Calvin’s *Institutes* or Theodore Beza’s *Tabula*—in order to find its meaning.

In several of the essays in this group, including in the monograph, I was consistently pressed to come to grips with what might be called collateral histories or intellectual contexts needed to interpret the religious or theological works: namely, the patterns of biblical interpretation brought about by the Renaissance and Reformation, including trajectories in the interpretation of particular biblical texts; and developments and changes in the study of philosophy, logic, and rhetoric, particularly as these impinged on issues of method and argument in theological works. Certainly some of these accents were brought to bear in the studies of theological prolegomena and of the doctrine of Scripture that appeared between 1987 and 1996, reaching some sort of a conclusion in the long essay on “Calvin and the Calvinists,” found in this volume. There, I attempted to lay out a series of methodological issues standing in the way of much of the older scholarship on the subject of Protestant orthodoxy—many of those issues being directly related to the refusal of the scholarship to deal with the broader contexts in which the individual documents had been written, the international religious-theological-philosophical community of dialogue and debate within which the various documents were produced, the genre and intention of the documents themselves, and the simple fact that none of the documents was produced in order to set the terms of debate, whether positive or negative, for various twentieth-century theological movements.

Identification of the broader contexts from a methodological perspective has been a central concern of my more recent work, most clearly expressed in *The Unaccommodated Calvin* and in the methodological proposals found in the second chapter of this volume. This question of context is basic to the reappraisal of the course of Protestant thought in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries both in view of the layers of bias, misrepresentation, and theologized readings of the era that have to be stripped away in order access the intellectual history of the Reformation and post-Reformation eras and in view of perhaps more fundamental question of the nature and viability of intellectual history as a field of inquiry. Specifically, the more recent studies have raised the question of what precisely frames the individual writings and teachings—is the context a contemporary polemic; is it the immediately intended audience whether in the classroom of an academy or university, in a service of worship, in a broader discussion or debate; is it a regional issue or debate, a national matter, or an international religious question; is it a trajectory of interpretation of a text of Scripture bounded less by issues

in the immediate social or political context of the writer than by perennial questions of meaning—or does the seemingly perennial question receive an answer dictated by a particular moment; is the context identified by collateral questions arising from philosophy, political, or even the literary and editorial concerns of an author? Quite simply, the framework for understanding a theological point may not be entirely theological—just as the intention of an author in organizing a more systematic treatise may be academic, traditionary, or literary and editorial, relating more to the chosen genre of the document than to a highly specified dogmatic interest.

Finally, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to the colleagues and friends who have made this work possible and who, at various stages in its production, have offered both help and encouragement. Among those to whom the greatest thanks must go is David C. Steinmetz, first my doctoral mentor, more recently a most supportive colleague, always a friend, and by way of his lectures on the scholastic distinctions of late medieval theology, the *causa proxima et instrumentalis* of my abiding interest in things scholastic. To my colleagues at the University of Utrecht, in the *Onderzoeksgroep Oude Gereformeerde Theologie*, and in the conference that led to the volume on *Reformation and Scholasticism*, I express a profound appreciation, both for the ongoing dialogue that we have had concerning sixteenth- and seventeenth-century thought and for their consistent efforts to refine this field of investigation. I must mention here Willem van Asselt, Eef Dekker, and Anton Vos. My thanks also to Carl Trueman, with whom I have discussed many of the issues addressed in the following pages and who read through several of the chapters and offered sound critique and significant advice. To him go thanks not only for these direct efforts on behalf of the manuscript but also for an ongoing and fruitful dialogue that extends now over half a decade. My graduate assistant Gregory Schuringa read through the penultimate manuscript with great care and offered significant help in producing the final draft for publication.

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# Contents

1. Approaches to Post-Reformation Protestantism: Reframing the Historiographical Question, 3

## Part I. Reframing the Phenomenon—Definition, Method, and Assessment

2. Scholasticism and Orthodoxy in the Reformed Tradition: Definition and Method, 25
3. *Ad fontes argumentorum*: The Sources of Reformed Theology in the Seventeenth Century, 47
4. Calvin and the “Calvinists”: Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities between the Reformation and Orthodoxy, Part 1, 63
5. Calvin and the “Calvinists”: Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities between the Reformation and Orthodoxy, Part 2, 81

## Part II. Scholastic Protestantism—Foundational Perspectives

6. *Calling, Character, Piety, and Learning: Paradigms for Theological Education in the Era of Protestant Orthodoxy*, 105
7. *Vera Philosophia cum sacra Theologia nusquam pugnat*: Keckermann on Philosophy, Theology, and the Problem of Double Truth, 122
8. Scholasticism Protestant and Catholic: Francis Turretin on the Object and Principles of Theology, 137
9. The Debate over the Vowel Points and the Crisis in Orthodox Hermeneutics, 146
10. Henry Ainsworth and the Development of Protestant Exegesis in the Early Seventeenth Century, 156
11. The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Orthodoxy: A Study in the Theology of Herman Witsius and Wilhelmus à Brakel, 175

Afterword, 191

Notes, 195

Index, 259

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## *Approaches to Post-Reformation Protestantism*

### Reframing the Historiographical Question

Scholarly perspectives on the phenomenon of post-Reformation Protestantism have altered dramatically in the last three decades. Studies of the Reformed or Calvinistic theology of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries written before 1970 or even 1975 tended to pose the Reformation against Protestant orthodoxy or, in the phraseology then common to the discussion, “Calvin against the Calvinists.” This rather radical dichotomy between the thought of the great Reformer and even his most immediate successors—notably, Theodore Beza—was constructed around a particular set of highly theologized assumptions, concerning the Reformation and Protestant orthodoxy, humanism and scholasticism, piety and dogma. At the heart of the dichotomizing argument was a contrast between the “biblical humanism” and christological piety of John Calvin and the Aristotelian scholasticism and predestinarian dogmatizing of nearly all of the later Reformed theologians, the sole exceptions being those who followed out the humanistic patterns of Calvin’s thought into fundamentally antischolastic modes of thought.<sup>1</sup>

Since that time, this view has been increasingly challenged and the attempt to offer a balanced, historically couched as distinct from theologically or even dogmatically-controlled account of the later Protestant development has proceeded on several fronts.<sup>2</sup> The essays in this volume provide a point of entry into the scholarship of reappraisal, whether from the perspective of the basic definitions of the terms and issues (such as “scholasticism” and “orthodoxy” in the Protestant context), from the perspective of the historiographical problems encountered by the study of post-Reformation Protestantism, or from the perspective of selected examples of Protestant thought as it developed into the era of orthodoxy.

There is, moreover, a similarity in method and approach between the scholarship that has begun to reappraise the transition from Reformation to post-Reformation era thought and the scholarship that, shortly before, had launched a reappraisal of the transition from the later Middle Ages to the Reformation. Specifically, the reappraisal of Protestant scholasticism has been attentive to studies of late medieval scholasticism, both in view of the definitions of the scholastic enterprise developed by scholars of the Middle Ages and Renaissance and in view of the more nuanced conception of “forerunners” of the Reformation arising out of studies of the thought of the fourteenth and fifteenth

centuries. Thus, scholarship on medieval thought has consistently identified “scholasticism” as a method of discourse used in the schools and universities, applicable to nearly all disciplines. So, too, has scholarship identified humanism as fundamentally related to method and to philology rather than to a particular philosophical or theological perspective.<sup>3</sup> Given these definitions, moreover, the nature of the conflict between humanists and scholastics has been reassessed.<sup>4</sup> On the second point, concerning the identification of “forerunners of the Reformation,” a newer scholarship has set aside the examination of reformist rebels, notably John Wyclif, Jan Hus, and Girolamo Savonarola, and sought out currents of thought, and series of issues and problems, that track from the later Middle Ages into the Reformation. The result of this investigation has been to identify a host of thinkers—such as Thomas Bradwardine, Gregory of Rimini, or Wessel Gansfort—virtually none of them rebels and nearly all of them belonging to identifiable traditions within medieval thought, whose positions and arguments led positively toward the Reformation.<sup>5</sup>

Applied to the study of the transition from Reformation to post-Reformation Protestantism, these conclusions concerning the later Middle Ages yield both a revision of the notion of scholasticism and a rethinking of the ways in which continuity and discontinuity of development ought to be charted. On the one hand, the scholasticism of the late sixteenth and of the seventeenth centuries, like the scholasticism of the medieval period, is understood more as a method than as a content. The claim of an intrinsic relationship between the rise of scholasticism among Protestants and the creation of a highly speculative and rigidly predestinarian theology can no longer be maintained. Understood as a method, scholasticism evidences an institutionalization of Protestant thought in its academies and universities, not the rise of a specific doctrinal perspective. On the other hand, the use of particular writers or documents as emblematic of a new theology—the most notable instance being Beza’s *Tabula praedestinationis*—simply doesn’t function as a method for approaching the diverse and varied materials of the developing Protestant theology.<sup>6</sup> In other words, leaping from Calvin’s *Institutes* of 1559, to Beza’s 1555 *Tabula*, to the Canons of the Synod of Dort (1618–1619), and thence to Francis Turretin’s *Institutio theologiae elencticae* (1679–1685), merely for the sake of documenting the scholastic elaboration of the Reformed doctrine of predestination, overlooks different historical contexts, different issues addressed, contrasting literary genres, and vast numbers of intervening events. The result is a simplistic and flawed picture of post-Reformation thought.

### The Course of Orthodoxy: A Brief Chronology

The “orthodox” or “scholastic” era of Protestantism extends for nearly two centuries past the Reformation—a phase of the intellectual development of Protestantism that stands some three times the length of the Reformation. Like the Reformation itself, the era of orthodoxy both drew on and worked to set aside its medieval heritage. Also like the Reformation it both participated in and confronted the shift in European consciousness that belonged to the early modern era.

For convenience of discussion, the span of the post-Reformation era can be divided into four somewhat vaguely defined periods: early orthodoxy, in two phases (ca. 1565–

1618–1640), one leading toward, the other following the Synod of Dort; high orthodoxy, also in two phases (ca. 1640–1685–1725), the former developing the orthodoxy of the confessions in considerable detail both positive and polemical, the latter phase characterized by deconfessionalization and transition; and late orthodoxy (ca. 1725–1770). These periods correspond with the initial framing and formulation of orthodoxy, the large-scale elaboration of the theology, and the decline of the movement in the eighteenth century. The beginnings of Protestant orthodoxy were, certainly, in the Reformation itself, both in normative confessions of the early Reformers, such as the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, the Tetrapolitan Confession, and the First Helvetic Confession, and in the major theological treatises of the great Reformers, particularly those who are counted as second-generation codifiers, works such as Philip Melancthon's *Loci communes*, John Calvin's *Institutes*, Heinrich Bullinger's *Decades*, or Wolfgang Musculus's and Peter Martyr Vermigli's *Loci communes*. Largely in the seventh decade of the sixteenth century, a significant shift took place, however, marking the beginnings of the early orthodox era: at approximately the same time, the larger number of major national confessions appeared and the majority of the significant second-generation codifiers died. Thus, the Gallican Confession (1559), the Scots Confession (1560), the Belgic Confession (1561), the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (1563), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and the Second Helvetic Confession (1566)—and among the major codifiers, Philip Melancthon (d. 1560), Jan à Lasco (d. 1560), Peter Martyr Vermigli (d. 1562), Wolfgang Musculus (d. 1563), John Calvin (d. 1564), Andreas Hyperius (d. 1564), Guillelme Farel (d. 1565), Pierre Viret (d. 1571), and Heinrich Bullinger (d. 1575). The transition to early orthodoxy occurred, therefore, not as a major shift in ethos or direction but as the transition from one generation to another and, specifically, as the transition from the work of a group of thinkers who produced the fundamental Reformed confessional and theological perspective to the work of another group of thinkers whose theology tended to develop within the confessional boundaries and along trajectories of argument set by the writers of the second generation.

The one slight exception in the roster of documents and names just noted is the Heidelberg Catechism, written in large part by Zacharias Ursinus. Although its date of composition places it among the major national confessional documents that together constitute the confessional codification of Reformed teaching, its primary author, together with various advisors such as Caspar Olevianus and Petrus Boquinus, belongs to the next generation of the Reformed. The catechism itself, and especially as augmented by Ursinus's catechetical lectures, stands as a founding document of the early orthodox era. The first phase of early orthodoxy comes to a close with the deaths of a significant series of third- and fourth-generation codifiers and the beginnings of the Arminian controversy: Franciscus Junius (d. 1602), William Perkins (d. 1602), Theodore Beza (d. 1605), Gulielmus Bucanus (d. 1603), Thomas Cartwright (d. 1603), the Lucas Trelcatius Jr. (d. 1607), Jacob Arminius (d. 1609), Bartholomaeus Keckermann (d. 1609), and Amandus Polanus (d. 1610).

We can, therefore, mark a transition from the initial phase of early orthodoxy to the second phase at the time of the Arminian controversy—and the involvement in doctrinal debate of a largely new roster of theologians: Franciscus Gomarus, Antonius Walaeus, Johann Polyander, John Davenant, Johannes Maccovius, and others. In the Arminian controversy (ca. 1605–1619), the confessional settlement of the mid-sixteenth century,

together with the various trajectories of Reformed thought emanating from the second generation and elaborated by the writers of the close of the sixteenth century, were defended and further institutionalized by the canons or theological definitions promulgated at the international Reformed Synod of Dort in 1618–1619.

After the promulgation of the Canons of Dort and the other Reformed confessional statements of the early seventeenth century,<sup>7</sup> there was a gradual transition to the high orthodox era, defined primarily by the passing of the larger number of Reformed writers who either sat at the Synod of Dort or whose thought matured in the early seventeenth century. This second phase of early orthodoxy (1618–1640) follows the publication of the significant later confessional documents—the Irish Articles (1615), the Confession of Sigismund (1614), the Brandenburg Confession (1615), the Canons of Dort (1619)—that marked out the confessional beginnings of the so-called Second Reformation in northern Europe. This phase of early orthodoxy also corresponds roughly with the religious phases of the Thirty Years' War. By the end of the second phase of early orthodoxy, all of the major theologians of the era of the Synod of Dort were dead or close to the end of their careers: Sibrandus Lubbertus (d. 1625), Matthias Martinius (d. 1630), Benedict Turretin (d. 1631), William Ames (d. 1633), Franciscus Gomarus (d. 1641), Antonius Walaeus (d. 1639), Johann Heinrich Alsted (d. 1638), John Davenant (d. 1641), Samuel Ward (d. 1643), Johannes Maccovius (d. 1644), and Johann Polyander (d. 1646). In addition, by 1640, other controversies, notably those over various teachings of the School of Saumur, were beginning to spread beyond France and to become major issues of debate in the broader Reformed community.

High orthodoxy (ca. 1640–1685–1725) can be defined as the era of post- and intra-confessional conflict as well as the time of the full development and codification of the Protestant orthodox theology in the face of various newer adversaries. The first phase of the high orthodox development was a time of theological development and of the framing of the full, confessional theology in its disputative and scholastic as well as positive, didactic, and catechetical forms. It also was an era of what can be called postconfessional or intraconfessional conflict, in which the process of fully formulating and then teaching the now detailed positions of Reformed orthodoxy brought new and highly defined internal conflicts to the movement: this is the era of the spread of the Amyraldian controversy and of debates with other theologians of the school of Saumur, of the controversy over Cocceian federalism and the eventual absorption of many elements of the federal perspective into the basic model of Reformed orthodoxy. In addition, in this era, the Reformed encountered the full implications of the Socinian challenge and faced questions concerning the development of theology in relation to the new rationalist philosophies, Cartesianism and Spinozism.

There is good reason to mark the end of one phase of high orthodoxy and the beginning of another circa 1685. Certainly, many of the major formulators of the fully developed Reformed orthodoxy had passed or were passing from the scene—Johannes Cocceius (d. 1669), Samuel Maresius (d. 1673), Gisbertus Voetius (d. 1676), Stephen Charnock (d. 1680), John Owen (d. 1683), and Francis Turretin (d. 1687). The revocation of the Edict of Nantes occurred in 1685, signaling a disastrous cultural and social moment for the continental Reformed communities and their theology—and 1685 also signaled the beginnings of the massive British trinitarian controversy that began in debate over Bishop Bull's *Defensio fidei nicaenae*, continued with Sherlock's attempt to restate orthodoxy,

and moved through various stages, including the debate over Samuel Clarke's theology,<sup>8</sup> lingering on into the second decade of the eighteenth century.

Given the difficulty of identifying a clear ending to the high orthodox era and the fairly clear breakdown of the major confessional models both on the continent of Europe and in Britain around 1725, many of the older histories of Protestant thought have identified an era of transition and deconfessionalization (ca. 1685 to ca. 1725), prior to the beginnings of the late orthodox era.<sup>9</sup> One might reasonably include these several decades in the declining years of the high orthodox era, inasmuch as many of the major theologians who published and taught between 1685 and 1725, some as late as 1735, belong stylistically to the orthodox era—writers such as Petrus van Mastricht (d. 1706), Herman Witsius (d. 1708), Wilhelmus à Brakel (d. 1711), Salomon Van Til (d. 1713), Johannes Van der Kemp (d. 1718), Melchior Leydekker (d. 1721), Benedict Pictet (d. 1724), Jacob Leydekker (d. 1729), Johannes Marckius (d. 1731), Thomas Boston (d. 1732), and Thomas Ridgley (d. 1734). Still, the thought of these writers was, in the same era, balanced against an equal number of representative thinkers whose thought moved toward a less confessional and more latitudinarian perspective—notably Louis Tronchin (d. 1705), Gilbert Burnet (d. 1715), Pierre Poiret (d. 1719), Samuel Clarke (d. 1729), and the Jean Alphonse Turretin (d. 1737). The result is a time of a unique perspective, neither thoroughly shaped by the ethos of orthodoxy nor fully drawn into the era of a dominant rationalism.

Late orthodoxy (ca. 1725–1775) might be called the beginning of the afterlife for Protestant orthodoxy. The orthodox theology, as a system, had not disappeared and its descendants, particularly the doctrinally orthodox pietists of the *Nadere Reformatie*, still taught lively versions of the older Reformed confessional systems. By contrast, orthodoxy had all but lost its relationship to philosophy and its ties to the scholarly or academic methods of biblical exegesis had been all but broken. In addition, the scholastic method, which had been supported throughout the seventeenth century by the retention of Latin as the language of the classroom and by the use of traditional texts in logic and rhetoric, like those of Spencer and Burgersdijk, no longer was the standard method of the academy and university. Philosophically, logically, and rhetorically, the style of theology was changing, and not in a way that could support the older orthodoxy either in style or in substance.

The deaths of a series of representative writers—in whose work one witnesses both the attempt to carry forward the doctrinal substance of orthodoxy but also the changes brought on by the loss of traditional philosophy and logic, the decline of scholastic method, and the absence of broadly accepted confessional standards in international Reformed thought—mark the close of the late orthodox era: Bernhardus De Moor (d. 1765), John Gill (d. 1771), Alexander Comrie (d. 1774), Johann Friedrich Stapfer (d. 1775), Daniel Wytenbach (d. 1779), and Herman Venema (d. 1787).

## The Theological Tradition

### *The Reformed Tradition: Confessional Unity and Theological Diversity*

What I have already begun to describe in this discussion of the successive generations of Reformed theologians and the rise of a scholastic orthodoxy is a single but variegated

Reformed tradition, bounded by a series of fairly uniform confessional concerns but quite diverse in patterns of formulation—not two or more traditions, as is sometimes claimed.<sup>10</sup> The identification of a single, variegated tradition as opposed to multiple traditions is not merely a matter of semantics. It is a major methodological point that influences the historiography of the movement of Reformed thought. The point is perhaps best understood when the history of the Reformed confessional documents is distinguished from the history of theological controversy in the Reformed churches—the former historical discussion serving to identify how the Reformed churches of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries defined their own identity as Reformed and serving, also, to identify the boundaries of controversy between the Reformed and other confessions, whether Lutheran, Roman, Remonstrant, or Socinian; the latter history having both extraconfessional and intraconfessional dimensions, with the extraconfessional dimensions manifesting the differences between the Reformed and various other theological or confessional traditions and the intraconfessional dimensions evidencing the debates that occurred among the Reformed.

Problematic historiography resulting from failure to make the distinction can be easily exemplified. The most basic instance of the problem is the attempt to pose “Calvin” against “the Calvinists.” Not only does this historiographical model fail to address the issues of context, literary genre, and development within a tradition, it also fails to recognize the nature and boundaries of the tradition itself. Calvin was not the sole arbiter of Reformed confessional identity in his own lifetime—and he ought not to be arbitrarily selected as the arbiter of what was Reformed in the generations following his death. Calvin himself recognized the need to balance his own particular theological views with those of his contemporaries in such confessional efforts as the *Consensus Tigurinus*, where the eucharistic teaching was a compromise between Geneva and Zurich.<sup>11</sup> Most of the major confessional documents of the Reformed churches produced in the mid-sixteenth century were conceived with a breadth of definition capable of including diverse individual theologies. Each of these individual theologies, moreover, left its mark on its time and on the writers of the early orthodox era, accounting for a series of trajectories of formulation, all within the boundaries set by the confessions. Given the diversity and the fact that the confessional boundaries were set by no single theologian, it is historically inaccurate to identify the later generations in a strict sense as “Calvinists” and it is quite useless to measure them against Calvin as if he were the standard of orthodoxy.

Confusion of confessional history with the history of theological controversies underlies the presentation of Reformed thought in Jan Rohls’s recent *Reformed Confessions*, in which the theological chapters draw nearly exclusively on confessional documents and the historical introduction engages in juxtapositions of Calvin and Beza on predestination, comments on the impact of Ramism on Reformed dogmatics, poses the federal theology of Cocceius against the scholastic orthodoxy of Voetius, and notes the heated debates of the seventeenth century over the theology of Saumur.<sup>12</sup> None of these issues except the problem of the Saumur theologies affected any of the confessions and even the debate over Saumur occurred largely within confessional boundaries. Here, as in Brian Armstrong’s study of Moyses Amyraut,<sup>13</sup> the result of a mistaken construal of the Reformed tradition is the assessment of the debates between Amyraut and thinkers such as Pierre Du Moulin, Friedrich Spanheim, and Francis Turretin or those between

the Cocceian federalists and the Voetians as battles between opponents and proponents of “scholastic orthodoxy”—whereas the documents of the era indicate battles among the Reformed orthodox and, indeed, among thinkers, all of whom used the scholastic method.

A somewhat different, albeit related, problem is encountered in the efforts of various writers to argue multiple and rather divergent Reformed covenant traditions.<sup>14</sup> I will return to the question of covenant theology later and confine comment here to the issue of tradition or traditions. The core of the argument for distinct Reformed covenant traditions, indeed, in the case of J. Wayne Baker’s version of the argument, two nearly inimical Reformed traditions, rests on the presence of unilateral and bilateral definitions of covenant in the Reformed tradition and the claim of these writers that the definitions are mutually exclusive and held by different thinkers, to the point that the unilateral definition belongs to a more “predestinarian” approach and the bilateral definition to an approach that verges on synergism in its emphasis on human responsibility. The problems with the theory are many: in the first place, many Reformed writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries employ both definitions, the unilateral and the bilateral, in their identification of different aspects or stages in the covenant relationship between God and humanity.<sup>15</sup> In the second place, all of the writers, whether Bullinger and Calvin in the sixteenth century or Perkins and Cocceius in the seventeenth, are mongergistic in their soteriology and intent on defining covenant within the boundaries of the confessional tradition. There is, in other words, one variegated Reformed tradition in which there are several trajectories of thought. Ultimately, whatever differences may be identified between the individual formulations of various theologians, all stood within the Reformed confessional tradition and, more to the point of the present discussion, all stood within the pattern of a developing Reformed orthodoxy. It is only by breaking apart the actual tradition, as defined by its own confessions and by labeling one side of the debate as “orthodox” and the other as an opposition to “rigid orthodoxy,” that the older scholarship has managed to produce its portrait of a rigidly monolithic or monochromatic orthodoxy.

### *The Theological Task Defined*

The success of the Reformation left Protestant forces in command of large geographical areas. With this ground gained, Protestantism increasingly was defined in religious matters by confessional documents and, from an institutional perspective, proved capable not only of surviving but also developing. Such development, framed by confessional definition, in turn provided a context for the rise of educational issues somewhat different from those faced by the Reformers themselves. The Protestant universities now were pressed to formulate and teach theology in detail to generations of students and pastors who had been raised Protestant—and at the same time to identify Protestantism as not only a form but also the correct form of Christianity over against the claims of Rome.

From an educational or pedagogical perspective, the era of early orthodoxy was, for the Reformed churches, an era in which theologians had to concern themselves with methods of education, specifically with the heritage of logic and rhetoric, the practice of exegesis, and the proper identification and arrangement of theological *loci* or topics for the sake of teaching. Increasingly, the Reformed universities and, given the nature of the academic curriculum, the large-scale theological systems, were modeled on scholas-