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On becoming children: In conversation with Calvin on receiving and responding to the gift of faith amidst the reality of an insecure and traumatised world.

ABSTRACT

The article describes Calvin's interpretation of faith from a Christological perspective that is historical, relational and embedded in the biblical and contextual narrative to point out the rhetorical power of faith. The grounding of faith is described as the process of becoming God's beloved and grateful children and prayer is described as one of the benefits of faith. The article reflects on the meaning of this gift of faith (grounding and benefits) in the context of a fragile world by engaging the voice of contemporary Calvin scholar, Serene Jones. The article describes her appeal to prayer when dealing with the issues of trauma, as a way in which faith functions with rhetorical power through the biblical and contextual narrative.

*Faith is a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favour toward us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ, and revealed to our minds, and sealed on our hearts, by the Holy Spirit.*²

1. INTRODUCTION

We live in a world marked by violence, poverty, suffering and unexpected changes. Some of these unexpected changes are the recent worldwide economic crisis that led to financial insecurity for many, as well as the sudden natural disasters in – for example – Japan and Australia that disrupted communities, destroyed infrastructure and caused the loss of many loved ones. These realities deeply challenge our confidence in our own ability to create and sustain safe and secure societies. This is evident in the many voices that raise concerns about the growing gap between the rich and the poor, ecological crisis, global warming, food shortages, frail democracies, HIV/Aids orphans, refugees, gender and race discriminations, to mention but a few of the shortcomings in the current system.³ One therefore asks, as a person of faith, what faith means amidst these challenges, changes and brokenness. Does the Christian faith alter the reality in which we live and, if so, how do we relate to this altered reality? What is this gift of faith and how do we enjoy it amidst these uncertain times?

John Calvin addressed similar questions about faith in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. He, too, lived in uncertain circumstances, experienced threats to his life, lived as a refugee, lost many loved ones and suffered from physical illness.⁴ Calvin wrote *Institutes of the Christian Religion* with the dual purpose of explaining the basic principles of the subject to new converts to the

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2 Calvin, J. 1559. *Institutes of the Christian religion*. Translated by Henry Beveridge, 1989. Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, III.2.7, p 475.

3 For a discussion on these concerns of globalism, see Boesak, A & Hansen, L (eds). 2009. *Globalisation: The politics of empire, justice and the life of faith*. Stellenbosch: SUN Press.

4 Steinmetz, DC. 2010. *Calvin in context*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp 3-22.

Christian faith and to inform the French king of the theological views of the Protestants and their peaceful intent. In this work he wrote and taught about faith from his own displacement and uncertainties.⁵ Calvin also wrote a dramatic commentary on the Book of Psalms, calling it the 'anatomy of the soul', in which he strongly voiced his own fears, rage, anger, loss and insecurities alongside the psalmists' pleas to the Lord.⁶

In this article, I contend that this 16th-century scholar's insight makes us aware of how the promise of the living Christ touches our identity and everyday reality in the 21st century. Calvin offers a description of faith that is life-giving, true and steadfast, and I reflect on this meaning as the process of becoming children. I describe this process in three movements: first, becoming God's children; second, becoming beloved and grateful children; third, living as God's children in this traumatised world.

I am hesitant and cautious to write about faith amidst the reality of suffering, as faith can easily be perceived as an opiate that encourages believers to endure their sufferings and to ignore the realities of their lives and that of their neighbours. Faith then becomes a form of pietism that focuses on the so-called spiritual needs of people, thereby ignoring the physical and social realities of personal pain and structural injustice.⁷

I write this article with the presupposition that the grace and love of God need to filter through to our whole existence, to the realities of individual suffering, to marginalised groups that suffer collectively and to the structures of our families, neighbourhoods, societies and nations.⁸

2. ON BECOMING GOD'S CHILDREN: A VIEW ON CALVIN'S CHRISTOLOGY

Edmondson contributes to the discussion on Calvin's Christology in pointing out that Calvin describes the communication of God's grace in Christ as the Mediator embedded within the

5 Ibid p 9.

6 Jones, S. 2009. *Trauma + grace: Theology in a ruptured world*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, p 43.

7 The ambiguous church history in South Africa points to different realities into which faith has spoken and the consequences of that. The harsh reality of apartheid that was theologically justified and supported through practices of faith serves as a warning that faith should not be marginalised into a purely private affair but should also address the reality of structural injustice. See Smit, D. 2007. Reformed faith, justice and the struggle against apartheid, in *Essays in public theology*. Stellenbosch: SUN Press, pp 27–39.

8 See the third article of the Belhar Confession in 'Die belydenis 1986. NG Sendingkerk in SA. Bybelse Versoening en 'n Stature Geskeide Gemeenskap'. The third article of the Belhar Confession deals with an understanding that justice through Christ should become visible acts of love, care and peace in society and that Christians should actively address any form of injustice that occurs in society. We confess: 'We believe that God has revealed himself as the one who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people; that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged; that God calls the church to follow him in this; for God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry; that God frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind; that God supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly; that for God pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering; that God wishes to teach the church to do what is good and to seek the right; that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream; that the church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others. Therefore, we reject any ideology which would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine which is unwilling to resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel.'

context of the covenant history.⁹ He names three characteristics of Calvin's Christology: it is eclectic, historical (defined by actuality, rhetorical shape and narrativity) and relational (defined as dynamic and personal).¹⁰

Edmondson explains *eclecticism* as Calvin's use of a variety of biblical narratives that embrace a vast spectrum of existential realities to describe who Christ is. As the Mediator (Calvin explains), Christ holds the threefold office of Prophet, King and Priest; and the functioning of this threefold office is accounted for in the different narratives of the gospel history.

Calvin uses the category of *history* as matter and purpose, thereby communicating his commitment to the *actuality*, *rhetorical shape* and intent, and *narrativity* of history. He uses history both in its broader sense (as the history of the covenant) and in its narrower sense (as the gospel history).

Calvin draws attention to what Christ has done in history and thereby appeals to the actuality of the history in which the world and our relationship with Christ have been altered. Edmondson explains that Calvin wants us to draw confidence from this altered history that is concrete and real in order to give us confidence in the love of God. The gospel history, in Calvin's mind, was also written with this rhetorical power in mind, this ability to draw confidence from the gospel history because it rests on actuality – it is true because it is real, and therefore able to touch us. Calvin explains that biblical history was written to make God himself available to us in its rhetorical power because the rhetorical power of Christ is bound up with the actuality of biblical history, the actuality of Christ being the fulfilment of the promise of the covenant, on which our renewed relationship with God is based. The witness of this actualised new relationship is accounted for in the gospel history, and it continues to shape us. It is therefore God himself who actualises his divine will in history, who adopts us and convinces us of his love for us through his Word and Spirit.

According to Edmondson, Calvin explains that it is only through the narrative that we have access to the rhetorical power founded on the actuality of Christ. This opens the avenue for Calvin to turn to stories, to reflect on Christ as being portrayed in the biblical narrative in the rich variety of Christ's life – as (for example) the fountain, brother, criminal and king. Calvin chooses to tell the narrative of Christ with reference to Christ's threefold office as Prophet, King and Priest because this, to Calvin, is the most powerful way to convince his readers of the actuality of God's love mediated through Christ.

Edmondson argues that the narrativity of history serves Calvin's Christology in two ways: First, Calvin is committed to Israel's covenant history and this enables him to relate the rich complexity of Christ's life to concrete and actual events. Second, the narrative is being told in such a way that readers will be convinced of Christ as the fountain of all good and then draw near to this reality in faith and obedience.

In Book III of the *Institutes*, in his discussion on sanctification, Calvin shows how the narrative shapes Christians' lives. This participation in Christ he describes as an engagement with Christ's history mediated through the narrative of Christ as Prophet, King and Priest.

But Calvin's use of narrative moves beyond its imaginative power insofar as the narrative in question seeks not merely to shape us, but to induce our participation in it through a community of activity with Christ in his history.¹¹

The actuality, rhetorical power and narrativity of history are inseparable from one another; together, they function as Christ's history that is also our history now.

The *relational* aspect of Calvin's Christology is notable, not only in the actuality of the Christ

9 Edmondson, S. 2004. *Calvin's Christology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp 40–88.

10 *Ibid* pp 220–236.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 226.

event that the promise has been fulfilled and the covenant upheld (Christ *for* us), but also in the engaging in, the adoption into the church's fellowship with God through faith (Christ *in* us). This relation is both dynamic and personal, for it is our lives – our stories – that are engrafted into Christ; and also his love, care, security and trustworthiness that shape our lives and enable us to respond to 'Abba' – Father – as his own children.

I will now turn to a more detailed description of faith by Calvin in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, keeping Edmondson's lens of Calvin's Christology in mind, to elaborate on how faith functions historically and relationally to enable us to realise the rhetorical force of the narrative for us today.

3. ON BECOMING BELOVED CHILDREN: RECEIVING THE GIFT OF FAITH

I describe the receiving of the gift of faith from a divine as well as a human perspective, within the actuality of the covenant history of the one Mediator who adopts us into his body and who exhorts us to trust the divine goodness offered to us.

The divine perspective on receiving faith can be viewed as a description of the *kind of gift* that is offered to us with its actuality founded on *the truth of a free promise in Christ*, and its rhetorical power on *the firm and sure knowledge of the divine favour towards us*.

The human perspective on receiving faith can be viewed as a description of *how and to what benefit we receive the gift* with its actuality (*the free promise*) revealed to *our minds* by the Holy Spirit, and its rhetorical power (*the divine goodness*) sealed on *our hearts* by the Holy Spirit. The gift is therefore the access, revealed to our minds and sealed on our hearts, into the fellowship of Christ; our response is merely to receive this fellowship gratefully.

3.1 The divine perspective of receiving the gift of faith

3.1.1. *The one Mediator who offers the gift of faith*¹²

Calvin begins the discussion of faith in Book III of *Institutes of the Christian Religion* with the question, 'How do we obtain and participate in what Christ has done for us?' He reminds his readers,

that so long as we are without Christ and separated from him, nothing which he suffered and did for the salvation of the human race is of the least benefit to us. To communicate to us the blessings which he received from the Father, he must become ours and dwell in us.¹³

These words are written against the background of Book I and Book II, in which Calvin addresses the question regarding our knowledge of God as Creator and Redeemer. He tries not only to answer the question about knowledge of God in general but also to answer in particular what kind of God is revealed to us. Now, after discussing the revealed knowledge of God, the Redeemer who is for us and not against us, Calvin explains in Book III how we obtain this grace.

This question on knowledge of God and the mediation of grace was vigorously debated during the Reformation, with the emphasis not on how Christ mediates but on whether Christ alone mediates. This interpretation differs from Rome's understanding that Christ mediates along with the church, the priests and the sacraments.¹⁴ Calvin begins Book III by reminding his readers that Christ alone mediates and that, apart from Christ, we are nothing. He often repeats that this union, this adoption by and participation in Christ, is necessary so that the work of the Saviour will not be in vain.

¹² *Inst* III.1.1, p. 463.

¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ Steinmetz, DC. 2010. *Calvin in context*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp 3–22.

This first section of Book III of the *Institutes* continues to strengthen Calvin's argument that it is Christ alone who mediates and who offers all benefits. In the discussion on faith, it is crucial to be reminded of the one Mediator who offers the gift of faith, because the reliability of the relationship does not hinge on our efforts but is sustained by Christ and in Christ, for us and within us to enjoy.

3.1.2 Faith as the secret operation of the Holy Spirit

Faith functions from a divine perspective as the secret operation of the Holy Spirit, who is the bond that unites us with Christ and is therefore called the *Spirit of sanctification and adoption*. It is called the Spirit of *adoption* because it is through the Spirit that we are able to cry, 'Abba, Father'. We have access to the Father from whom we have been estranged, and are now called children of God.¹⁵ Calvin affirms that the Spirit that unites us with Christ is the Spirit of Christ. 'The Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually binds us to himself.'¹⁶ Without the secret operation of the Holy Spirit, 'we view Christ coldly and from a distance'.¹⁷ It is through the Spirit that we are pulled closer and adopted into his grace. It is called the Spirit of *sanctification*, as our salvation is perfected in the person of Christ and by making us partakers in Christ; we are cleansed, made new creatures and dedicated to the Lord as holy temples.

The Spirit is described as *water*, the life-giving force with which we are invited to quench our thirst. When we are restored to the full vigour of life, the Spirit is called *oil* or *unction*. She is constantly cleansing us from pollution and enflaming our hearts with love of God and piety – hence she is called *fire*. She is called *fountain*, from which the goodness and heavenly riches flow to us; or the *hand* of God by which the power of divine life enters and guides our lives, so that we no longer rely on ourselves.¹⁸

The secret operation of the Holy Spirit points to the actuality of Christ's work done for us, with such power that Christ's work now happens within us. We are adopted into the gospel history, and the actuality of what happened with Christ is an actuality in our own lives as we participate in the life of faith as beloved children.

3.2 The human perspective of receiving the gift of faith

3.2.1 Faith, the hand by which we embrace Christ the Redeemer

Faith functions from a human perspective as the hand by which we embrace Christ the Redeemer, revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. Calvin deals with faith in 43 subsections by first explaining what faith is not – namely the idea and argument that God is the object of faith and that faith functions implicit in our minds – and then giving a definition of faith and the meaning thereof. Calvin continues his argument that there is only one Mediator between God and humanity, and even though I describe the human participation of this relation, Calvin's account thereof remains that through Christ, the Word and the Spirit we are drawn into the reality of grace. Only then we acknowledge, trust and place our hope in Christ, our Saviour.

Calvin points out that faith in God without reference to Christ destroys faith. He also deals with this in Book II.6.4:

It is true indeed that faith has respect to God only; but to this we should add, that it acknowledges Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. God would remain far off, concealed from

15 Gerrish, BA. 1993. *Grace and gratitude: The Eucharistic theology of John Calvin*. Minneapolis: Fortress, p 89.

16 *Inst* III.1.2, p. 464.

17 *Inst* III.1.3, p 465.

18 *Inst* III.2.13, p 481.

us, were we not irradiated by the brightness of Christ.¹⁹

The first step in piety, Calvin reminds his readers, is to realise that God is our Father and that this knowledge is revealed to us through Christ, his son, in such a manner as to accommodate himself to our capacity.²⁰ It is in this particular accommodation of himself to us that we are able to see his divine goodwill towards us and that we are enlightened by the Holy Spirit to trust God as our Father. True faith, therefore, is not ignorant, faith that is implicit; not mere knowledge of God, but knowledge of the divine will.²¹ Implicit faith can serve as a preparation for true faith, but as soon as we embrace Christ as our only teacher, we will feel assured that he is the author of our salvation. In present times, he continues to be the author of our salvation as the gospel bears testimony to his work; therefore, 'we say that the word itself, whatever be the way in which it is conveyed to us, is a kind of mirror in which faith beholds God'.²²

Calvin reminds his readers that the law of God needs to be completely upheld and respected in all aspects; otherwise, the judgement of eternal death will be delivered. Here Calvin shows that we are unable to fulfil the demands of the law and that we are therefore unable to rely on our own strength. We have faith in Christ as he is revealed to us as the One who fulfilled the law; he became the fulfilled promise in history by upholding the covenant with humanity. God is merciful and faithful in his promises, and Christ is the only pledge of love.

In one word, he only is a true believer who, firmly persuaded that God is reconciled, and is a kind Father to him, hopes everything from his kindness, who trusting to the promises of the divine favour, with undoubting confidence anticipates salvation; as the Apostle shows in these words, 'We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end' (Heb. iii.14).²³

Calvin elaborates on the definition of faith²⁴ whereby *knowledge* is a kind of knowledge that surpasses all understanding and whereby believers know and understand themselves as children of God in the breadth and length and depth and height of Christ's love.²⁵

This knowledge is described as a *sure and firm knowledge*, as confidence in the goodness of God that is offered to us. This assurance is sure and firm, alleviating the anxiety of not being sure or being in doubt whether God will be merciful to us.²⁶ The principle of faith is that each one of us needs to internalise this assurance personally.

We must not suppose that any promise of mercy which the Lord offers is only true out of us, and not at all in us: we should rather make them ours by inwardly embracing them.²⁷

Calvin describes this assurance not as a tranquil knowledge but rather as a perpetual struggle with the believer's own distrust. He uses David as an example of someone who was constantly overwhelmed by doubt but did not cease to cry out for the mercy of God.²⁸

Here we find an example of the third notion of Edmondson's description of Calvin's Christology: the narrative that gives a full description of believers' lives with regard to how they

19 *Inst* III.2.1, p 470. Calvin emphasises that the image of the invisible Father (the glory of God) is to be sought and met in the face of Jesus Christ. He points his readers to the following scriptural passages: 1 Tim vi.16; John viii.12; John xiv.6; Luke x.22; 1 Cor ii.2; Acts xx.21; Acts xxvi.17,18; 2 Cor iv.6.

20 *Inst* II.6.4, p 297.

21 *Inst* III.2.2, p 470.

22 *Inst* III.2.6, p 474.

23 *Inst* III.2.16, p 484.

24 *Inst* III.2.7, p 475. "That it is a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favour toward us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ, and revealed to our minds, and sealed on our hearts, by the Holy Spirit."

25 *Inst* III.2.14, p 482.

26 *Inst* III.2.15, p 482.

27 *Inst* III.2.16, p 483.

28 *Inst* III.2.17, p 485.

live the life of faith in the midst of its doubts, fears and insecurities. The narrative gives us not only an example of the lives of believers but also insight into their prayers and their clinging to the promise of God's love. We are adopted and sanctified by receiving the gift of faith, and we rest assured that we remain forever his beloved children.

4. ON BECOMING GRATEFUL CHILDREN: RESPONDING TO THE GIFT OF FAITH

The gift that we as believers received is free reconciliation and newness of life.²⁹ The gospel compels us to respond after we have received the assurance (tranquillity of our minds) of the goodness of God's will. After our adoption, sanctification follows, which does not require of us to climb a ladder of holiness but rather requires us to receive the grace and love of the Father, thereby allowing the Father's love to truly touch and reform us. 'Believers have by free adoption, or by gift, what Christ has by nature.'³⁰ We are, first of all, forgiven and then we are able to love; and through this love, we give thanks and bear witness to the Lord's kindness.

According to Calvin the effects of faith are repentance or regeneration, a Christian life, justification and prayer. This response is the fruit of faith; it flows from faith and neither precedes it nor is the merit thereof. Calvin describes this responding as a process that takes place throughout our whole life.

Regeneration flows, therefore, from faith and it consists of two parts, namely mortification and quickening.

Mortification is the realisation of the sin, the self-interest of lives and a true sense of divine judgement that is the beginning of hatred of sin. Quickenings is the joy which the soul feels after being calmed from fear.³¹

Here we witness how the rhetorical power of the actuality of our forgiveness in Christ and the free reconciliation that follows from it directly alters our narrative.

The whole of Christian existence – the life of the new self – is then perceived as nothing but life of God's adopted sons and daughters, and it is in its very essence a life of confidence and freedom.³²

It is from this confidence and freedom in the loving Father that we, as adopted and beloved children, respond with gratitude.

5. ON LIVING AS HIS CHILDREN: RESPONDING TO NEGLECT

I want to use Jones's work to provide an example of how faith functions with rhetorical power through the narrative. In her book *Trauma and Grace*,³³ Jones deals with the reality of people who have been affected by different forms of violence. She relies on Judith Herman's work to give her insight into the psychological landscape of traumatised individuals and groups.

Traumatized people feel utterly abandoned, utterly alone, cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life. Thereafter, a sense of alienation, of disconnection, pervades every relationship, from the intimate familial bonds to the most abstract affiliations of community and religion. When trust is lost, traumatized people feel

29 *Inst* III.3.1, p 509.

30 *Inst* II.14. 5-6, pp 419–421.

31 *Inst* III.3.3, p 511.

32 Gerrish, BA. 1993. *Grace and gratitude: The Eucharistic theology of John Calvin*. Minneapolis: Fortress, p 100.

33 Jones, S. 2009. *Trauma + grace: Theology in a ruptured world*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox.

that they belong more to the dead than to the living.³⁴

Jones argues that trauma influences not only the self but also how the story of grace is heard and received. She turns to Calvin, who in her opinion has dealt with the issue of trauma within the reality of divine love throughout his life. Calvin's own life was one of trauma and displacement yet, in *Institutions*, Calvin³⁵ takes great care to show how God in Christ is a loving Father to us. He reassures his fellow refugees so that they may trust the Lord.

Jones points out that in Calvin's commentary on the Book of Psalms, he discerns three modes of prayer in which the psalms are written: psalms of deliverance, psalms of lament and psalms of thanksgiving. These three modes, Jones argues, are similar to the three stages of healing the traumatised: establishing safety, hearing the story and integrating healing into everyday life.

It is through the *mode of prayer* that we live daily in the reality of the living Christ. It is in prayer that we are reminded of our identity as children of God and experience the rhetorical power of the Father's love. It is in the action of surrendering our own narratives, our pain and suffering, into the trustworthy hands of the Father that our wounds are healed. It is in prayer that our narratives are reframed in grace and that our lives become integrated.

Jones concludes with the notions of mourning and wonder³⁶ as a way to proceed with trauma and grace. To her, these actions of mourning, of deeply feeling the sorrow and pain of neglect, are a way in which we acknowledge the realities of our own lives. And in the midst thereof, the possibility of wonder breaks through. Jones does not write about this wonder as an all-changing reality that overcomes all the pain and hurt, but rather describes a wonder that is a perpetually new realisation of the love offered to us. This love takes on many faces and forms but is rooted in the free promise of Christ.

She concludes:

This fall is not just social or collective; it also structures the deep logic of our interior worlds, its rupturing force reaching into our core. In this way, we are set up to relentlessly mourn the loss of our own innocence, whether at our own hands or another's; it is gone and it will not return. We constantly grieve the loss of ourselves while discovering our innocence.

What fortitude of spirit this demands from us.³⁷

Jones lives between this loss of the self and the discovery of her innocent childhood identity that can trust the Father.

6. CONCLUSION

In many ways it remains impossible to understand how our relationship with God works and how we participate in this union. Calvin offers us a view that takes us back, again and again, to the living Christ as the author of the relationship, the One who sustains it. Edmondson gave us a view on the actuality and rhetorical power of the life in Christ. Again we are reminded that, no matter how chaotic our world might be – perhaps filled with senseless violence and sudden changes or harmed by our own or others' enslavement to and entanglements with sin – our security and freedom do not lie within ourselves.

Security and freedom lie, from a human perspective, in the continued realisation that we are children of grace who belong to the Father³⁸ and that we therefore can come to our Father with

34 Ibid p 50.

35 Ibid pp 43–67.

36 Ibid pp 151–165.

37 Ibid p 165.

38 Many feminists have argued that male language for God is received negatively, especially when women have suffered abuse by their fathers or other dominant male figures. Jones also take cognisance of this critique, and as a feminist theologian she carefully gives an account of three different views on the cross

confidence and without fear. Jones turns to prayer where she is able to mourn, in the confidence that her prayers are heard by our Father, and where she, the adopted child, can be surprised by the wonder of the love that comes to her. It is in the reality of the actuality; rhetorical power and narrativity of God's love that our own narratives open up and by grace remain open to his touch and care.

In the first movement I describe in this article, I used Edmondson's lens of Calvin's Christology to explain how Christ functioned in history and how the power of Christ's life, death and resurrection continues to function in our own life stories through the gospel history and the secret operation of the Holy Spirit. Thus, by the grace of God we are adopted, and he compels us to live our own life stories in the reality of His narrative, as his children. Then, I described Calvin's notion of faith from this Christological foundation by referring to certain sections in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* from which I concluded that we become beloved and grateful children by receiving and responding to the gift of faith. In the last movement, I showed how we live as God's children from this Christological understanding of faith by using an example from the contemporary work of a Calvin scholar, Serene Jones, who addresses trauma and grace through an appeal to prayer. I showed how she employs one of the benefits of faith, namely prayer, as a way in which we participate through mourning and wonder in the narrative, in the actuality of the altered world with its rhetorical power amidst a traumatised world, to become adopted, beloved and grateful children.

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KEY WORDS

Calvin
Christology
Faith
Trauma
Prayer
Rhetorical power

TREFWOORDE

– the Alluring Cross, the Mirrored Cross and the Unending Cross – to voice a different Christology, which takes into account various responses to the suffering of women. See Jones, S. 2009. *Trauma + grace: Theology in a ruptured world*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, pp. 69–85. See also her discussion on feminist theory in Jones, S. 2000. *Feminist theory and Christian theology: Cartographies of grace*. Minneapolis: Fortress.

I prefer to use male language for God, (Father), in this article, because Calvin challenges us with the love of the Father precisely during the times when we feel abandoned by him and distrust his promises.

Calvyn
Christologie
Geloof
Trauma
Gebed
Retoriese krag

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