

ECUMENISMO EN LA TEOLOGIA DE CALVINO

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E. Doumergue, en su voluminosa y a la par extraordinaria obra sobre Juan Calvino, recoge el testimonio de varios escritores que valoran el ecumenismo del Reformador de Ginebra¹. T. F. Torrance afirma que ninguno de sus contemporáneos se esforzó más en luchar por la unidad eclesial que el propio Calvino abrigando a la vez la esperanza de la eficacia de estos esfuerzos para la consecución de un acuerdo entre las Iglesias del protestantismo².

Pudiera suceder que estas afirmaciones resultasen extrañas a quien no conoce de la Reforma más que unos cuantos nombres y unos cuantos errores en combinación con ellos, sin fondo de verdad alguna. A nuestro parecer, la concepción teológica de Calvino sobre la Iglesia de Dios implica una mentalidad ecuménica; ya a priori pudiéramos inclinarnos por un bagaje de afirmaciones y realizaciones universalistas en la teología y en la obra del Reformador, pero no es nuestra intención establecer unos principios ecuménicos por los que se rijan la doctrina y la praxis de este teólogo, sino más bien deducirlos de la exposición de sus escritos³.

¹ E. DOUMERGUE: *Jean Calvin, Les hommes et les choses de son temps*, t. IV, *La pensée religieuse de Calvin* (Lausanne 1910) 452-53. Entre ellos se encuentran Tröltzsch, Holl, Barth, Eck...

² T. F. TORRANCE: *Tracts and treatises on the Reformation of the Church* (by J. Calvin) tr. H. Beveridge, v. I (Michigan, Grand Rapids, 1958), en la introducción, XXXII-XXXIII.

³ Sobre la eclesiología de Calvino pueden consultarse entre otras obras:

J. BOHATEC: *Calvins Lehre von Staat und Kirche* (Breslau 1937).

W. NIESEL: *Die Theologie Calvins* (München 1957).

En consecuencia, podrá cuestionarse como hace Gerstner⁴, la contribución del calvinismo —sobre todo la forma de realización— al movimiento ecuménico, la interpretación de la neo-ortodoxia de las categorías auténticamente calvinistas, la parcialidad o imparcialidad de la teología Reformada en cuanto referida al campo ecuménico, pero existe un hecho claro: la riqueza ecuménica de los escritos de Calvino, evidenciada en la Institución y especialmente en sus escritos polémicos y en sus cartas.

Nuestra intención en el presente artículo es reflejar ese pensamiento ecuménico a través de las palabras que el mismo Reformador dejó consignadas en su obra⁵. No pretendemos hacer elaboración teológica alguna, ni establecer una comparación entre la dimensión ecuménica del mundo protestante y el católico, ni valorar las consecuciones de nuestro tiempo en esta materia; nos limitamos a exponer la doctrina de Calvino con la finalidad de descubrir en ella la dialéctica que, en el campo ecuménico, se establece entre la adhesión firme a la Palabra de Dios y la libertad de la conciencia cristiana⁶. Los escritos examinados nos ofrecerán una base sobre la que cimentar unas conclusiones que, a manera de principios, laten en la teología del Reformador de Ginebra.

Con la finalidad de una mejor inteligencia agrupamos los escritos de Calvino en los siguientes apartados: 1) fundamentos cristológicos y eclesiológicos de la unidad, 2) puntos esenciales y accidentales de la misma, 3) relaciones de Calvino con otros Reformadores.

A. GANOCZY: *Calvin, théologien de l'Eglise et du ministere* (Paris 1964).

E. DOUMERGUE: *Jan Calvin. Les hommes et les choses de son temps*, t. V, *La pensée ecclésiastique et la pensée politique de Calvin* (Lausanne 1917).

H. BERGER: *Calvins Geschichtsauffassung* (Zürich 1955).

J. MACKINNON: *Calvin and the Reformation* (New York 1962).

⁴ J. H. GERSTNER: *Calvinism four hundred years after*, en *John Calvin Contemporary Prophet* (edit. J. T. Hoogstra) (Michigan 1959) 11-17.

⁵ Razones, de conveniencia unas, de necesidad otras, nos han obligado a utilizar en lengua inglesa los escritos de Calvino: su Institución, sus escritos polémicos, su correspondencia, etc.

⁶ Cf. J. H. KROMMINGA: *Calvin and Ecumenicity*, en *John Calvin, Contemporary Prophet*, o. c. 164-65.

1) *Fundamentos cristológicos y eclesiológicos de la unidad*

Aunque pueda afirmarse que el ecumenismo de Calvino estuvo, en parte, condicionado por circunstancias externas, por motivaciones extrínsecas al mismo⁷, sin embargo, es preciso dejar bien sentado desde un comienzo que los factores determinantes de su postura hacia la unidad eclesial son eminentemente cristológicos; la unidad que él persigue se centra en la Palabra y en la integridad de la Iglesia de Cristo.

He aquí unas palabras de Calvino que prueban con evidencia su deseo de mantener la unidad de la Iglesia, unidad que se concretiza en la enseñanza paulina de “un solo Señor, una sola fe, un solo bautismo”:

“The last and principal charge which they bring against us is, that we have made a schism in the Church. And here they boldly maintain against us, that in no case it is lawful to break the unity of the Church. How far they do us injustice, the books of our authors bear witness. Now, however, let them take this brief reply - that we neither dissent from the Church, nor are aliens from her communion... In like manner, the unity of the Church, such as Paul describes it, we protest we hold sacred, and we denounce anathema against all who in any way violate it. The principle from which Paul derives unity is, that there is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all”, who hath called us into one hope (Eph. 4, 4-5). Therefore, we are one body and one spirit, as is here enjoined, if we adhere to God only, i. e, be bound to each other by the tie of faith”⁸.

⁷ En carta a H. Bullinger, desde Ginebra, el 26 de junio de 1548 escribe: “At Paris and in many parts of the Kingdom, the ferocity of the ungodly is inflamed afresh. The King himself holds on in his fury. Thus is fulfilled the prediction, without fightings, without fears; although Jodocus excites not only fears within, but open fightings. But may the very fewness of our members incite us to an alliance!” J. BONNET: *Letters of John Calvin* (Philadelphia 1858) II, 172. En lo sucesivo esta obra se citará bajo el título de *Letters*.

Desde Estrasburgo escribe, el 25 de junio de 1539, a la Iglesia de Ginebra diciendo: “For where there are quarrels and discord, there is scarcely any hope of improvement”. J. BONNET: *Letters* I, 143.

⁸ J. CALVIN: *Tracts Relating to the Reformation*, 3 vol. (tr. H. Beveridge) (Edinburg 1844-51) I, 211-15. En adelante esta obra aparecerá bajo el nombre de *Tracts*.

La Iglesia, fundada sobre la doctrina de los apóstoles y de los profetas y en comunión con su Cabeza, Cristo Jesús, no puede ser auténtica si no reina sobre ella la Palabra de Dios:

“But do what they will, they cannot reproach us with having any other end that to gather in the people who have long been astray, and to bring them back to their standard, which is the pure word of God. We demand, however, that all differences of opinion be determined by an appeal to that, and that everyone abide by what we know to be the will of God... But we know that the Church is founded on the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, and that she ought to be united to Jesus Christ, her head, who is without variableness. So therefore it is but a bastard church where God’s doctrine does not reign as the rule”⁹.

En su famosa réplica a Sadoleto acentúa asimismo la importancia de la Palabra y la centralidad de la misma en la Iglesia:

“Thou, O. Lord, knowest, and the fact itself has testified to men, that the only thing I asked was, that all controversies should be decided by thy word, that thus both parties might unite with one mind to establish thy Kingdom; and I declined not to restore peace to the Church at the expense of my head, if I were found to have been unnecessarily the cause of tumult. But what did our opponents? Did they not instantly, and like madmen, fly to fires, swords, and gibbets?”¹⁰.

“One thing, in particular, made me averse to those teachers, viz, reverence for the Church. But when once I opened my ears, and allowed myself to be taught, I perceived that this fear of derogating from the majesty of the Church was groundless. For they reminded me how great the difference is between schism from the Church, and studying to correct the faults by which the Church herself was contaminated. They spoke nobly of the Church, and showed the greatest desire to cultivate unity”¹¹.

“I admit, that, on the revival of the Gospel, great disputes arose, where all was quietness before. But that is unjustly im-

⁹ J. BONNET: *Letters*, II, 255. Esta carta escrita desde Ginebra hacia el año 1549 al Sr. de Saint Laurens contiene artículos fundamentales de la fe Reformada.

¹⁰ J. CALVIN: *Tracts*, I, 60.

¹¹ J. CALVIN: *Tracts*, I, 62-63.

puted to our Reformers, who, during the whole course of their proceedings, desired nothing more than that religion being revived, the Churches, which discord had scattered and dispersed, might be gathered together into true unity. And not to go back upon old transactions, what sacrifices did they, on a late occasion, decline to make, merely that they might procure peace to the Churches? But all their efforts are rendered vain by your opposition”¹².

“Always, both by word and deed, have I protested how eager I was for unity. Mine, however, was a unity of the Church, which should begin with thee and end in thee. For as oft as thou didst recommend to us peace and concord, thou, at the same time, didst show that thou wert the only bond for preserving it. My conscience told me how strong the zeal was with which I burned for the unity of the Church, provided thy truth were made the bound of concord”¹³.

2) *Puntos esenciales y accidentales de la unidad eclesial*

Conforme a los principios señalados anteriormente, Calvino establece unos puntos esenciales para el mantenimiento de la unidad de la Iglesia, mientras que otros son considerados secundarios. Entre los primeros se cuentan la profesión de los artículos fundamentales de la fe —la confesión de un solo Dios, la divinidad de Cristo, la salvación como obra de la misericordia divina y otros semejantes— la doctrina sacramentaria, el Ministerio de la Palabra y de los Sacramentos, el reconocimiento, aunque imperfecto, de la doctrina sobre la que se funda la Iglesia de Dios, etc., etc.; en los segundos se incluyen los artículos de la fe no fundamentales, las irregularidades en la conducta del cristiano siempre que se dé el ministerio de la Palabra y de los Sacramentos, las ceremonias litúrgicas, etc.

Ofrecemos una selección de sus escritos, principalmente de su Institución y de su epistolario, para apoyar estas afirmaciones:

“Some are so necessary to be known, that they ought to be universally received as fixed and indubitable principles, as

¹² J. CALVIN: *Tracts*, I, 67.

¹³ J. CALVIN: *Tracts*, I, 59-60.

the peculiar maxims of religion; such as, that there is one God; that Christ is God and the Son of God; that our salvation depends on the mercy of God; and the like. There are others, which are controverted among the Churches, yet without destroying the unity of the faith. For why should be a division on this point, if one Church be of opinion, that souls, at their departure from their bodies, are immediately removed to heaven; and another Church venture to determine nothing respecting their local situation, but be nevertheless firmly convinced, that they lived to the Lord; and if this diversity of sentiment on both sides be free from all fondness for contention and obstinacy of assertion? The language of the apostle is, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." (Phil. 3, 15) Does not this sufficiently show, that a diversity of opinion respecting these non-essentials points ought not to be a cause of discord among Christians? It is of importance, indeed, that we should agree in everything; but as there is no person who is not enveloped with some cloud of ignorance, either we must allow of no church at all, or we must forgive mistakes in those things, of which persons may be ignorant, without violating the essence of religion, or incurring the los of salvation... But I maintain, that we ought not, on account of every trivial difference of sentiment, to abandon the Church, which retains the saving and pure doctrine that insures the preservation of piety, and supports the use of sacraments instituted by our Lord"¹⁴.

"I affirm that there are Churches, inasmuch as God has wonderfully preserved among them a remnant of his people, though miserably dispersed and dejected, and as there still remain some marks of the Church, especially those, the efficacy of which neither the craft of the devil nor the malice of men can ever destroy. But, on the other hand, because those marks, which we ought chiefly to regard in this controversy, are obliterated, I affirm, that the form of the legitimate Church is not to be found either in any of their congregations, or in the body at large"¹⁵.

¹⁴ J. CALVIN: *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (tr. J. Allen) (Philadelphia) I. IV, c. I, 284-85. Esta obra se citará a partir de ahora *Institutes*.

¹⁵ J. CALVIN: *Institutes*, IV, c. II, 315.

“With regard to the Sacraments, there was some jarring of opinion; but when those of our side conceded to them their ceremonies as things indifferent, they advanced them to the consideration of the sacrament of the Supper. There stood the impassable rock which barred the way to farther progress. Transubstantiation, reposition, circumgestation, and other superstitious forms of worship, were utterly rejected. This our opponents would by no means allow”¹⁶.

“This is the sum of your defence: that provided purity of doctrine be retained, externals should not be pertinaciously contended for. And if it be true that is confidently asserted everywhere, you extend the distinction of non-essentials too far”¹⁷.

“Besides, as to Bucer’s defence of Luther’s ceremonies, he does not do so because he eagerly seeks them, or would endeavour to introduce them. By no means can he be brought to approve of chanting in latin. Images he ahhors. Some other things he despises, while others he cares nothing at all about. There is no occasion to fear that he would be for restoring those things which have been once abolished; only he cannot endure that, on account of these trifling observances, we should be separated from Luther. Neither, certainly, do I consider them to be just causes of dissent”¹⁸.

“It is true, that if a different form has been seen and preferred it is quite allowable in communicating first of all with the pastor, to tell him what is thought of it, provided one accommodates one’s-self to the usages of the place where one lives, without clamouring for novelty, but peaceably conforming to any order that is not repugnant to the word of God”¹⁹.

“Whenever therefore it happens, by the Lord’s permission, that the Church is administered by pastors, whatever kind of persons they may be, if we see there the marks of the Church, it will be better not to break the unity. Nor need it be any hindrance that some points of doctrine are not quite so pure,

¹⁶ J. BONNET: *Letters*, I, 261. Carta a Farel desde Ratisbona, el 11 de mayo de 1541.

¹⁷ J. BONNET: *Letters*, II, 272. Carta a Melanchthon del 18 de junio de 1550.

¹⁸ J. BONNET: *Letters*, I, 137. Desde Estrasburgo a Farel. abril de 1539.

¹⁹ J. BONNET: *Letters*, II, 361. Calvino escribe desde Ginebra en setiembre de 1552 a la comunidad francesa de Londres.

seeing that there is scarcely any church which does not retain some remnants of former ignorance. It is sufficient for us if the doctrine on which the Church of God is founded be recognized, and maintain its place"²⁰.

"That is to say, that wherever *that* (es decir, ministry of the word and sacrament) exists entire and incorrupted, no errors and irregularities of conduct form a sufficient reason for refusing the name of a Church. In the next place, that the ministry itself is not so far vitiated by smaller errors, as to be considered on that account less legitimate. It has further been shown that the errors which are entitled to this forgiveness are those by which the grand doctrine of religion is not injured, which do not suppress the points in which all believers ought to agree as articles of faith, and which, in regard to the sacraments, neither abolish nor subvert the legitimate institution of their Author. But as soon as falsehood has made a breach in the fundamentals of religion, and the system of necessary doctrine is subverted, and the use of the sacraments fails, the certain consequence is the ruin of the Church, as there is an end of a man's life when his throat is cut, or his heart is mortally wounded"²¹.

Se desprende claramente que la unidad de la Iglesia goza para Calvino de una dimensión colocada fuera del plano político, es decir, no se obtiene a base de esfuerzos humanos sino que proviene de Cristo, el Señor, del cual se deriva a la comunidad de los creyentes y de la que no puede disponerse con manipulaciones del hombre; hay en ella una mezcla de elementos humano y divino, espiritual y material²². He aquí sus palabras:

"...might transmit to posterity, out of the pure word of God, a true and distinct confession; I nevertheless highly commend the plan which you, reverend sir, have adopted, to make the English frame for themselves, without delay, a religious constitution, lest, by matters remaining longer in an unsettled state, or not being sufficiently adjusted, the minds of the common people should be confirmed in their suspense"²³.

²⁰ J. BONNET: *Letters*, I, 101-02. A Farel desde Estrasburgo el 24 de octubre de 1538.

²¹ J. CALVIN: *Institutes*, IV, c. II, 302.

²² Cf. T. F. TORRANCE: *o. c.*, p. XIV.

²³ J. BONNET: *Letters*, II, 356. Escrita a Cranmer en el año 1552.

“He has appointed pastors and teachers, that his people might be taught by their lips; he has invested them with authority; in short, he has omitted nothing that could contribute to a holy unity of faith, and to the establishment of good order”²⁴.

“For unless we are united with all the other members under Christ our Head, we can have no hope of the future inheritance. Therefore the Church is called CATHOLIC, or universal; because there could not be two or three churches, without Christ being divided, which is impossible”²⁵.

“; but do what they will, they cannot reproach us with having any other end than to gather in the people who have long been going astray, and to bring them back to their standard, which is the pure word of God. We demand however, that all differences of opinion be determined by an appeal to that, and that everyone abide by what we know to be the will of God... But we know that the Church is founded on the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, and that she ought to be united to Jesus Christ, her head, who is without variability. So therefore it is but a bastard church where God’s doctrine does not reign as the rule”²⁶.

“...But who doubts that the only *peace of the Church* is that which is of Christ? Truly an admirable sentiment which ought to arise in our mind whenever we treat of *establishing peace and concord among christians* and specially when the object sought is *consent in doctrine*. ...And who, if not devoid of humanity, does not willingly lend his ear and his mind when true and serious mention is made of *pacifying the Church*? There is no man possessed only of a moderate sense of piety whom this foul and dreadful rending of the body of Christ does not grieve and excruciate”²⁷.

“For Christ is the only bound of holy unity. He who departs from him disturbs and violates unity, while out of him there is nothing but sacrilegious conspiracy. Roman antichrist invites us to himself, under the pretence of unity, and pronounces all to be schismatics who do not spontaneously submit to be harnessed to the yoke of his tyranny. We, however, on

²⁴ J. CALVIN: *Institutes*, IV, c. 1, 269.

²⁵ J. CALVIN: *Institutes*, IV, c. 1, 271.

²⁶ J. BONNET: *Letters*, II, 255.

²⁷ J. CALVIN: *Tracts*, III, 240.

the other hand, hear the words of Christ, "Where the carcase is, there will be eagles be gathered together". We hear the Spirit exhorting us to be "of one heart, of one mind", but in Christ. ...Let Farnese then show that Christ is on his side, and he will prove that the unity of the Church is with him"²⁸.

"However high our reputation may be, it is never well to be so very liberal in bestowing another's property; and if we must beware of being bountiful at the expense of men, what caution ought to be exercised in dispensing the truth of God, which he does not commit to our trust that we may lessen it in anything?"²⁹.

"Philip and Bucer have drawn up ambiguous and insincere formulas concerning transubstantiation, to try whether they could satisfy the opposite party by yielding nothing. I could not agree to this device, although they have, as they conceive, reasonable grounds for doing so, for they hope that in a short time it would so happen that they would begin to see more clearly if the matter of doctrine shall be left an open question for the present; therefore they rather wish to skip over it, and do not dread that equivocation in matters of conscience, than which nothing can possibly be more hurtful"³⁰.

3) *Relaciones de Calvino con otros Reformadores*

Las relaciones de Calvino para con sus compañeros de Reforma son la manifestación lógica de sus pensamientos ecuménicos expuestos anteriormente.

Como prólogo a la consideración de estas relaciones transcribimos unos párrafos del prefacio de la traducción latina del Catecismo que, según opinión de Doumergue, cuenta tal vez entre "las páginas más bellas que hayan sido escritas en favor de la armonía y concordia entre cristianos, entre pastores"³¹.

"Jésus-Christ: Mes serviteurs ne peuvent recevoir des blessures que je ne ressente pas moi-même. Oh! si notre esprit était dominé par la pensée que c'est sur Christ que portent nos coups, toutes les fois que nous nous laissons aller à attaquer ceux qui conservent ne fût-ce qu'une étincelle de piété, com-

²⁸ J. CALVIN: *Tracts*, I, 259.

²⁹ J. BONNET: *Letters*, I, 62. Carta a Louis de Tillet.

³⁰ J. BONNET: *Letters*, I, 263.

³¹ E. DOUMERGUE: *Jean Calvin, Les hommes et les choses de son temps*, t. II, *Les premiers essais* (Lausanne 1902) 234.

bien cette pensée n'étoufferait-elle pas de germes de contestations, combien n'éteindrait-elle pas de colères naissantes, combien de querelles ne préviendrait-elle pas?...

Chacun de nous doit par conséquent savoir, quand il le faut, faire le sacrifice de ses droits; à moins que nous ne voulions que, dans la lutte, les dons de Dieu ne soient mis en pièces, car on ne peut les respecter sans tolérer en même temps les défauts dont ils sont inséparables. Si c'est jusque-là que doivent aller notre support et notre modération, quel n'est pas notre tort quand, pour des soupçons vagues ou même sans fondement, nous nous séparons de ceux dont nous connaissons avec certitude la piété, la sincérité, et la probité? Il y a deux espèces de soupçons, qui ont déjà fait et qui font encore beaucoup de mal à l'Eglise: d'une part, quand nous donnons une interprétation malveillante à la conduite de nos frères et de nos compagnons d'oeuvre, tandis que, si l'on avait invoqué l'arbitrage de gens de bien, on serait arrivé à la pleine justification ou à l'excuse suffisante de cette conduite; d'autre part, quand nous montrons trop prompts à avaler et à retenir tous les mauvais bruits.

Si nous tenons à faire fleurir parmi nous l'union et la paix, recherchons l'unité dans la doctrine et dans les sentiments, plutôt que de nous attacher avec pédanterie à l'exacte conformité des cérémonies du culte. Il est, en effet, indigne de nous d'introduire dans les choses où le Seigneur nous a laissé l'usage de notre liberté, pour le plus grand avantage de l'édification, une conformité servile qui n'édifie pas. Certes, quand nous paraîtrons devant ce tribunal suprême, où nous aurons un jour à rendre compte de notre administration, ce n'est pas des cérémonies qu'il sera question. On n'examinera point ce qui concerne la conformité dans les choses extérieures, mais l'usage que nous aurons fait de notre liberté; il ne sera déclaré légitime que s'il a servi à l'édification. L'édification, voilà le but auquel doivent tendre toute notre sollicitude, notre vigilance, nos efforts et notre application. Sachons que nous ne pouvons l'atteindre que par une sérieuse crainte de Dieu, une piété sincère, et une pureté de moeurs qui ne soit pas de l'hypocrisie"³².

³² J. CALVIN: *Le Catechisme français*, 140-43. Tomado de E. DOUMERGUE: o. c. 234.

Calvino exhorta a Libertet y a otros hermanos, así como a la Iglesia de Ginebra para que preserven y cultiven la paz y la unidad.

"Some how or other it has so happened that in the hurry of writing I omitted what by no means I had intended. It was to exhort you and the other brethren in a few words, but most heartily, to the cultivation of peace, for the preservation of which you ought all of you to strive the more earnestly as Satan watches intently for its overthrow. You can scarce believe how much I was shocked at hearing of that new uproar about the lepers, set agoing by him of whom I would never have suspected such a thing. But at length he vomited out the poison with which he was sweltering from long dissimulation, and having fixed the sting, like a viper fled way. Be not wanting, on your part, I entreat you, so far as lies in you, which, indeed, I was confident would be the case of your own accord, but I was willing at the same time to interpose my prayer for peace"³³.

"God is our witness, and your own consciences before his judgmentseat, that while we had our conversation among you, our whole study has been to keep you together in happy union and concord of agreement"³⁴.

"; whatever may have given the occasion, I cannot hear without great and intense horror that any schism should settle down within the Church... I allude to what I have heard about those your contentions, so long as you were tossed about in uncertainty; since owing to thet circumstance not only was your Church rent by division quite openly, but also the ecclesiastical ministry exposed to obloquy and contempt. This of itself is of infinite importance"³⁵.

Se lamenta también de la división de las Iglesias, de la negligencia de los pastores, de su indiferencia por la unidad y pureza de la Iglesia de Cristo.

"This other thing also is to be ranked among the chief evils of our time, viz, that the Churches are so divided, that

³³ J. BONNET: *Letters*, I, 44. Esta carta firmada con el seudónimo de Martianus Lucanius, utilizado a veces por Calvino en su correspondencia latina, parece que se escribió un año antes de la publicación de la Institución Cristiana, es decir, el 1534. Está dirigida a Libertet o Fabri, un ministro de la Iglesia de Neuchâtel.

³⁴ J. BONNET: *Letters*, I, 83.

³⁵ J. BONNET: *Letters*, I, 142-43.

human fellowship is scarcely now in any repute amongst us, far less that Christian intercourse which all make a profession of, but few sincerely practise. If men of learning conduct themselves with more reserve than is seemly, the very heaviest blame attaches to the leaders themselves who, either engrossed in their own sinful pursuits, are indifferent to the safety and entire piety of the Church, or who, individually satisfied with their own private peace, have no regard for others. Thus it is that the members of the Church being severed, the body lies bleeding. So much does this concern me that, could I be of any service, I would not grudge to cross even ten seas, if need were, on account of it”³⁶.

“We have reason to lament that good and otherwise right-hearted men are not more earnestly affected by the desire of promoting the public peace. For if they no longer need to care for the establishment among themselves of a godly union, they ought at least to consider it a duty to endeavour to come to a good mutual understanding with the Churches. Luther, with whom I do freely acknowledge that I am not satisfied, may have been to blame. But what will it at length come to, if thus of set purpose we contend with each other, which can exceed the other in sin?”³⁷.

A pesar de las innumerables dificultades en contra, Calvino adoptó una actitud conciliadora hacia Lutero, si bien es cierto que nunca hizo concesiones contrarias a sus principios fundamentales.

“Would that I could fly to you, that I might even for a few hours enjoy the happiness of your society; for I would prefer, and it would be far better, not only upon this question, but also about others, to converse personally with yourself; but seeing that it is not granted to us on earth, I hope that shortly it will come to pas in the Kingdom of God. Adieu, most renowned sir, most distinguished minister of Christ, and my ever-honoured father”³⁸.

³⁶ J. BONNET: *Letters*, II, 347-48. Carta a Cranmer, desde Ginebra, en abril de 1552. Thomas Cranmer, arzobispo de Canterbury y primado de Inglaterra, desempeñó un papel importante en la reforma de este país durante los reinados de Enrique VIII y Eduardo VI.

³⁷ J. BONNET: *Letters*, I, 89.

³⁸ J. BONNET: *Letters*, I, 442. Esta es la única carta dirigida a Lutero, escrita en el año 1545, en la que le presenta varios de sus escritos con la intención de obtener su aprobación.

“Crato, one of our engravers, lately returned from Wittemberg, who brought a letter from Luther to Bucer, in which there was written: “Salute for me reverently Sturm and Calvin, whose books I have read with special delight”. Now, consider seriously what I have said there about the Eucharist; think of the ingenuousness of Luther: it will now be easy for you to see how unreasonable are those who obstinately dissent from him... “I hope that Calvin will one day think better of us (de Lutero y sus amigos) but in any event it is well that he should even now have a proof of our good feeling towards him”³⁹.

“Howbeit, in the Church we must always be upon our guard, lest we pay too great a deference to men. For it is all over with her, when a single individual, be he whosoever you please, has more authority than all the rest, especially where this very person does not scruple to try how far he may go”⁴⁰.

Otro tanto puede afirmarse de su postura ante la doctrina de Bucer.

“But I beseech you, my Bullinger, to consider with what propriety we should alienate ourselves from Bucer, seeing he subscribes this very confession which I have laid down. I shall not at present declare the virtues, both rare and manifold, by which that man is distinguished. I shall only say that I should do a grievous injury to the Church of God, were I either to hate or despise him”⁴¹.

Consideraciones finales

La doctrina ecuménica de Calvino, expuesta a lo largo de estas páginas, pudiera resumirse en las siguientes proposicio-

³⁹ J. BONNET: *Letters*, I, 166-67. Escrita a Farel; en ella se consignan los saludos de Lutero a Calvino.

⁴⁰ J. BONNET: *Letters*, I, 467. En el año 1545, cinco meses más tarde de su carta a Lutero, Calvino escribe a Melanchthon lamentando la tiranía de aquél y rogando a este último que muestre decisión y firmeza.

⁴¹J. BONNET: *Letters*, II, 171. Escribe a Bullinger desde Ginebra en junio de 1548 acerca de nuevas explicaciones en torno a la última Cena.

nes que, a su vez, serían los principios que iluminan toda su praxis de unidad eclesial:

— El ecumenismo de Calvino viene exigido teóricamente por su concepción sobre la Iglesia. Si, como creemos, la opinión que este Reformador tiene de la realidad eclesial es unitaria, en el sentido que la elección divina determina la cuestión de verdad o falsedad aplicada a la Iglesia, excluyendo con ello toda disociación o dualismo entre el elemento visible e invisible, es obligado concluir la admisión, por parte de Calvino, de tesoros de la Iglesia de Dios —al menos teóricamente— en cualquiera de las formas históricas eclesiales⁴².

— Esta actitud doctrinal obliga a Calvino a considerar como verdaderas aquellas Iglesias que, a pesar de sus desviaciones y errores, han permanecido fieles a las exigencias fundamentales de la Palabra. Así, él reconoce la validez del bautismo celebrado en la Iglesia Romana siempre que sea administrado por un ministro suyo, y su ministerio, al menos en este punto.

— El ecumenismo de la teología de la Reforma distingue unos principios fundamentales de otros secundarios; la conculcación de los primeros supone la pérdida del derecho a que una comunidad se llame y se considere Iglesia, si bien hay que advertir que la pureza de doctrina, la práctica sacramentaria y el ejercicio de la disciplina nunca serán absolutos ni en las Iglesias fieles a Cristo, el Señor. El olvido de los principios secundarios no rompe con la verdadera Iglesia de Cristo.

— La naturaleza de la unidad cristiana por la que Calvino trabajó durante un cuarto de siglo no es de tipo político, ni basada en identidad de ceremonias sino que se fundamenta en la verdad, en la Palabra de Dios, y se expresa en el amor a los hermanos.

⁴² J. J. HERNÁNDEZ: *Pensamiento de Juan Calvino sobre la Iglesia de Dios*, en *Ciencia Tomista* 99 (1972) 122 ss.

— Finalmente, esa unidad, como observa Nichols⁴³, tiene un carácter escatológico, en cuanto que, a pesar de que ha de ser trabajada en la historia, su consecución final es metahistórica.

⁴³ J. H. NICHOLS: *A protestant theologian looks at Ecumenism*, en *Ecumenism and Vatican II* (O. Neill) (Milwaukee 1964) 27.