
Calvin's critique of Roman Catholicism was total, encompassing theology, church practices, and lifestyles. This book is a collection of conference papers seeking common ground between Calvin and Catholicism to facilitate present-day academic discussions. Exciting possibilities are raised. Might there be common ground in Calvin's acceptance of some early church theologians? Calvinists and Catholics found ways to coexist in Geneva and Holland; does that suggest common ground for today? Can Calvin's stress on the revelation of God in all of nature lead to a common view of "sacramentality"?

As is often the case with multi-authored works, there is a lack of common focus. Most of the writers are historians, but some are theologians. I found the historical studies on social aspects of the Reformation to be very interesting, although yielding no surprises or insights for today, as the authors usually admit. Those interested in Calvinism as popular religion will want to read these essays. On the theological side, Carlos M. N. Eire was asked to "assess the degree to which Calvin might be seen as a Catholic theologian," an assignment that he describes as a Zen koan (p. 145). Despite his creative and clever attempts, I felt his article, along with the rest of the book, remains a koan—profitable for future meditation if one transcends logic. There is much goodwill but no new common ground.

Zachman notes Calvin's growing appreciation, during the 1540's, for some traditional views of the sacraments and suggests this "might" show influences by Catholics with whom Calvin was in dialogue (p. 191). Perhaps it "might," but Calvin was also in discussion with Melanchthon (Lutheran), and Calvin's theology did grow and mature all the time. Since none of Calvin's new views are more "Catholic" than "Lutheran," I see no evidence that dialogue with Catholics led Calvin to make these changes. In saying this "might" be the case, Zachman is saying let's keep talking even though we have no evidence. This reflects the spirit of this book.

Given this book's comprehensive title, why does no one explore how Rome interpreted the thought of Calvin at the time? Catholic biographies of Calvin are explored but not for theological insight. Most of the essays are by historians looking at the past, and there are only a couple of passing references to today's dialogues between Catholics and the Reformed churches. No article attempts to define "the core" of Calvin's theology to compare it to "the core" of Catholicism. Can Catholics find common ground with Calvinists without talking about the authority of the Bible, predestination, the intellectualizing of "faith" as "doctrine," and other essential themes? Maybe. Maybe not.

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The 2006 World Methodist Council's affirmation of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification with Catholics and Lutherans, after decades of one of the most productive dialogues in the modern ecumenical movement, has set a new tone and level of visible communion between the Wesleyan and Catholic heritages. This agreement on grace and salvation is as much an impetus to the future reconciliation as resolution of past differences. This volume, on a particular theme within the Christian understanding of God's saving grace and progress in the spiritual life, begins to fill out one of these themes: Christian perfection.

The author takes up a modest task, exploring one theme in two relatively uneven authors, but figures with disproportionate influences in the Western tradition. Traditional
interpretations of John Wesley emphasize the Eastern patristic influence on his practical theology, spirituality, and understanding of the *ordo salutis*. While not disputing these interpretations, the author attempts to amplify the Wesleyan dialogue with the Western, Catholic heritage by this focus on Thomas Aquinas. The latter’s theology is comprehensive, philosophically grounded, and elaborated in a way that Wesley’s is not. There are no claims of influence from the scholastic tradition of the thirteenth century directly on Methodist theology of perfection. However, the author skillfully elaborates the different developments, terminology, and historical contexts of the two authors in order to outline the differences and convergences and to show a complementarity and sympathy between the two approaches, serving not only the unity of the church but also a convergence in spiritualities and some fundamental ecclesiological harmonies.

The volume includes seven chapters, after an introduction on the purpose and method of the book and the history of the Methodist and Catholic relationship. Colón-Emeric begins with two chapters on Wesley’s understanding of the nature and way of Christian perfection. In this elaboration he has a monumental task of drawing a theological portrait from a body of literature focused on revival, pastoral leadership, and spiritual nurture. The following two chapters cover Aquinas’s treatment of the theology and pathways of Christian perfection—their challenge being to explicate the vast and precise anthroplogy and soteriology that the Angelic Doctor elaborated as the basis of his understanding of this theme in the Christian life. The author is careful to avoid overly facile comparisons, while tracing what he proposes as a fundamental compatibility.

A chapter looks at Wesley’s and Aquinas’s exegesis of the beatitudes and their commonalities and differences in interpreting the biblical basis for their doctrines of perfection. It ends with chapters comparing the two perspectives, applying Wesley’s doctrine to a Catholic figure and Aquinas’s understanding to a significant Methodist person of holy reputation. While the text is a careful theological and historical exposition, it points to a spiritual as well as theological convergence, a “kneeling ecumenism,” demonstrating the author’s proposal for an ecclesial and ecumenical significance of sanctity.

This study will not only be useful for the technical analysis it gives to a significant aspect of Methodist and Catholic witness to the common tradition, but it will also provide a stimulus for further studies verifying the agreement claimed in the *Joint Declaration* and potentially enriching the sharing of a spiritual life to which both Wesley and Aquinas were committed in their own time and historical contexts.

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In his 1951 study of Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar traced a development from dialectics (*Epistle to the Romans*) to analogy (*Church Dogmatics*), resulting in a “mature” Barth more open to Roman Catholicism than ever before. Marga handily lays this thesis to rest in her fascinating new book on Barth’s intensively fruitful dialogue with Catholicism in the 1920’s. Barth’s common ground with Catholicism was based on a mutual commitment to God’s *Gegenständlichkeit* (objectivity) in revelation, a mainstay of authentic Reformation theology that is entirely missing from liberal Protestantism. Marga’s analysis of the 1924–25 Göttingen cycle of dogmatic lectures, as well as the largely unpublished Münster cycle of 1926–28, reveals a Barth captivated by Thomas Aquinas and the *analogia entis*. Indeed, von Balthasar’s own mentor, the Polish Jesuit, Erich Przywara, was guest of honor at Barth’s 1929 Aquinas seminar.