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## THE ORGANIC IDEA IN CALVIN'S THOUGHT

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### II. Calvin's standpoint regarding medieval organic thought.

Calvin's conception touches that of the Middle Ages, insofar as he also assumes that humanity forms a great organism; the bond of unity is nature, common to all, in which God has impressed the stamp of His divine image.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, this organism embraces the small and the great, the remote and the most remote, even the "poor unbelievers" (*povres incredules*).<sup>2</sup> Just as God created this unity, He also maintains it. If He withdraws His hand, as happens in the many revolutions in political and social life, then even the best human strength is of no avail; then it seems as if there were no nerves in the body; then kingdoms and their princes disappear into nothingness.<sup>3</sup>

In this sense, Calvin uses the Stoic term "*societas humani generis*," especially as found in Cicero, to connect the Stoic concept of a human state. It is an invisible community of people, which was well-known to the pagans.<sup>4</sup> At a decisive point, Calvin breaks with the unity enthusiasm of the Middle Ages. Humanity is not identical with the universal church; it does not coincide with Christianity. To the true church, to the mystical body of Christ, belong only the elect known only to God (the invisible church), who by adoption have become children of God and by the sanctification of the Spirit have been incorporated as true members into the body of Christ. The visible church, by contrast, consists of the multitude of confessors of God and His Christ scattered throughout the world, who, by baptism in faith in the Son of God and by partaking of the Holy Supper, express unity in true love and doctrine and maintain the Ministry of the Word.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Op. 52, 477: We are one and the same: I say the whole human race.

Op. 34, 596: Let us therefore know that God has made us all of one nature, that he has put this union in order to bind us together.

Op. 54, 559: There is a kind of natural bond.

Op. 51, 765 ff: God has made us in such a condition that we are like a mass. For if there are several fingers in a human body, if there are several nerves, that does not mean that all are not one.

Op. 26, 351: For nature has wanted to bind men together in union, and God has formed them all in his image.

Op. 26, 19: There is ..... some union between the human race ..... we are all formed in a semblance and that we recognize in the person of men, like our flesh.

ib. 10: There is still some community in general, that all men must think, that they are formed in the image of God.

Op. 53, 128: (God) has created us of one nature. When I look at a man, I must contemplate there my image, and I must look at myself in his person, and I must recognize myself there.

<sup>2</sup> Op. 53, 128, 159 ff; Op. 27, 329.

<sup>3</sup> Op. 34, 597 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Op. 34, 605; Op. 41, 273; Op. 27, 329: The pagans have well known how to say this: that all mankind should be allied.

Op. 26, 10: They have a nature as among themselves. And the pagans have well known this.

<sup>5</sup> Op. 2, 752 ff

Therefore, a clear distinction is made between the "body of the church and Christendom" (*corps de l'église* and *chrestienté*) on the one hand and "all men in general" (*tous hommes en général*) on the other.<sup>6</sup> Calvin adheres to this distinction, although he knows that true unity before God only exists in full unity in Christ as the one Head of the one body.<sup>7</sup> To realize this ideal of true unity is the calling of Christians; they must pray for the unbelievers, for the "membres retranchez" (cut-off members), until these are brought into or back into the true body.<sup>8</sup>

To this end, however, it is necessary that the consciousness of humanity deepens into a feeling of humanity. It would be inhuman, egoistic, and contrary both to God's all-encompassing rule and to the order created by Him, as well as to the universality of salvation, if one wanted to exclude non-Christians from the organism of humanity.<sup>9</sup> Thus, humanity is not merely something that is given in a natural sense, but rather something that has been given as a moral task. God is not only Creator, but also Father of mankind.<sup>10</sup> Mankind is the material of humanity.<sup>11</sup>

This humaneness is brotherhood insofar as all men are children of the one heavenly Father. It is demanded everywhere that men must not exalt themselves above others or separate themselves from the rest with contempt.<sup>12</sup>

This brotherhood is not a vague love for all; rather, it expresses itself in justice and fairness toward all people.<sup>13</sup> Brotherhood, in the deepest, special sense of the word, is a characteristic of a much deeper community, one of community with Christ.<sup>14</sup> If humanity is, therefore, in its deepest essence and in its true destiny, a moral community, then it cannot be artificially constructed—especially not with the grotesque forms in which, during the Middle Ages,

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<sup>6</sup> Op. 53, 135.

<sup>7</sup> Op. 42, 221: The unity of men is of no value before God unless it begins from the head himself: this is where all will submit themselves with one consent to Christ and will depend on him with their nod. ib. 220: That you may be one body under one head.

<sup>8</sup> Op. 53, 159: It is true that those who are not in agreement in faith with us, are like our enemies, and at a long distance. But nevertheless, the order of nature shows us that we should not at all reject them, and that we should take pains as far as we can, to reunite them to the body, because they are like members severed.

<sup>9</sup> Op. 53, 160, 162; Op. 54, 599; Op. 51, 760, 765 ff.

<sup>10</sup> Op. 27, 479 ff: God does not only say that he is the creator of the human race, poor and rich alike..... but he is called Father.

<sup>11</sup> Op. 26, 23: Exercise humanity towards one another.

vgl. Op. 27, 330, 333; Op. 51, 765.

<sup>12</sup> Op. 27, 479 ff: It is necessary that we have fraternity among ourselves ..... Kings and princes consider themselves to be as if cut off from the company of men, and it already seems to them that they should no longer be reputed to have this common rank.

<sup>13</sup> Op. 27, 328: We must therefore keep equity and uprightness towards all men; for there we contemplate our nature. Op. 33, 66: From "uprightness and equity" it expresses itself, "that each one does not withdraw apart, to seek his own profit, but that we communicate together, as God has bound us and united us in one body ... that there be this fraternal community, and this equity of not doing to others except what we want them to do to us."

vgl. ook: Op. 26, 331; The union of Christ is "more sacred than this bond of nature, which is common to all mankind. 33, 733 ff

<sup>14</sup> Op. 27, 328: The servants of the faith are united with a closer bond, with us; it is therefore with good reason that we bear them a special fraternity.

Op. 26, 331: The union of Christ is "more sacred than this bond of nature, which is common to all mankind."

people conceived of the unification of humanity as a unity. Neither the universal church of the papacy nor the world empire of the imperial party achieves what was intended: the unity of the human race.

In his combat against the world church and the world state, Calvin adapts himself to the method of the medieval writers. These writers were happy to use the theories of their opponents for their own purposes. It was an analogical method. The defenders of ecclesiastical world domination used the evidence for the existence of an undivided world organism to support their doctrine that this world organism was embodied in the world church, while the state party drew from the evidence of the ecclesiastical party precisely the opposite conclusion, which fitted in with its conception.

Thus, it can be explained that Calvin, in his polemic with the defenders of papal world domination, also refutes the grounds used by the defenders of world monarchy, thereby indirectly also exercising a devastating criticism of world monarchy. This occurs in the classical chapter: *De primatu romanae sedis* (*On the primacy of the see of Rome*). We will only consider those arguments in more detail that are directly related to the idea of organism. In doing so, it will be important to get to know the opponents who are not named by Calvin, according to his usual way of polemizing.

The opponents start from the "axiom" that the church would resemble a mutilated body if it were not governed by a head, that is, by the See of Rome, the pope. The pope stands at the head of the universal church as vicar of Christ; the church would not be properly constituted if one wanted to deny the primacy to the holy see.

Calvin is apparently thinking here primarily of Eck,<sup>15</sup> who in the Leipzig dispute called the church without a head a *monstrum*: *Quod monstrum esset ecclesiam esse acephalam*. This becomes especially clear from the expositions of the eleventh part of Chapter VI. When Calvin has shown that Christ is the only head under whose rule we live together as members, and that Christ is wronged when a man is put in His place, he adds the remark:

"It is not unknown to me how our opponents want to get rid of our assertion that Christ is the only head who rules by His authority and His name alone. It does not matter, they say, that under Christ there exists another head, namely the *caput ministeriale* ("serving head"), a head who fulfills the office of Christ on earth."

Here again, Eck is meant, who writes in his *Loci theologici*:<sup>16</sup> *Petrum membrum et partem ecclesiae dicimus; sed quod propterea non possit esse caput ministeriale seu vicarius veri capitis, negamus. Similiter aliud est agere privatam personam, aliud publicam. Et si est caput, est utique membrum*. (We do say that Peter is a member of the church, but that he cannot therefore be the "serving" head or the deputy of the real head, we deny. Thus, it also

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<sup>15</sup> The idea itself is more common among writers. The writer of the *Questio in utramque partem*, Goldast III, 102: *Totius ecclesiae unum est caput, istud caput divinum esse Christum...* Potest nihilominus Papa dici caput Ecclesiae, in quantum est principalis inter ministros Ecclesiae. But the meaningful expression *caput ministeriale* is missing here.

<sup>16</sup> I cite this place according to the Cologne edition of the "Loci" of the year 1561, p. 74. The *Loci* were first published in 1525, and it is as good as certain that the words quoted were already in the first print, which I could not use.

makes a difference whether one acts as a private person or as an office bearer. And even if he is the head, he is still first and foremost a member.)

In Op. 52, 86 Calvin quotes both statements by Eck about the "ecclesia dHsqxxloc" (church without head) and the "caput ministeriale" (serving head) side by side.<sup>17</sup>

According to Calvin, the cardinal question, which the problem of the universal church actually revolves around, is whether the papal chair must necessarily be invested with such dignity and power in order to be considered the head of the whole body. The opponents would have to prove this necessity. Indeed, they cite the "Supreme Council" in Jerusalem as an example of a central authority institution. But they prove nothing by doing so. What was necessary for a people need not be necessary and binding for the whole world.

The reason for the establishment of the Jerusalem court of justice (the Supreme Council) lay in local circumstances. Since the Jews were surrounded on all sides by idolaters, in order to maintain unity among them, one had to appoint an *antistes* (high priest) in the center of the country, to whom they could all look up with respect. Since the true religion is now spread over the whole world, it is absurd to entrust the government of the West and the East to one man. With this exposition, Calvin refutes the "*egregia interpretatio, quae Anacleti nomine in Gratiano refertur*"<sup>18</sup> (the praised explanation which is mentioned in the Decretum Gratianum in the name of Anacletus), which he quotes in another place (vol. 11 of Cap. VI, Op. 2, 831) and which is mentioned in the Decretum Gratianum in the name of Anacletus), namely that Peter should be the head of the church.

Calvin concludes with an analogical proof (Op. 2, 813): *Perinde est ac si quis contendat, totum mundum a praefecto uno debere regi, quia ager unus non plures prae-feetos habeat* (That is as foolish as the assertion that the whole world should be governed by one ruler because one piece of land does not have several rulers), forming the transition to another group of proofs, in which Calvin strikes the defenders of papal and imperial world domination with one blow.

One of the main arguments put forward in favor of the single-headed leadership of the universal church was the claim that Peter was recognized as the highest among the twelve. To support this claim, the advocates of papal world domination referred to a phenomenon found in both natural and political life, namely that all organizations have a leading, governing head. The most illustrative examples of this were bees and cranes, which always choose only one leader and not multiple leaders. Among the "civilia exempla" (civil examples), the well-known words of Homer—"ai!" dyai'Mv noi.vHoteavl't" (a multi-headed rule is not good)—and the statements of other secular writers were cited.

Calvin responded: Even if it were true—which, however, is not the case—that Peter surpassed all the apostles in dignity and power, it is not legitimate to derive a general rule

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<sup>17</sup> ..... teaches that Christ is the sun, who has the power to govern the Church, to whom the faithful must look only to one thing, from which the unity of the body depends. The Papists, while they want their idols to be tyrannical, cause the Church to be "papa" unless the Pope, as a head, dominates it..... Nor is there any qualm about the fact that the Pope, as a head, is a ministerial one. Calvin also appeals to Eck; see Op. 51, 202: This (i.e., that the Pope is distinguished from the common members of the Church) is denied by the Papists, because the Pope is only a minister. They pretend to be a real head.

<sup>18</sup> It concerns Can. 1, dist. 22, cap. 2, in "Analectus servus Christi Jesu ad omnes episcopos", epist. III, c. 3.

from a single example, thereby turning a one-time occurrence into a permanent institution. Assuming that one among the apostles was the highest, he held this position only within a small circle. However, this does not mean that such a person should stand as a sovereign at the head of a mass numbering in the hundreds of thousands. That the twelve apostles had this one leader is not surprising. For it is in accordance with the demands of nature and reason that in an assembly (*coetus*) of otherwise equal and equally powerful members, there must be one who serves, as it were, as a "moderator" (administrator, leader, ruler), to whom all can look up with respect.

For "*nulla est curia sine consule, nullus consessus iudicum sine praetore seu quaesitore, collegium nullum sine praefecto, nulla sine magistro societas*" (there is no senate without a consul, no judicial assembly without a praetor or quaestor, no college without a president, no society without a leader). However, what can be valid among a few cannot be applied to the whole world, for the world cannot be governed by a single man. Calvin does not seek to dispute the examples provided by his opponents; he merely argues that, since they apply only to a small circle, they lose their evidential strength when the discussion concerns the entire world, as is the case with a world monarchy and a universal church. The political authority of Homer and other secular writers carries no weight in this matter, as they do not seek to prove that a single person must rule the whole world, but only that one empire cannot tolerate two rulers. Even if a world monarchy were beneficial for the world—which the opponents assume but which is an absurdity (*quod est tamen absurdissimum*)—this assumption still does not prove the necessity of a world church under single-headed leadership.

Against whom are these polemical arguments directed? To trace the position of the opponents, one must consider that it was particularly the secular French writers who, for the sake of national political interests, opposed the idea of a world state in the name of Gallican liberty—before even the ecclesiastical party, in opposition to imperial world domination, set the pope's claims to supreme authority against it.<sup>19</sup>

Beyerhaus<sup>20</sup> sought these opponents within the French camp but was unable to find the source. In answering the question of which sources from ecclesiastical or anti-ecclesiastical literature formed the foundation of the opposition to the papacy, he limited himself to presenting some important perspectives that are valuable in themselves but contributed little to identifying the exact source from which Calvin directly drew. However, I have succeeded in discovering this source. In *Somnium Viridarii*, a Gallican polemical treatise from 1376 or 1377, which has been on the Roman Index since 1559, an anonymous writer<sup>21</sup>—who refers to himself as "miles" (knight)—opposes the claims of the ecclesiastical party (represented by the "clericus") that the French king was subject to the See of Rome "in temporalibus" (in secular affairs).<sup>22</sup> To support his counterarguments, the writer draws a parallel between the aspirations of the defenders of world monarchy and those of the defenders of ecclesiastical world domination, in order to dismantle the latter's arguments.

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<sup>19</sup> See Gierke, *Genossenschaftsrecht* III, 544, and Althusius pp. 62, especially Scholz, "The Journalism at the Time of Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII" in *Church Legal Treatises* Issue 6–8, pp. 326 ff.

<sup>20</sup> *op. cit.* 110, note 4.

<sup>21</sup> Gierke (*op. cit.* 507) supposes that it is Philip de Mazières.

<sup>22</sup> Goldast I, 68.

Thus, we observe the same tendency as in Calvin. Moreover, the content of his argumentation strongly resembles Calvin's own reasoning.<sup>23</sup>

1. The "Clericus" quotes as "non-legal in nature" (si non esset textus juris) the words of Homer, which he knows from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (12) in Latin: *Entia desiderant optime disponi et multitudo principatuum est mala* (Things desire to be arranged as well as possible, and a multitude of heads is bad).

2. The "Clericus" further gives the example of "apes" and "grues" (bees and cranes) from Aristotle (*Hist. Anim.* 7 quo 1 ca. in Apibus).

That in itself would not say much because this example has been cited several times by medieval writers.<sup>24</sup> [24] However, it is characteristic that the "miles" contests the evidential value of the example with the same arguments as Calvin (cf. Goldast 69):

*Nec obstat, quod in apibus est unus princeps: quia nec ego dico, quod in uno regno sint duo reges: sed in quolibet regno unus rex* (And that among bees there is one head [queen] is not in conflict with this, because I do not claim that in a kingdom there are two kings, but in each separate kingdom, one king).

Compare this with Calvin: ...*indicant volunt, regnum duos non capere* (They want to show that one kingdom cannot have two heads). Furthermore, Goldast 69 states:

*Naec omnes grues de mundo sequuntur unani, sed una congregatio sequitur unam, et alia aliam: sic in quolibet regno erit unus rex* (Nor do all the cranes of the whole world follow one leader, but one flock follows this one and the other another, so there must be one king in each kingdom).

Goldast continues (73): *Nec obstat, quod de apibus arguitur: quia non omnes apes mundi habent unum principem, nec omnes grues unum habent ducem: sed apes unius loci unum, apes alterius loci alium* (And this is not in conflict with what is said of the bees, for not all the bees of the whole world have one queen, nor all the cranes have one leader, but the bees of one place have one, and the bees of another place another).

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<sup>23</sup> Goldast 70.

<sup>24</sup> Aegidius Romanus, *De regimine principum* (1498), book III, part II, chapter III:

*"If bees, although it is natural for them to live in society, are naturally under one king... if, therefore, we consider individual natural entities, we always see each one being reduced to a single governing and ruling principle. Just as it is natural that a multitude originates from one, so it is also natural that it is brought back into one... The best form of government is monarchy or the rule of one king because in it the most perfect unity is preserved."*

Johannes de Paris, *Tractatus de potestate regia et populi* (in Schard, *De iurisdictione, autoritate et praeeminentia imperiali ac potestate ecclesiastica*, 1560, p. 146):

*"Even among gregarious animals, such as bees and cranes..."*

Thomas Aquinas, *De regimine principum*, Cologne 1643, p. 9 ff.:

*"For bees have one king, and in the whole universe, there is one God, the creator and ruler of all, and this is rational. For every multitude derives from one."*

Fischer, *Assertionis Lutherquae confutatio*, 1525, p. 324:

*"To this, as Cyprian's words state, there is one king among bees, one leader among flocks, and ultimately, in any properly established polity, the entire administration must be referred to one."*

Moreover, Calvin writes: *Et huius rei... probationem sumunt a gruibus et apibus, quae sibi ducem unum semper eligunt, non plures... sed an ex toto orbe confluunt apes ut regem unum eligant? Suis alvearibus contenti sunt reges singuli. Ita in gruibus unaquaque caterva proprium regem habet* (And the proof of this matter they find in the cranes and bees, which always choose for themselves one leader, not several... but do all the bees of the whole world also come together to choose one king? The individual queens are content with their own hives. And so with cranes, each flock has its own king).

3. Goldast (73) further notes: *Unitatem principatus demonstrat natura... iudicio intellectuali* (Nature proves to the intellectual judgment the unity of authority ...). This is followed by the example of "apes" and then the sentence: *Si natura hoc insinuat, ergo et naturae naturanti hoc convenit, quae est omnium directrix* (If they come to this through nature, then this is in accordance with *natura naturans*, which governs everything).

Calvin similarly remarks: *Atqui illud, inquit, non minus in naturae universitate quam in singulis partibus locum habet* (This, on the other hand, they say, happens just as much in nature in general as in particular cases in nature). Compare this sentence with the comparison adduced between the macrocosm and the microcosm. See also Ooldast [71]

4. The "Somnium" also cites *exempla civilia* (examples from civil life) (Goldast 70 v.) from Aristotle,<sup>25</sup> [25] Roman law, and canon law.

While these sources demonstrate a fairly close connection between Calvin and his French source, Calvin introduces a new and significant idea absent in medieval political thought: according to the law of nature and reason, only relatively small political or social "associations" can be under a single head.

*Quod inter paucos valet, non protinus trahendum in universum orbem terrarum, ad quem regendum nemo unus sufficit* (What is valid among a few cannot simply be applied to the entire world, which cannot be governed by one alone). It is characteristic that Calvin, in listing examples of single-headed supreme government, does not mention the state. He refers only to smaller corporations and associations: city councils, courts, and societies.<sup>26</sup> [26]

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<sup>25</sup> From Aristotle (*Metaphysics* XI):

"Entities desire to be well-ordered, and a multitude of rulers is a bad thing..."

Cf. also Anton de Rosellis, *Goldast* I, 536.

<sup>26</sup> Calvin clearly has the communal structures of his time in mind, although he uses terms from Roman law, which were only partially employed in the Middle Ages. The term *consessio iudicum* (the college of judges) is clear. However, the other terms require further explanation.

The term *curia* here likely refers to the senate or city council, the highest governing body of the city, as supported by the French translation (*Op.* 4, 675: *conseil, parlement*). This meaning appears in *Codex Theodosianus* (VI, 6, c. 1 de coss.).

The role of *consuls* in all cities of the Roman Empire was equivalent to that in Rome, as explained by Valesius.

In the Middle Ages, the term *consul* persisted for city officials (*consules in civitatibus*).

The distinction between *collegium* and *societas* is difficult to define, as they were not strictly separated in either ancient Rome or the Middle Ages. In Roman law, *collegia* referred to permanent associations, whereas *societates* were temporary partnerships (Mommesen, *De collegiis et sodaliciis Romanorum*, p. 39).

The term *societas* commonly referred to partnerships for joint business ventures or economic cooperation (Liebemann, *Geschichte der Organisationen des römischen Vereinwesens*, p. 167).

Although Calvin's focus on smaller groups may reflect the apostolic example (*Unus inter apostolos summus fuit, nempe quia pauci erant numero* – Among the apostles there was one head, of course because there were so few), he deliberately omits the state. This omission can be seen as a silent protest against defenders of papal world domination, who often included the state in examples of unimanically governed corporations to bolster monarchical conclusions.

For instance, Augustine Alvendensis, whose writings<sup>27</sup> [27] played a role in Luther's struggle against Rome (see *Luther's Werke* W.A. 2, 290 ff.), listed a progression of civilities: family, village, city, and finally the empire.<sup>28</sup> [28] Calvin, however, regarded large empires with suspicion.

But even if Calvin did not have this specific intention in mind, it is certain that for him—who did not hold monarchy in particularly high regard and recognized it, like every form of government, only as a divine institution in its factual existence—the great empires were an abomination.

Above all, this applied to the prototype of the world empire, the Roman Empire, glorified by the medieval state party. The judgment he had already expressed in his youthful work, the *Seneca Commentary*, in connection with Augustine—that this proud empire was, in essence (*vere*), a *magnum latrocinium* (a great band of robbers)—was one he never abandoned and later even intensified.

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Canonists distinguished between a *collegium* and a *societas* by requiring the latter to be officially recognized by the ruler before it became a formal institution.

In the medieval context, *societas* often referred to guilds and trade associations, which were led by a *rector* or *praepositus* (Endemann, *Studien zu der romanisch-kanonistischen Wirtschafts- und Rechtslehre*, I, p. 349).

Calvin likely envisioned these organizations, as evidenced by his use of the French term *bande* (*Op.* 4, 675), which aligns with the Latin *societas*.

In contrast, Calvin seems to associate *collegium* with professional guilds and civic organizations, as seen in the Roman term *praefectus* for their leaders (*praefectus fabrum*, *praefectus et patronus collegii funeratici*).

<sup>27</sup> *Super apostolica sede*: On whether the Apostolic See exists by divine right and whether the pope, as he came to be called, presides over it by divine right.

<sup>28</sup> This passage appears in the first *gladius* of the *probatio prima conclusionis*:

"No human polity or, so to speak, plurality can be properly governed without the unity of a head."

The exact text states:

"Give a family a household and remove from them their one ruler—will it not collapse in disorder? Give a village and take away its one leader—will it not become a den of beasts? Give a city and deprive it of a governor, or a magistrate, or a senate—if there is no one head among the senators, what do you think will happen? Give a kingdom without one king—it will be divided, destroyed, and perish... Neither the household, the monastery, nor the state can stand without the unity of a head, but will instead be desolated, overturned, and scattered. The Catholic Church, therefore, is not merely the household of one family, one village, one town, or one kingdom, but a vast multitude of believers; and can this multitude exist without one head, one ruler, one shepherd, and one lord?"



According to him, the Romans were a nation of robbers, a people of "proud barbarians." Everything of value in Greece, Macedonia, the islands, and all of Asia was plundered, and yet their greed was never satisfied. The conquered provinces were bribed with looted money and spoils. Greece was turned into a land of slaves. The proconsuls and praetors behaved in the provinces as kings and consuls did in Italy; they held power over the lives and deaths of their subjects. The Caesars overthrew all divine and human rights, accepting not only divine worship for themselves but, like Caligula, even feeling superior to Zeus, whom they relegated as a foreign god to Greece. Bloodshed and cruelty were the defining traits of the Roman people. The Romans knew neither piety nor humanity.

Thus, the Roman world empire was the very embodiment of unchecked tyranny (*saeva tyrannis*), for although the Romans repeatedly boasted that they had as many kings as senators (*totidem fuisse reges quot erant senatores*), it would be more accurate to say that there were just as many robbers among them as there were tyrants.<sup>29</sup> [29].

This critique of the Roman Empire stands in stark contrast to that of the medieval writers. According to the latter, God willed monarchical rule because, just as He governs the higher world, so too must one single man rule the world below. Therefore, the imperialist conquest policy of the Romans was entirely justified (*et sic iuste fecerunt*). Moreover, it served the lofty goal of establishing a community of justice and piety and securing universal peace.<sup>30</sup> [30]. Thus, conquest was sanctified as a means to an end.

But even in itself, the Roman world monarchy was already justified, for the Romans acquired the world through a just war (*justitia bellica*), by testamentary disposition, and by the voluntary submission of peoples.<sup>31</sup> [31].

Furthermore, the Romans were the virtuous people in the truest sense of the word—a people that loved homeland, peace, freedom, and justice and had great reverence for the law; their yoke was supremely just and mild.<sup>32</sup> [32]. To all these praises, Calvin could only respond sarcastically: *Whoever glorifies the ancient condition of the Roman Empire, in praising its freedoms, merely extols tyranny.*<sup>33</sup> [33].

According to Calvin, the Romans achieved the opposite of what a world empire aims for. The Roman world state was not the highest organic unity but a horrifying hodgepodge, undermined by internal conflicts, especially when it stood at the height of its prosperity.

A great paradox reigns in Roman political history. The Roman Empire distinguished itself from other empires precisely by the fact that it actually had no "head"—even though that

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<sup>29</sup> *Op.* 41, 47 ff., 77 ff., 274 ff., 440 ff.; *Op.* 40, 599.

<sup>30</sup> Anton de Rosellis, *Goldast* I, 544:

*"The Romans waged wars to unite the entire world into one society of justice and piety and to establish one universal monarchy and federation, from which universal peace would follow. It can be shown that by divine will, Rome was granted dominion over the world."*

Ib. 548:

*"God chose the Romans as His instruments and ministers... and thus, they acted justly."*

Cf. Dante, *De Monarchia*, book II, chapters 2 and 7.

35)

<sup>31</sup> Engelbert of Volkersdorf, *op. cit.* 40 ff.; Dante, *op. cit.*, chapters 10 and 11.

<sup>32</sup> Anton de Rosellis, *Goldast* I, 545; Petrarch, *Epist.* VIII (*Goldast*, I, 1354); Dante, *op. cit.*, chapter 5.

<sup>33</sup> *Op.* 2, 841.

should have been the ultimate goal of a world empire. The Senate had authority, but real power rested with the people. The result was merely a chaotic mass. Essentially, the Roman Empire was neither a kingdom nor a republic but a disorderly mess—a monster.<sup>34</sup> [34].

A striking resemblance to this devastating critique can also be found in the criticism of the universal church under the papacy.

The church is not an undivided organism, for the pope is not its supreme head but an "unsightly excrescence" on its body, disturbing the harmony of the whole. The pope elevates himself above the whole because he refuses to be regarded as an ordinary member. By opposing the true head of the church, Christ, he becomes a tyrant who disrupts apostolic order.<sup>35</sup> [35].

The reason for rejecting both the world church and the world state can be summarized as follows: neither of these entities can bring about the organic unity they claim to pursue; instead, they create disorder and tyranny.<sup>36</sup> [36].

*(To be continued.)*

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<sup>34</sup> *Op.* 40, 599, 77; *Op.* 41, 73 ff.

<sup>35</sup> *Op.* 51, 202:

*"What then is the papacy, if not a hideous hunchback that distorts the entire symmetry of the Church, as one man sets himself up as its head and removes himself from the body of members? ... The tyranny of this idol is contrary to the order that Paul commends."*

<sup>36</sup> Calvin's critique, in itself, is not proof that he became one of the first defenders of national kingdoms and nations in general, as Doumergue (*op. cit.* V, 435) assumes. If this were the case, his attacks on the contemporary French monarchy would be inexplicable.