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Autopistia : the self-convincing authority of scripture in reformed theology

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Citation
Belt, H. van der. (2006, October 4). *Autopistia : the self-convincing authority of scripture in reformed theology*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4582

Version:	Corrected Publisher's Version
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Downloaded from:	https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4582

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

3 The Source and Sense of Αὐτόπιστος

Now that we have discussed the introduction of the term αὐτόπιστος in the 1559 edition of the *Institutes*, we will take a closer look at the exact meaning of the term in the context of Calvin's theological work, tracing the source of the term and the contexts in which the term was used in Calvin's days. The use of the term αὐτόπιστος will also be placed in a historical perspective. We will not give a survey of the development of the concept of the authority of Scripture throughout the ages, but focus on the influence on Calvin from the theology of the church fathers, medieval theologians, and the Reformers. Calvin was of the opinion that the meaning of a term has to be determined by the way in which it is used rather than by its etymology.[1] This humanistic insight is also important for us; therefore the semantic context in which the term αὐτόπιστος occurs in Calvin's works will be examined.

3.1 Greek instead of Latin

Calvin deliberately used a Greek word in the Latin text of the *Institutes*; as a humanistic scholar he apparently found it necessary to use the original Greek term in this case. He probably did this because he was not content with the Latin alternatives. By the Greek term αὐτόπιστος Calvin suggested that there was a special nuance in this word that was hard to translate. In the medieval theological textbooks Greek words were seldom used; rather the Latin equivalents were chosen. In his use of Greek in a Latin text Calvin was a typical Renaissance scholar. Because of his special interest in the original sources (*ad fontes*) he sometimes preferred a Greek term to a Latin translation.

3.1.1 Searching for the Source

Sometimes Calvin's Greek words stem from the New Testament. Terms like λόγος and ἔλεγχος in the *Institutes* come directly from the Greek Testament.[2] In other cases the Greek terms come from the church fathers, as the expression ἰδιωμάτων κοινωνία.[3] They can also be derived from philosophical sources as in the discussion of the faculties of the soul, where Calvin refers to Aristotle's distinction of the will (βούλησις), the impulse (ὁρμή), and the emotion (πάθος).[4] Calvin does not give an indication of his source for αὐτόπιστος and therefore we will have to trace the occurrences of the term that were available to Calvin. The sixteenth-century dictionaries show which Greek words were commonly used in Calvin's days. In the *Lexicon Graeco Latinum* compiled by Giovanni Crastoni and published for the first time in ca. 1480 αὐτόπιστος does not occur. The term ἀξιόπιστος

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1 "Quid interest inter tyrannum & regem. Quinquid est differentiae, vsus potius quàm verbi etymon aut proprietas constituit." J. Calvin, *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia*, ed. F.L. Battles and A.M. Hugo, Leiden 1969, 200-201. Cf. Jones, *Calvin and the Rhetoric of Piety*, 80, n. 18.

2 The word λόγος comes from John 1,1. Calvin, *Institutes* 1.13.22, *OS* 3, 138; ἔλεγχος comes from Heb. 11,1. Calvin, *Institutes* 3.2.41, *OS* 4, 51. Unfortunately, no extensive study of the use of Greek terms by Calvin has been published, thus far; it might be helpful to understand the influences on Calvin from the church fathers and from ancient philosophy.

3 Calvin, *Institutes* 2.14.1, *OS* 3, 459.

4 Calvin, *Institutes* 1.15.6, *OS* 3, 184.

is translated as "fide dignus."[5] In the *Lexicon Graeco Latinum* of Guillaume Budé (1468-1540), printed for the first time in Paris in 1530, αὐτόπιστος is translated as "per se fidem faciens sine argumentis."[6] This shows that the term αὐτόπιστος was known in the circle of humanistic scholars in which Calvin was educated. The lemma in Budé's dictionary underlines the meaning of αὐτόπιστος in the *Institutes*. Something that is αὐτόπιστος makes or creates its own *fides*.

The most important Greek-Latin dictionary of the sixteenth century was edited by Henry Estienne (1528-1598) and titled *Thesaurus linguae graecae* (1572). This work served as the basis of Greek lexicography up to the nineteenth century. Estienne gives the following definition: "Αὐτόπιστος, Per se probabilis seu credibilis, Cui per se fides adhibetur, sine argumentis."[7] Αὐτόπιστος implies that something is probable or credible by itself or that it leads to faith by itself without arguments. Estienne refers to John Philoponus, a sixth-century Christian philosopher and gives two quotations: "ἀξίωμα αὐτόπιστον καὶ ἀναπόδεικτον" and "αὐτόπιστος πρότασις"; he translates the second as: "propositio quae per se fidem meretur."[8]

In order to sort out the possible sources of αὐτόπιστος for Calvin, we have consulted the digital collection of Greek texts *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (*TLG*) to trace all the occurrences of the term in the ancient Greek texts. *TLG* has collected and digitized virtually all Greek texts surviving from the period between Homer (eighth century BC) and 600 AD and the majority of the texts up to the fall of Byzantium in 1453 AD. The search key "αὐτοπιστ-" has led to a total of 88 matches in the entire *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. These 88 matches are found in the works of 20 different authors ranging from the first to the twelfth century AD.[9]

List of authors and works from the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*

(αὐτόπιστος or one of its derivatives is used (#) times)

Heron Mechanicus, (first century AD)

Definitiones (3)

Themistius Philosophus et Rhetoricus (fourth century AD)

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5 J. Craston, *Lexicon Graeco-Latinum*, Mutinae [1499-1500].

6 G. Budé, D. Erasmus, and L. Valla, *Lexicon Graeco Latinum cui praeter omneis omnium additiones hactenus*, Paris 1530. Sometimes it is titled *Dictionarium Graeco Latinum.* It was reprinted four times during Calvin's lifetime, in Basel in 1532 and 1537, and in Geneva in 1554 and 1562. The lexicon was published one year after his collection of lexicographical notes, G. Budé, *Commentarii linguae Graecae*, Paris 1529. Calvin used these notes in his Seneca commentary, without referring to it explicitly. Lane, *John Calvin: Student*, 73.

7 H. Estienne, *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae*, Geneva [1572], 5, 584.

8 Estienne, *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae*, 5, 584. A *Lexicon Graecolatinum* printed in Geneva, translates αὐτόπιστος exactly in the same way and also refers to John Philoponus. *Lexicon Graecolatinum recens constructum*, Geneva 1583, 191. This lexicon is published anonymously; it may have been composed by the printer and scholar Jean Crespin or by John Scapula, a corrector of H. Estienne, who is sometimes blamed of plagiarism. His *Lexicon* was much less expensive than Estienne's *Thesaurus*. Cf. J. Scapula, *Lexicon Graeco-Latinum novum*, Basil 1579.

9 The titles of the works and the information about the authors in the list are copied from the *TLG Canon of Greek Authors and Works*. For this study the CD-ROM edition was used: *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, CD-ROM E, Irvine 2000.

Quae fertur in Aristotelis analyticorum priorum librum i paraphrasis (2)
Joannes Chrysostomus (fourth-fifth century AD)
In catenas sancti Petri (1)
Proclus Philosophus (fifth century AD)
In primum Euclidis elementorum librum commentarii (5)
Speusippus Philosophus (4th century BC) in Proclus (fifth century AD)
Fragmenta (1)
Damascius Philosophus (fifth-sixth century AD)
In Philebum (1)
In Phaedonem (1)
Asclepius Philosophus (sixth century AD)
In Aristotelis metaphysicorum libros A-Z commentaria (4)
Joannes Philoponus (sixth century AD)
In Aristotelis categorias commentarium (3)
In Aristotelis analytica priora commentaria (4)
In Aristotelis analytica posteriora commentaria (18)
In Aristotelis libros de anima commentaria (1)
In Aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria (2),
De aeternitate mundi (1)
Simplicius Philosophus (sixth century AD)
In Aristotelis categorias commentarium (1)
In Aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria (19)
Eustratius Philosophus (eleventh-twelfth century AD)
In Aristotelis analyticorum posteriorum librum secundum commentarium (1)
In Aristotelis ethica Nicomachea i commentaria (4)
In Aristotelis ethica Nicomachea vi commentaria (1)
Anna Comnena (eleventh-twelfth century AD)
Alexias (1)
Michael Philosophus (eleventh-twelfth century AD)
In Aristotelis sophisticos elenchos commentarius (2)
Nicephorus Gregoras (thirteenth-fourteenth century AD)
Historia Romana (1)
Sophonias Philosophus (thirteenth-fourteenth century AD)
In Aristotelis libros de anima paraphrasis (1)
There are matches in several anonymous commentaries on Aristotle (6), Euclides (3), and Lucianus (1).

The term αὐτόπιστος is rare and comparatively recent; it only occurs once or maybe twice in the Greek literature before the fourth century and the total of 88 matches in a collection of more than three thousand authors and twelve thousand works is small.[10] Moreover, the term mostly occurs in a philosophical context; there are a few references in ecclesiastical writings, for instance of John Chrysostomus, but they are a small minority. Most matches occur in commentaries on Aristotle, though the term αὐτόπιστος does not occur in Aristotle's works.

3.2 A Historical Survey of the Use of Αὐτόπιστος

The *Lexicon* of Liddell and Scott gives five references for the term αὐτόπιστος.[11] There the term is connected with one of the fundamental terms of classic Greek logic and

[10] The *TLG* gives 1138 matches for the keywords beginning with "ἀξίοπιστ-."

[11] "αὐτόπιστος, ον, credible in itself, ἀξιώματα Hero *Deff.* 136.6, cf. Olymp. *in Phd.* P. 225 N., Heliod. *in EN* 117.36, Simp. *in Ph.* 649.12; f.l. in Oenom. ap. Eus. *PE* 5.33." Liddell and Scott,

geometry: the axiom (ἀξίωμα). An axiom is a statement accepted as true without proof or argument; it is a general proposition or principle that is accepted as self-convincing, either absolutely or within a particular sphere of thought. Plato confined the word ἀξίωμα to mathematical axioms, but Aristotle applied it to the ultimate principles of thought which lay behind all special sciences. The term αὐτόπιστος leads us back to the origins of the philosophy of science and especially of mathematics. The Greek commentators mentioned above use the term αὐτόπιστος frequently in their commentaries on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* and on Euclid's *Elements*.

3.2.1 Aristotle

Aristotle
Principles (ἀρχαί):
1. Axiom (ἀξίωμα)
2. Thesis (θέσις):
   a. Hypothesis (ὑπόθεσις)
   b. Definition (ὁρισμός)

In his *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle (384-322 BC) expands his theory from the formal logic of the syllogism (*Prior Analytics*) to the philosophy of science. Aristotle's chief model of science is mathematics. He states that every demonstrable science starts from necessary first principles (ἀρχαί).[12] Aristotle discusses the indemonstrable character of the principles in *Metaphysics*, where he says that it is impossible to demonstrate them, because this leads to an infinite series of demonstrations (*regressus ad infinitum*); there would be principles behind the principles and so on.[13]

Aristotle gives a few characteristics of these first principles; they must be true (ἀλῆθεις) primary (πρῶται), and immediate (αμέσοι). The principles must be clearer (γνωριμώτεραι) than the conclusion drawn from them.[14] He also says that nothing should be more credible (πιστότερον) than the first principles.[15] These last two characteristics are important for the meaning of αὐτόπιστος in the later commentaries on Aristotle. The fact that the principles must be clear does not mean that they depend on perception by the senses, but that they are evident on their own (καθ' αὐτὸ).[16] By assuming the evidence of the first principles Aristotle introduces a subjective or psychological element into the foundations of his logical system. To decide whether a premise is so evident that it is a first principle Aristotle draws back on the human mind (νοῦς).[17] Things that are true and primary, have trustworthiness through themselves (δι' αὐτῶν

Lexicon, 281. These references will be discussed in the historical survey of the use of αὐτόπιστος in this chapter.

12 Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 1.6, 74b 5. Cf. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics: Topica*, ed. H. Tredennick and E.S. Forster, Cambridge (Mass.) 1976, 52-53. Cf. K. von Fritz, 'Die ARXAI in der griechischen Mathematik,' *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 1 (1955), 13-102, 21.

13 Aristotle *Metaphisica* 997a 5-8, 1005a 21-b 17, 1006a 5, 17. Cf. Heath, *Elements,* 1, 121. Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 1.10, 76a 31. Cf. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 68-69.

14 Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 1.2, 71b 20. Cf. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 30-31. Aristotle also uses the terms prior to (πρότεραι) and causative (αἴτιαι). Cf. Von Fritz, 'Die ARXAI,' 21.

15 Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 1.2, 72b 1. Cf. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 36-37.

16 Cf. Von Fritz, 'Die ARXAI,' 23.

17 At this point Von Fritz falls in with an article by H. Scholz 'Die Axiomatik der Alten,' *Blätter für deutsche Philosophie* 4 (1930), 259-278, 269. Cf. Von Fritz, 'Die ARXAI' 22, n. 17.

ἔχοντα τὴν πίστιν) and not through other things.[18] This expression may have led to the compound αὐτόπιστος in the commentaries.

Aristotle divides the principles into two types, making a distinction between an axiom (ἀξίωμα) and a thesis (θέσις). He is the first to use ἀξίωμα as a *terminus technicus*.[19] None of the first principles can be proved, but while not everyone needs to know the theses, the axioms are absolutely necessary for anyone who wants to learn anything in a science. "An axiom is that which it is necessary for anyone to hold who is to learn anything."[20] Aristotle distinguishes between two kinds of theses: the hypothesis (ὑπόθεσις) that determines if something exists or not and the definition (ὁρισμός) that requires only an understanding of the terms and does not determine the existence of the things.[21] The axioms are general (κοινά) whereas the hypotheses and definitions are specific (ἴδια) for the different sciences. Aristotle therefore also calls the axioms common things (τὰ κοινά) or common opinions (κοιναὶ δόξαι).[22] The axioms or common notions are obviously true and applicable in all sciences.[23] Hypotheses and definitions also cannot be proved, but they are not obviously true and cannot be universally applied.[24]

3.2.2 Euclid

In his *Elements* Euclid defined the mathematic principles of geometry. These principles (ἀρχαί) are the starting points for the demonstration of geometrical propositions. Euclid mentions three kinds of principles: definitions (ὁροι), common notions (κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι) and postulates (αἰτήματα). Together, the common notions and postulates sometimes are called the axioms of Euclid's geometry.

Euclid
Principles (ἀρχαί):
1. Definition (ὅρος)
2. Common notion (κοινά ἔννοια)
3. Postulate (αἴτημα).

It is necessary to give the definitions of points, lines, triangles, etc. before anything can be demonstrated. Geometrical definitions depend on agreement, the common

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18 Aristotle, *Topica* 1.1, 100b 18. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 273. Cf. A. Huning, 'Per se notum,' in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J.F. Ritter and K. Gründer, vol. 7, Darmstadt [1971-], 262-266, 262.

19 Von Fritz, 'Die ARXAI,' 33.

20 ἦν δ' ἀνάγκη ἔχειν τὸν ὁτιοῦν μαθησόμενον, ἀξίωμα· Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 1.2, 72a 15. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 32-33. Von Fritz, 'Die ARXAI,' 25.

21 For example, defining what the term "circle" means does not imply that a circle exists. Heath, *Elements* 1, 118, 143.

22 Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 1.10, 76a 37. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 68-69. Heath, *Elements* 1, 120 refers to *Metaphysica* 996b 26-30, 997a 20-22 and 1061b 19-24 and to *Analytica posteriora* 1.11, 77a 30.

23 Heath, *Elements* 1, 117-119.

24 P. Aubenque, 'Prinzip I Antike,' in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 7, 1336-1345. In modern English a hypothesis is an idea, a suggestion, the starting point for reasoning or explanation. The word is also used in this sense in ancient Greek and even by Aristotle for the premise of a conclusion. In the context of the Aristotelian philosophy of science, however, the meaning is narrower. Used in a broader sense a hypothesis is not necessarily true, but in the context of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* it is necessarily true. Cf. Von Fritz, 'Die ARXAI,' 37, 42-43.

notions, however, do not depend on agreement, but are undeniable, for example that the whole is greater than a part. Postulates are assumptions that are necessary to prove propositions. The difference between the common notions and the postulates not only lies in the fact that the common notions are undeniable, but also that they are true for science in general, while the postulates are specific to geometry. Both the common notions and the postulates are assumed to be true and cannot be proved and can be used as a premise in a deductive argument. The common notions in Euclid's *Elements* correspond with the axioms in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*.

In his *Elements* Euclid lists five common notions: 1) things equal to the same thing are equal to each other, 2) if equals are added to equals, the wholes are equal, 3) if equals are subtracted from equals, the remainders are equal, 4) things which coincide with one another are equal, 5) the whole is greater than the a part.[25] In the later commentaries especially Euclid's first common notion is mentioned as example. Τὰ τῷ αὐτῷ ἴσα καὶ ἀλλήλοις ἐστὶ ἴσα. If A is equal to B and B is equal to C, then A is equal to C. The common notions are so obviously true that we simply cannot imagine that they are false.

The Latin edition of Euclid's *Elements* that was used as an introduction to geometry from ancient to modern times was widespread in Calvin's days. The Latin translations in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were made from the Arabic versions. In 1505 the first Latin translation from the Greek text appeared at Venice.[26] In his commentary on Seneca's *De clementia* (1532) Calvin refers to Euclid's *Elements*.[27] The Euclidean geometry belonged to his basic academic education; geometry was one of the seven liberal arts.

3.2.3 *Definitiones*

The term αὐτόπιστος occurs in the ancient Greek texts for the first time in the *Definitiones*, included in the works of the Greek philosopher and mathematician Hero of Alexandria, who lived in the first century AD.[28] His works, of which a large number have survived, fall into several categories: technical, mechanical, and mathematical. The *Definitions of the Terms of Geometry* is an introductory commentary on Euclid's *Elements* and gives 133 definitions of geometrical terms beginning with points and lines. It is not sure that Hero is the author; recently it has been attributed to Diophantus of Alexandria.[29] The term αὐτόπιστος appears in the definition of an axiom.

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25 Heath, *Elements* I, 155. Sometimes eight or nine common notions are attributed to Euclid. A. Szabó, 'Anfänge der Euklidischen Axiomensystems,' in *Zur Geschichte der Griechischen Mathematik*, ed. O. Becker, Darmstadt 1965, 414-415. Already in ancient Greek philosophy the authenticity of all but the first three has been under dispute. Von Fritz, 'Die ARXAI,' 44.

26 Euclides, *Elementorum libri xiii*, trans. B. Zamberti, Venice 1505.

27 "A solid body […] according to Euclid [Elem. 11, Del. 1] is the opposite of something empty or a vacuum." Calvin, *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia*, 52-53.

28 It is impossible to define the dates of Hero exactly. According to D. Sakales, he lived at the end of the first or beginning of the second century. D. Sakales, *Die Datierung Herons von Alexandrien*, Cologne 1972, 158. According to Neugebauer, Hero referred to an eclipse in 62 AD. O. Neugebauer, *A History of Ancient Mathematical Astronomy*, Berlin 1975, 846.

29 W.R. Knorr, 'Arithmêtikê stoicheiôsis: on Diophantus and Hero of Alexandria,' *Historia Mathematica* 20 (1993), 180-192.

> An axiom is according to Aristotle a proposition that is to be accepted as a first principle which is both comprehensible for the pupil and convincing according to itself (καθ' αὐτὸ πιστὸν). […] When that which is told to the pupil, however, is not a self-convincing notion (ἔννοιαν τὴν αὐτόπιστον) but he nevertheless is convinced and admits what is proposed, this is a hypothesis.[30]

The author of the *Definitions* refers to Aristotle, without quoting him exactly. The term αὐτόπιστος is used to indicate the difference between an axiom (ἀξίωμα) and a hypothesis (ὑπόθεσις). An axiom does not need to be proved because it is a notion that is convincing by itself. In the *Definitions* the first axiom of Euclid is given as an example: when things are equal to the same thing, they are also equal to each other. The quotation makes clear that αὐτόπιστος means the same as καθ' αὐτὸ πιστὸς. The axiom must be trustworthy on its own account or according to (κατά) itself; in the compound αὐτόπιστος the prefix αὐτο- means 'on its own account,' 'according to itself' or 'without external aid,' 'independent.'

It is a matter of dispute whether this interpretation of the common notions or axioms in geometry corresponds with the original intention of Aristotle and Euclid.[31] In order to determine the meaning of αὐτόπιστος in Calvin's theology it is not necessary to discuss the question whether the ancient commentators on Aristotle and Euclid interpreted them in the right way, although it is helpful to keep the context of the distinction between axioms, hypotheses and postulates in mind.

A few characteristics of the use of αὐτόπιστος in Greek philosophy can now be listed: 1. The word is used to determine the first principles of science. The first principles cannot be demonstrated; if something is called αὐτόπιστος it is beyond logical proof. In the Aristotelian philosophical context the first principles cannot be proved, but are necessarily true. 2. The word is used to determine a special type of the first principles of science: the axioms (or common notions). The axioms differ from the other first principles because they are general (κοινά) whereas the other first principles are specific (ἴδια) for the different sciences. 3. The meaning of αὐτόπιστος corresponds with "convincing according to itself" (καθ' αὐτὸ πιστὸν); it refers to a pupil who is immediately convinced that the axiom is true.

3.2.4 Proclus

It would be interesting to turn to Calvin's *Institutes* to compare these results with his use of αὐτόπιστος, but first we will have to take a closer look at his possible sources. It is an important question how we can know which sources were possibly used by Calvin. It is not sure that he used any particular source, for as we have seen the term αὐτόπιστος was listed in a Greek dictionary edited

Proclus
Common Principles (κοιναὶ ἀρχαί):
1. Definition (ὅρος)
2. Postulate (αἴτημα).
3. Common notion (κοινά ἔννοια)

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30 W. Schmidt and J.L. Heiberg, eds., *Heronis definitiones cum variis collectionibus. Heronis quae feruntur geometrica* [Heronis Alexandrini Opera quae supersunt omnia, vol. 4], Teubner 1912, 112. This is the first reference in Liddell and Scott, "Hero *Deff. 136.6." Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 281. Cf. "What is a hypothesis? When a student does not have a notion of what is said that is convincing in itself (ἔννοιαν … αὐτόπιστον)." Schmidt, Heiberg, *Heronis definitiones*, 158.

31 Szabó, 'Anfänge der Euklidischen Axiomensystems,' 417.

by Budé in 1530. Calvin possibly picked up the word during his study or in the circle of humanistic scholars. Moreover, Calvin did not have access to all the ancient Greek texts in which the term αὐτόπιστος occurs, for the simple reason that some of them were not yet printed. It is important to notice that Calvin did not use the term αὐτόπιστος for the first time in 1559. The term already occurred in 1543 in his *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae*.[32] The texts from the *TLG*-list that were not available in Greek in 1543 must be dropped as possible sources for Calvin. For instance, the first edition of de Greek text of the *Definitiones* was printed in 1570.[33] Finally, in order to conclude that Calvin used a certain source, there must be some indication that Calvin possessed the work or was familiar with it. An important list of books can be found in the catalogue of the library of the University of Geneva (*Académie de Calvin*) from 1572.[34] Not all of Calvin's books ended up in this library and therefore Calvin still could have possessed a book that is missing in the list. Calvin probably read books that he never possessed and possessed books that he never read.

One of the works from the *TLG*-list that was in print before 1543 and was possibly known by Calvin is the *Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements* by the Neoplatonist Proclus (410-485).[35] The Greek text of Proclus's *Commentary* was edited by Simon Grynée (1493-1541) and published at Basel in 1533 as an appendix to his edition of Euclid's *Elements*.[36] Simon Grynée succeeded Erasmus in Basel in 1529. He lectured on Greek and the New Testament. Calvin knew him very well from the time that he stayed in Basel as a refugee. When Calvin and Guillaume Farel (1489-1565) had to leave Geneva in 1538 they took refuge in Basel, where the relationship with Grynée was deepened. Grynée wrote several letters to Farel and Calvin in 1538.[37] Calvin could have been interested in the Greek text of the *Elements* and in Proclus's *Commentary*. It is possible that Calvin read or possessed a copy of the work, although the catalogue of the library of the *Académie de Calvin* does not list the title.[38] At least Proclus's *Commentary* was well known in his immediate environment. Moreover, at the Genevan

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32 J. Calvin, *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae de servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii contra Alberti Pighii Campensis*, Geneva 1543. *CO* 6, 225-404. We will discuss this reference in detail later in this chapter.

33 C. Dasypodius, ed., *Evclidis Elementorvm liber primus. Heronis Alexandrini vocabula geometrica*, Argentinae [Strassburg] 1570. Cf. Schmidt, Heiberg, *Heronis definitiones*, ix.

34 A. Ganoczy, *La Bibliothèque de l'Académie de Calvin*, Geneva 1969.

35 Proclus was a representative of the last phase of ancient pagan philosophy during the fifth century in Athens, which lasted until 529 when the philosophic schools at Athens were closed by an edict of Justinian. The Greek text of the *Commentary* is published by G. Friedlein, *Procli Diadochi In primum Euclidis Elementorum librum commentarii*, Lipsiae 1873. An English translation is offered by G.R. Morrow, *A Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements*, Princeton 1970.

36 S. Grynaeus, *Eukleidou Stoicheion bibl. ie* [= 15], Basil 1533. Cf. S. Grynaeus, *Euclidis Elementorum libri XV*, Basil 1533.

37 Herminjard, *Correspondance*, 4, 361, 379, 401. It is possible that Calvin attended the lectures of Grynée on Romans in 1535; he dedicated his commentary on Romans to him in 1539. J. Calvin, *Commentarius in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* [COR II, vol. 13], ed. T.H.L. Parker and D.C. Parker, Geneva 1999, XI.

38 Ganoczy, *Bibliothèque*, 17-19.

Academy the book was used to teach the Euclidian geometry in the lectures on *mathématiques* from the very beginning in 1559.[39]

Proclus uses the term αὐτόπιστος five times in his *Commentary*. He states that the science (ἐπιστήμη) of geometry derives its propositions from first common principles (κοιναὶ ἀρχαί). His subdivision, however, differs somewhat from Aristotle and Euclid. He distinguishes between three kinds of common principles: definitions (ὅροι), postulates (αἰτήματα), and common notions (κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι).[40] Just as in Euclid's *Elements* the common notions for Proclus correspond with the axioms for Aristotle.

In an introduction to geometry the principles of the science and the conclusions that follow from these principles should be presented separately. "For no science demonstrates its own first principles or presents a reason for them; rather each holds them αὐτοπίστως, that is more evident than their consequences."[41] Proclus does not say that these principles are αὐτόπιστος, but that they are held as αὐτοπίστως in the several sciences. This indicates that the self-convincing character of the axioms also determines the way in which they are accepted; or in other words the axiomatic truths beg for trust and so also in the philosophical context the term has a truth-side and a trust-side. It is essential for these principles that they cannot be demonstrated; this is the difference between principles and conclusions drawn from them. Principles must also be clearer than their consequences. The use of the adjective καταφᾶνής indicates that the principles must be clear and easy to grasp, they must be evident or apparent.

Proclus uses the term αὐτοπίστως for the principles in general, while the *Definitiones* only applies it to the common notions or axioms. Proclus also says that principles must always be superior to their consequences in being simple (ἁπλότητος), indemonstrable (ἀναπόδεικτος), and αὐτόπιστος.[42] Every science has its own principles; our minds have a clearer contact with these principles than our sight has with visible objects.

Commenting on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* Proclus divides the principles of geometry into axioms (ἀξιώματα), hypotheses (ὑποθέσεις), and postulates (αἰτήματα).[43] This subdivision differs from Proclus's own subdivision. An axiom is a proposition that is both known to the pupil and convincing in itself (καθ' αὐτὸ πιστὸν). For example, things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. When that which is told to the pupil is not a self-convincing notion (ἔννοιαν αὐτόπιστον) this is a hypothesis. Proclus

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39 C. Borgeaud, *L'Académie de Calvin, 1559-1798, Histoire de l'Université de Genève*, vol. 1, Geneva 1900, 68.

40 Von Fritz, 'Die ARXAI,' 44.

41 Friedlein, *Procli Diadochi commentarii*, 75. Cf. Morrow, *A Commentary*, 62. An unknown commentator on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics says that science (ἐπιστήμη) must be proved from αὐτοπίστων τῶν ἐσχάτων ἀρχῶν. G. Heylbut, ed., *Heliodori in ethica Nicomachea paraphrases* [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, vol. 19.2], Berlin 1889, 117. This is the third reference in Liddell and Scott "Heliod. in EN 117.36." Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 281.

42 Friedlein, *Procli Diadochi commentarii*, 179. Cf. Morrow, *A Commentary*, 141. Proclus seems to depend on Speusippus (d. 339/338 BC), but Proclus does not give a literal quotation and it is unlikely that Speusippus himself used the word αὐτόπιστος. Cf. L. Tarán, *Speusippus of Athens: A Critical Study with a Collection of the Related Texts and Commentary* [Philosophia Antiqua, vol. 39], Leiden 1981, 167, 426-431.

43 Friedlein, *Procli Diadochi commentarii*, 76. Cf. Morrow, *A Commentary*, 62-63.

leans heavily on the *Definitiones* in his distinction between a hypothesis and an axiom.[44] Here the term αὐτόπιστος is used by Proclus to distinguish an axiom or common notion from the other principles; his use of the term αὐτόπιστος is inconsequent because he also uses it for the principles in general.[45] The difference with a hypothesis is that an axiom does not need to be explained or postulated because the student perceives it immediately. An axiom is a premise (πρότασις) that is immediate (ἄμεσος) and αὐτόπιστος because of its clarity (δι᾽ ἐνάργειαν).[46] An axiom that is αὐτόπιστος is not accepted with blind assent, but it is accepted because it does not need demonstration; it is clear enough in itself and it cannot be disputed. "An axiom asserts some inherent attribute that is known at once to one's auditors – such as that fire is hot, or some other quite evident truth of which we say that they who are in doubt lack sense organs or must be prodded to use them."[47] Without using the term αὐτόπιστος the meaning of the term in connection with ἀξίωμα is conveyed clearly here.[48] The axioms possess an inherent clarity and lie at the foundation of the whole system of mathematics. According to Proclus, "mathematical arguments proceed either from common notions, that is from self-convincing clarity alone (ἀπό τῆς ἐναργείας μόνης τῆς αὐτοπίστου), or from things previously demonstrated."[49]

In his *Praefatio* Simon Grynée also refers to the term αὐτόπιστος; he says that Euclid's common notions (e.g. that the whole is greater than a part) are called ἀρχαί "because nothing is more evident than them and they have trustworthiness spontaneously and of themselves."[50] This shows that for the Renaissance scholar Grynée αὐτόπιστος was more than an arbitrary word; it was important to define the principles of science.

The three characteristics of the use of αὐτόπιστος in Greek philosophy, listed above can now be specified with the following nuances: 1. The word can also be used to determine the first principles of science in general. 2. These principles must always be superior to their consequences and convincing in themselves (αὐτόπιστος); at the same time they are to be accepted as such. The use of the adverb (αὐτοπίστως) indicates that the self-convincing character of the axioms also determines the way in which they are accepted; the truth of the axioms begs for trust. 3. The immediate clarity to which the term αὐτόπιστος refers is compared with perception by the senses. Again it would be interesting to turn to Calvin's *Institutes*, but first we will look at some other possible sources.

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44 Schmidt, Heiberg, *Heronis definitiones*, 112.

45 This is probably due to a confusion of the terms and a misunderstanding of Aristotle. Von Fritz, 'Die ARXAI,' 46-47.

46 Friedlein, *Procli Diadochi commentarii*, 194. Cf. Morrow, *A Commentary*, 152. Proclus refers to Aristotle and the geometers here.

47 Friedlein, *Procli Diadochi commentarii*, 181. Cf. Morrow, *A Commentary*, 142.

48 "Now that which is per se necessarily true (ὅ ἀνάγκη εἶναι δι᾽ αὐτὸ) and must necessarily be thought so, is not a hypothesis nor a postulate (αἴτημα)." In contrast an axiom is necessary through itself. Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* 1.10, 76 b 24. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 70-71.

49 Friedlein, *Procli Diadochi commentarii*, 255. Cf. Morrow, *A Commentary*, 198.

50 "ἀρχάς vocant, quod iis evidentius nihil sit: quod suapte sponte & ex seipsis habeat fide." S. Grynaeus, 'Praefatio,' in Grynaeus, *Euclidis Elementorum*, [p. iii].

3.2.5 John Philoponus

John Philoponus or Grammaticus (sixth century AD) was a Christian philosopher, theologian, and literary scholar whose writings expressed an independent Christian reflection on classical Hellenistic thought. His commentaries on Aristotle are interesting for the relationship between Aristotelianism and the Christian faith and include works on the *Physics*, the *Prior Analytics*, the *Posterior Analytics*, and the *Metaphysics*. Most of the works of Philoponus were available in Calvin's days and the catalogue of the library of the *Académie de Calvin* (1572) lists five of his commentaries on Aristotle and his *De aeternitate mundi* against Proclus.[51] This does not prove that Calvin had read them, but it illustrates the high esteem of Aristotelian philosophy in Renaissance circles and confirms that αὐτόπιστος in Calvin's works should be interpreted in correspondence with its ancient philosophical meaning.

The way in which Philoponus uses the term αὐτόπιστος corresponds with what we have found in the *Definitiones* and in Proclus's *Commentary*. In his commentary on Aristotle's *Analytica priora* Philoponus says that common notions (κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι) are always true and αὐτόπιστοι.[52] The common notions are always αὐτόπιστοι through themselves (δι᾽ ἑαυτάς) but the demonstrations (ἀποδέιξεις) have their trustworthiness (τὸ πιστὸν) through the common notions.[53] Terms that are placed in one line with αὐτόπιστος are among others: ἄμεσος (immediate),[54] ἀναγκαῖος (necessary),[55] ὁμολογουμένος (according to common opinion),[56] and ἀναποδείκτος (indemonstrable).[57]

The knowledge of the axioms does not come to us through demonstrations (ἀποδέιξεις), but is αὐτόπιστος.[58] Philoponus also gives the example of Euclid's first

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51 "Ioannis Grammatici In primos quatuor Aristototelis De natuarali auscultatione libros commentaria, Venise, 1535, B. Zanetti." "Ioannes Grammaticus In libros de generatione et interitu. Alexander Aphrodisiensis In meteorological. Idem De mixtone…, Venise, 1527, Aldus et Andreas Asulanus." "Ioan. Gram. Philoponi Commentaria in priora Analytica Aristotelis. Magentini Commentaria in eadem…, Venise, 1536, B. Zanetti." "Ioannis Grammatici In posteriora Resolutoria Aristotelis commentarium. Incerti autoris in eadem. Eustratii in eadem, Venise, 1534, Aldus Manutius." "Ioannis Grammatici Philoponi Commentaria in libros de Anima Aristotelis, Venise, 1535, B. Zanetti." "Ioannis Grammatici Philoponi Alexandrini Contra Proclum de mundi aeterinitate, Venise, 1535, B. Zanetti." Ganoczy, *Bibliothèque*, 270-271.

52 M. Wallies, ed., *Ioannis Philoponi in Aristotelis Analytica priora commentaria* [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, vol. 13.2], Berlin 1905, 2.27.

53 Philoponus, *In Analytica priora*, 24.9.

54 Philoponus, *In Analytica priora*, 353.21-22.

55 M. Wallies, ed., *Ioannis Philoponi in Aristotelis Analytica posteriora commentaria cum Anonymo in librum II* [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, vol. 13.3], Berlin 1909, 2.19. An unknown commentator on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* writes: "Something that is necessary (το ἀναγκαῖον) is always true and has τὸ αὐτόπιστον." This means that it has the quality of being credible without further proof or demonstration. M. Hayduck, ed., *Eustratii in analyticorum posteriorum librum secundum commentarium* [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, vol. 21.1], Berlin 1907, vii.

56 Philoponus, *In Analytica posteriora*, 3.1. In an anonymus commentary on Aristotle's *Ars Rhethorica* αὐτόπιστος is also placed next to ὁμολογούμενος. H. Rabe, *Anonymi et Stephani in artem rhetoricam commentaria: Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, vol. 21.2, Berlin 1896, 2.

57 Philoponus, *In Analytica posteriora*, 4.16, 24.14.

58 Philoponus, *In Analytica posteriora*, 23.1, 23.3. In Aristotelian logic ἀπόδειξις means

common notion; it is αὐτόπιστος that things equal to the same thing, are also equal to each other.[59] It is a logical necessity that these axioms exist, because not every premise (πρότᾶσις) can be proved.[60] There are immediate premises that cannot be proved. Still it is possible to gain knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of them, because they are αὐτόπιστος; this knowledge is stronger than knowledge through proof.[61]

Compared with the other Greek authors Philoponus uses the term αὐτόπιστος frequently; 29 of the total of 88 matches in the *TLG* are found in his works. There is one interesting passage in which Philoponus compares the knowledge that is convincing of itself (αὐτόπιστος) with the perception through our senses. Philoponus comments on Aristotle's *De Physica*¸ where Aristotle writes that it would be ridiculous to attempt to prove that nature (φῦσις) exists.[62] Philoponus explains that this is because the reality (ὑπόστᾶσις) itself is so self-evident (ἐναργής). "So as someone who tries to demonstrate that fire burns shows lack of perception, so one who demonstrates that nature exists shows lack of reason."[63] Philoponus further comments: "Therefore one should not seek a demonstration of everything; for there are many things which provide an assurance from self-evidence (τὴν πίστιν ἐκ τῆς ἐναργείας) stronger than any demonstration, such as that colors and bodies exist."[64] We cannot demonstrate that colors exist to those who are blind from birth, for it is by perception and not by arguments, that colors are recognized. "It is possible for someone distorted in his senses or reason not to recognize which things are self-convincing and which need demonstration (τίνα τῶν πραγμάτων ἐστιν αὐτόπιστα καὶ τίνα δεόμενα ἀποδείξεως)"[65] This reminds us of Calvin's example of black and white, sweet and bitter things, of which the perception is immediate and does not need to be proved.

The term αὐτόπιστος occurs twice in the works of Damascius, another sixth-century philosopher.[66] Discussing Plato's *Philebus* he says that the author follows a simple method

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demonstration, a deductive proof by syllogism. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 196.

59 Philoponus, *In Analytica posteriora*, 25.5.

60 In Aristotelian logic πρότᾶσις means a proposition and especially a premise of a syllogism. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1533-1534. In Aristotelian logic a συλλογισμός can be defined as an argument in which, certain things being posited, something different from them necessarily follows. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1673.

61 Philoponus, *In Analytica posteriora*, 47.17. Cf. the German translation "Ein Wissen von ihnen gibt es aber doch, weil sie von selbst einleuchten." W. Böhm, *Johannes Philoponos: Ausgewählte Schriften*, München 1967, 67.

62 Aristotle, *Physica*, 193a 3. Cf. Aristotle, *The Physics*, ed. P.H. Wicksteed and F.M. Cornford, vol. 1, Cambridge (Mass.) 1929, 111.

63 H. Vitelli, ed., *Philoponi in Physicorum octo libros commentaria* [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, vol. 16-17], Berlin 1888, 206. The translation is from J. Philoponus, *On Aristotle Physics 2*, trans. A.R. Lacey [The Ancient Commentators on Aristotle], London 1993, 20.

64 Vitelli, *Philoponi in Physicorum*, 206. Cf. Philoponus, *On Aristotle Physics 2*, 20.

65 An other manuscript has: "… not to recognize that some things are αὐτόπιστος and do not need demonstration." Then the last clause of the sentence is an explanation of αὐτόπιστος. For the meaning of the word the difference is not so important. Vitelli, *Philoponi in Physicorum*, 207. Cf. Philoponus, *On Aristotle Physics 2*, 21, 151, n. 97.

66 Damascius was a Greek Neoplatonist and the last in the succession of scholars at Plato's Academy in Athens. He served as head of the Academy until 529, when Justinian closed the "pagan schools." John Philoponus, Damascius and Simplicius were pupils of Ammonius

and proves (δείκνυμι) the matter as something almost αὐτόπιστος.[67] Damascius does not use the term in the strict logical sense, otherwise the combination with the verb δείκνυμι would be a contradiction in terms. The other occurrence in the commentary on Plato's *Phaedo* has the same loose meaning; there he combines αὐτόπιστος with hypotheses as well as principles.[68] The word αὐτόπιστος has a marginal meaning here. The two commentaries are not listed in the catalogue of the Genevan library.

Philoponus's pagan opponent Simplicius (sixth century AD) also uses the term αὐτόπιστος in his commentary on this passage of Aristotle's *De Physica*; he says that colors are obvious (φανερός) and αὐτόπιστος to anyone who can see.[69] Simplicius uses αὐτόπιστος almost as frequently as Philoponus does.[70] It is not likely, however, that he is Calvin's immediate source because none of his works are listed in the library of the *Académie de Calvin* and the first Greek editions of Simplicius stem from 1544, one year after the first time Calvin uses αὐτόπιστος.

3.2.6 Other Possible Sources

A comparison of the list of authors that use the term αὐτόπιστος and the authors mentioned in the catalogue of the library of the *Académie de Calvin* results in a few other possible sources for Calvin's use of αὐτόπιστος; a short discussion of three authors will complete our picture.

In the commentary on Aristotle's *Sophisticos Elenchos* that was ascribed to Alexander of Aphrodisias (second or third century AD) the term αὐτόπιστος is used to define a premise.[71] A true premise (πρότᾶσις) is either gained though a syllogism or comes from a common opinion (ὁμολογία) that is true and αὐτόπιστος. The term αὐτόπιστος occurs only twice and although the Genevan library contains some works of Alexander Aphrodisiensis this commentary is not listed.

The library of the *Académie de Calvin* mentions an edition of the works of Themistius (about AD 350), a Greek philosopher from Constantinopel who wrote many

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Hermiae (fifth century AD), who was taught by of Proclus.

67 Damascius, *Damascius: Lectures on the Philebus, Wrongly Attributed to Olympiodorus*, ed. L.G. Westerink, Amsterdam 1959, 5. This is the second reference in the list of occurances of αὐτόπιστος in Liddell and Scott, who attribute this work to Olympiodorus, "cf. Olymp. in Phd. 225N." Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 281.

68 Damascius, *The Greek commentaries on Plato's Phaedo*, ed. L.G. Westerink, vol. 2, Amsterdam 1977, 329.

69 H. Diels, ed., *Simplicii in Aristotelis Physicorum libros quattuor priores commentaria* [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, vol. 9], Berlin 1882, 272. Simplicius, *On Aristotle's Physics 2*, trans. B. Fleet [The Ancient Commentators on Aristotle], Ithaca (N.Y.) 1997, 25. The fourth reference in Liddell and Scott is to Simplicius "Simp. in Ph. 649.12." Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 281. Cf. Diels, *Simplicii In Aristotelis Physicorum*, 649.

70 Of the total of 88 matches found via the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 20 occur in the works of Simplicius.

71 M. Wallies, ed., *Alexandri quod fertur in Aristotelis sophisticos elenchos commentarium* [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, vol. 2.3], Berlin 1898, 3, 10. More recently the work is ascribed to Michael of Ephesus, who lived in the 12th century. The first printed edition is by H. Gyrlandus, *Alexander Aphrodisiensis In Sophisticos Aristotelis elenchos commentaria*, Venice 1520.

commentaries on Aristotle's works.[72] Calvin was familiar with Themistius and quotes his commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* in the *Institutes* of 1539.[73] The only occurrence of αὐτόπιστος, however, is in Themistius's *Paraphrase of Aristotle's Prior Analytics* where he uses the term twice in one sentence.[74] Syllogisms are demonstrated by pro-syllogisms except when the premises are immediate (ἄμεσος) and αὐτόπιστος. The context confirms the logical meaning of αὐτόπιστος in the philosophical discourse of Calvin's time, but this *Paraphrase* is not included in the 1534 edition of *Omnia Themistii opera*.

The only Greek author next to John Philoponus who uses αὐτόπιστος in one of the works from the list of the Genevan library is the Byzantine philosopher Eustratius of Nicea (c. 1050-c. 1120).[75] The references in his works confirm the use of αὐτόπιστος to define the first principles of science.[76] Eustratius uses the term αὐτόπιστος to distinguish between an axiom and a hypothesis and illustrates the axioms with the example of Euclid's first common notion in a passage that probably depends on the *Definitiones* or Proclus's *Commentary*.[77] It is interesting that Eustratius connects the term αὐτόπιστος with the verb πιστόω a few times. Speaking of certain logical proofs, he says that they do not need any stimulation to be believed but they are to be considered "ὡς αὐτόπιστα ἀξιώματα."[78] If a proof is αὐτόπιστος it is to be believed without any external motivation.

The list from the *TLG* also gives examples of a non-philosophical use of αὐτόπιστος. Anna Comnena uses αὐτόπιστος in her *Alexias* as an adjective for μάρτυς, witness.[79] Certain witnesses were able to give a convincing account of their personal experience; they were αὐτόπιστος because they themselves had experienced the mercy

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72 "Omnia Themistii Opera… Alexandri Aphrodisiensis Libri duo de anima, et de fato unus..., Venise, 1534, Haeredes Aldi Manutii et Andreae Asulani." Ganoczy, *Bibliothèque*, 271.

73 Calvin, *Institutes* 1.15.6, 2.2.23 Cf. Köstlin, 'Calvin's Institutio', 36.

74 M. Wallies, ed., *Themistii quae fertur in Aristotelis analyticorum priorum librum i paraphrases* [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, vol. 23.3], Berlin 1884, 145.

75 "Ioannis Grammatici In posteriora Resolutoria Aristotelis commentarium. Incerti autoris in eadem. Eustratii in eadem, Venise, 1534, Aldus Manutius." "Eustratii et aliorum… peripateticorum commentaria in libros decem Aristotelis de moribus ad Nicomachum…, Venise, 1536, Haeredes Aldi Manutii et Andreae Asulani." Ganoczy, *Bibliothèque*, 271.

76 He calls the common notions "αἱ κοιναὶ καὶ αὐτόπιστοι ἔννοιαι." Hayduck, *Eustratii in analyticorum posteriorum librum secundum commentarium*, 257.

77 G. Heylbut, ed., *Eustratii et Michaelis et anonyma in ethica Nicomachea commentaria* [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, vol. 20], Berlin 1892, 321.

78 Heylbut, *Eustratii et Michaelis et anonyma in ethica Nicomachea commentaria*, 2. The same connection with the verb πιστόω occurs again on the same page and in another passage αὐτόπιστος is related to πίστις. Heylbut, *Eustratii et Michaelis et anonyma in ethica Nicomachea commentaria*, 64.

79 "μάρτυρας αὐτοπίστους ἑαυτοὺς παριστῶντες." Anna Comnena, *Alexias* XII, 1, 6. A. Comnena, *Annae Comnenae Alexias: Pars prior, Prolegomena et textus*, ed. D.R. Reinsch and A. Kambylis [Corpus fontium historiae byzantinae, vol. 40.1], Berlin 2001, 361. The German translation has: "indem sie sich selbst als glaubwürdige Zeugen präsentierten." Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, trans. D.R. Reinsch, Cologne 1996, 403. She received an excellent education in Greek philosophy, especially in Aristotle and Plato. Komnene, *Alexias*, 9.

of Alexius and therefore their witness was certainly true.[80] Calvin could not have read the Greek text of the *Alexias*, because the first printed Greek edition is from 1610.[81] The idea of trustworthy witnesses, however, is a nice parallel to the context of the *Institutes* where αὐτόπιστος is connected with the witness of the Spirit.

3.2.7 Back to the *Institutes*

The use of αὐτόπιστος in Greek philosophy is determined by the following characteristics: 1. The word is used to determine the first principles of science; if something is αὐτόπιστος it is beyond logical proof. 2. The word is used to determine a special type of the first principles of science: the axioms. The axioms or common notions are general (κοινά) whereas the other first principles are specific (ἴδια) for the different sciences. 3. In this context αὐτόπιστος means convincing according to itself (καθ' αὐτὸ πιστὸν); it refers to a pupil who is immediately convinced that the axiom is true. 4. In the philosophic meaning both sides of the term – the truth-side and the trust-side – are retained. The axioms are convincing of themselves and therefore necessarily true, and still they are to be held and accepted as convincing in themselves (αὐτοπίστως). The use of the adverb shows that the principles must be received and accepted as such: the truth of the axioms begs for trust. 5. The immediate clarity to which the term αὐτόπιστος refers is compared with perception by the senses. Although Calvin's theological use of the philosophical term may imply that αὐτόπιστος gains a different nuance, we will look at the sentence of the *Institutes* that we have analyzed in the preceding chapter, in the light of these aspects.

> Maneat ergo hoc fixum, quos spiritus sanctus intus docuit, solide acquiescere in scriptura, et hanc quidem esse αὐτόπιστον neque demonstrationi et rationibus subiici eam fas esse; quam tamen meretur apud nos certitudinem, spiritus testimonio consequi.

1. Calvin uses αὐτόπιστος as an adjective for *scriptura*, placing Scripture alongside with the *principia* of science. This leads to the question whether Calvin was fully aware of the philosophical meaning of the term. We will have to look at the other occurrences of the term in his works to see if this was so. Even if he was aware of this meaning, the question remains open whether he used the term in its philosophical sense, or in a metaphorical sense. Did he mean to say that Scripture is the axiomatic principle of the theological science or that for believers its authority can be compared with the authority of the axioms in science? This question will also return after we have looked at the other occurrences of the term.

2. The use of αὐτόπιστος implies that Scripture is not subjected to rational demonstration and thus that *neque demonstrationi et rationibus subiici* is an explanation of αὐτόπιστος. Calvin wants to underline that he finds it improper to prove Scripture. This places the introduction of this term in 1559 in the context of his return to his original emphasis of 1539. As we have seen Calvin changes the function of the evidences in 1550. In the final edition of the *Institutes* he leaves the "apologetic" function of the evidences

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80 In a metaphrase of Comnena's text (1350), in which many expressions are transformed into colloquial language, the term αὐτόπιστος is changed into the superlative ἀληθεστάτος. H. Hunger, ed., *Anonyme Metaphrase zu Anna Komnene, Alexias XI-XIII: ein Beitrag zur Erschliessung der byzantinischen Umgangssprache* [Wiener byzantinistische Studien, vol. 15], Wien 1981, 58.

81 A. Comnena, *Alexiados libri VIII ab Anna Comnena de rebus a patre gestis scripti*, ed. D. Hoeschel, Augustae Vindelicorum [Augsburg] 1610.

intact, but he also underlines that for true faith the evidences are not sufficient and also that they do not lead to the necessary certainty regarding Scripture. For believers who truly find rest (*acquiescere*) in Scripture a different certainty is necessary; for those who are taught by the Spirit Scripture is αὐτόπιστος.

3. The contrast between αὐτόπιστος and the *testimonium*, indicated by the *quidem … tamen* construction, can very well be explained by the tension between the indemonstrable character of Scripture (convincing according to itself, καθ' αὐτὸ πιστὸν) and the fact that it is not accepted by all. The authority of Scripture is indemonstrable; still it only receives faith through the *testimonium*. Scripture is αὐτόπιστος; still it is only through the Spirit that this can be recognized. The fact that Scripture is the final authority in which believers acquiesce or find rest does not make the testimony of the Spirit superfluous. The example of a teacher confirms our point of view that the *autopistia* of Scripture and the *testimonium* of the Spirit ought to be kept close together. The Spirit as a teacher shows the self-convincing character of Scripture to believers, just like a philosopher explains the axioms to his pupil; explanation is not the same as demonstration.

4. Although Scripture is αὐτόπιστος it still must be believed. It is convincing of itself and at the same time it must be accepted as αὐτόπιστος; the truth of Scripture begs for trust. The philosophical meaning of the term is in concord with both sides of the Greek word for faith, πίστις.

5. Finally, the use of the term in philosophy confirms the relation between the term αὐτόπιστος and the illustration in the second edition of the *Institutes* that Scripture gives as clear a sense of its own truth as white and black things of their color, or sweet and bitter things of their taste. Also in philosophy the self-convincing αὐτόπιστος is compared with perception by the senses.

3.3 A Survey of the Theological Background

It is important to know the philosophical context from which Calvin borrowed the word, but this does not mean that αὐτόπιστος has exactly the same meaning in a theological context. The application to Scripture amends the meaning of αὐτόπιστος, because of the difference between theology and geometry. If we want to know whether Calvin's use of the term αὐτόπιστος in a theological context was an innovation, we will have to study the theological background. Therefore we will insert a survey of the use of αὐτόπιστος and related terminology in the works of some church fathers, medieval theologians, and other Reformers.

3.3.1 Influence from the Church Fathers

One would expect that Calvin's use of αὐτόπιστος was influenced by the church fathers, but as we have seen they hardly use the term.[82] Moreover, it is difficult to decide which of the church fathers Calvin had read and even more difficult to decide which of them he had read in Greek.[83] The only exception in the *TLG* list is John Chrysostom. The

[82] It does not occur in G.W.H. Lampe, ed., *A patristic Greek lexicon*, Oxford 1961-[1968].

[83] A.N.S. Lane concludes that Calvin only read the works of Basil once in 1542 in the Latin translation, and that Calvin read the Greek fathers primarily in Latin. Lane, *John Calvin: Student*, 83, 86.

word αὐτόπιστος occurs in a work that has been attributed to him, *In catenas sancti Petri*.[84] Chrysostom makes a remark about an angel or messenger (ἀγγελος) that has a sincere self-convincing character (τὸ ἀψευδὲς αὐτόπιστον). This work, however, cannot have been the source for Calvin, because the manuscript was discovered in a Jerusalem library in 1904.[85] The other reference that begs for a short discussion is found in the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea (fourth century AD). He is the fifth author mentioned in the references for αὐτόπιστος in the *Greek-English Lexicon* of Liddell and Scott and the only church father among them and therefore sometimes is seen as Calvin's source. In his apologetic work *Preparatio Evangelica* Eusebius gives an extended quotation from Oenomaus' *Philosophus*. Oenomaus criticizes the Greek oracles as an authoritative source, using the expression "αὕτη πιστὴ." Some manuscripts read αὐτοπιστη.[86] Although Calvin knew Eusebius's work, it cannot be his source for the use of αὐτόπιστος. Besides the fact that Eusebius uses two words, the Greek text of *Preparatio Evangelica* was first republished in 1544.[87]

It is possible that the church fathers influenced Calvin in an indirect way. The Aristotelian concept of the principles of science was generally known and accepted in the first centuries of Christian theology. Although the term αὐτόπιστος is not used, it is possible to give some quotations from the Greek church fathers that come close to it. Basil the Great (fourth century AD), for instance, says that "it is necessary that the first principles of every science should be self-evident (ἀνεξετάστος)."[88]

In his explanation of John 5, John Chrysostom expresses the idea that a witness can be trustworthy (ἀξιόπιστος) by himself and that then no other witness is necessary.[89] Clement of Alexandria (second and third centuries AD) was also familiar with the idea of self-convincing principles, which he called ἐξ αὐτῶν πίστα. He refers to "the philosophers" and probably depends on a philosophical school-handbook that summarized the Aristotelian theory.[90] Clement even applied this concept to Scripture in his *Stromata*.[91] Although it would be very interesting to study the Greek and Latin

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84 E. Batareikh, 'Discours inédit sur les chaînes de S. Pierre attribué à S. Jean Chrysostome,' *CHRYSOSTOMIKA* 3 (1908), 937-1006, 986.

85 Batareikh, 'Discours inédit sur les chaînes de S. Pierre,' 973.

86 "Εἰ δὲ καὶ δίχα τούτων ἐστίν τις καὶ θεῶν ψῆφος καὶ αὕτη πιστὴ." Eusebius, *Die Praeparatio Evangelica: Die Bücher 1 bis 10*, ed. K. Mras [Eusebius Werke, vol. 8.1] Berlin 1954, 282. According to Liddell and Scott, αὐτοπιστη is a *falsa lectio* "f.l. in Oenom. ap. Eus. *PE* 5.33." Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 281.

87 I. Backus, 'Calvin's judgment of Eusebius of Caesarea,' in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor: Calvin as Confessor of Holy Scripture*, ed. W.H. Neuser, Grand Rapids 1994, 235.

88 "Ἀνάνκη γὰρ ἑκάστης μαθήσεως ἀνεξετάστους εἶναι τας ἀρχας." Basilius Caesariensis, *Homilia in Psalmum 115*, *PG* 30:104-105. Cf. F. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. G.M. Giger, ed. J.T. Dennison, vol. 1, Phillipsburg 1992, 89. Polanus a Polansdorf quotes Basil from the Latin version: "Qui est ergo ex seipso fidelis, Dominica scriptura" A. Polanus von Polansdorf, *Syntagma theologiae Christianae*, Geneva 1617, xiv.

89 "Μαρτυρεῖ ἄνθρωπος ὅταν ἀφ ' ἑαυτοῦ ἀξιόπιστος ἦ οὐχ ὅταν μαρτυρίας δέηται." John Chrysostom, *In Joannem (homiliae 1-88)*, *PG* 59:291.

90 Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata*, VIII (6.7-7.2). Cf. S.R.C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism*, London 1971, 120-123.

91 "Ὁ μὲν οὖν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ πιστὸς τῇ κυριακῇ γραφῇ τε καὶ φωνῇ ἀξιόπιστος εἰκότως." Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VII (95,4). Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, ed. L. Früchtel, O. Stählin,

fathers more in detail at this point for a survey of the development of the idea of the self-convincing character of Scripture, it is of less importance for Calvin's source of αὐτόπιστος.

3.3.2 Medieval Theology: *Principium per se Notum*

In order to understand the theological background to Calvin's use of αὐτόπιστος we must turn to the Middle Ages. To prove with certainty that Calvin's introduction of the term αὐτόπιστος in a theological context was an innovation, it must be demonstrated that the term was never used before by medieval theologians or by other sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers. It is impossible, however, to search all the Latin volumes of the Middle Ages and Reformation for one Greek term. As we have seen the term was hardly used by the Greek fathers. In the Middle Ages it was unusual to use Greek idiom in the Latin theological discourses and it is unlikely that a rare Greek philosophical term from commentaries on Aristotle would be an exception. After the rediscovery of the Greek sources (*ad fontes*) in the Renaissance, the use of Greek in the Latin theological works became more usual. Aristotle and his commentators were no longer studied in the Latin translations, but in the Greek originals. It is likely that αὐτόπιστος was first used in the context of the authority of Scripture at the time of the Reformation. Nevertheless, we will take a short look at the terminology of medieval theology at this point, for an important stream in medieval theology reckoned Scripture the sufficient source of Christian doctrine and esteemed the authority of Scripture higher than the authority of the church.[92]

The fundamental teaching method of the medieval schools was the exposition of authoritative texts. Among these texts Scripture had the highest degree of authority. It is a misconception to think that medieval scholasticism diminished the role of the Bible for theology.[93] It is true that Scripture formed only a part of the massive body of authoritative sources, but in the hierarchy of texts it had the highest place. No conclusion in any subject could stand if it was contradictory to the teaching of Scripture and the infallibility of the Bible was thought to be absolute.[94]

Truth in the Middle Ages was seen as the correspondence of a thing to the intellect (*adequatio rei ad intellectum*), and was understood as eternal and unchanging. According to Thomas Aquinas, Scripture is absolutely true, because God is its author.[95]

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and U. Treu [Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller, vol. 52], vol. 3, Berlin 1970, 67.

92 Y.M.J. Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, New York 1976, 116-117, H. Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation*, New York 1966, 53-65. Cf. R.A. Muller, *Prolegomena to Theology* [2nd ed.] [Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, vol. 1], Grand Rapids 2003, 97 [Muller, *PRRD* 1^2]. H.A. Oberman has made a helpful, though generalizing distinction. The concept of "Tradition I" – tradition as an instrumental vehicle in which Scripture comes alive – was universally held during the first three centuries of Christianity. In the concept of "Tradition II" – there is an oral tradition of Christ's teachings especially from the time between the resurrection and ascension – is to be regarded as a complement to Scripture. H.A. Oberman, *The Harvest Of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism*, Cambridge 1963, 406.

93 R.W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe: The Heroic Age*, ed. L. Smith and B. Ward, vol. 2, Oxford 2001, 102.

94 Southern, *Scholastic Humanism* 2, 104-105.

95 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I,q.1,a.10.

There are two sorts of truth in medieval scholasticism, the one derived from chains of reasoning based on self-evident principles, the other based on revealed truths contained in the Bible.[96] There is an analogy between the *principia* of philosophy and Scripture as Nicholas of Lyre (1270-1340) says: "Just as in philosophy whatever is unmistakably concluded from first principles is true – so whatever is manifestly concluded from Holy Scripture is also true."[97] And Roland of Cremona (d. 1259) says: "Everything written in the Bible appears to be self-evident (*per se nota*), because it is revealed by the Holy Spirit. Indeed we must believe God on His own account, for He is the first truth himself."[98]

The development of the prolegomena is also important to understand the medieval background of Calvin's statement that Scripture is self-convincing. Reformed orthodoxy underwent a strong influence from medieval scholasticism in the prolegomena, as we will see in chapter 4. This development started with the theologians of the twelfth century, who agreed that theology needed to be organized and developed according to a consistent method. The idea of the ἀρχαί or *principia* of science influenced the theological systems that were based on Aristotle's theory of science. If theology is a science (*scientia*), it must rest on *prima principia*.

In the prologue of his *De sacramentis christianae fidei* Hugh of Saint Victor (d. 1141) deals with Scripture as the foundation and the material of theology.[99] William of Auxerre (d. 1231) argues that all sciences rest upon their own *principia* and that theology in turn must have its own self-evident principles (*principia per se nota*); these principles, however, are only known *per se* to believers.[100] Therefore he compared the *articuli fidei* with the *principia* of science; the articles of faith are self-evident, but only for those who believe them.[101] Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) discusses the question whether theology is science (*scientia*) or wisdom (*sapientia*). Although he does not preclude its identification as *sapientia*, he argues that theology is also a science by making the distinction between primary and subalternate sciences. The first principles of the former are self-evident, those of the latter are received from a higher science. According to Aquinas, theology is "a subalternate science which receives from God by revelation principles that are self-evident in the *scientia Dei*, the science or knowledge of God himself."[102] The *principia theologiae*, God and his revelation, become the basis

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96 Southern, *Scholastic Humanism* 2, 108.

97 Nicholas of Lyre refers to Aristotle, *Metaphisics*, ii, where Aristotle says that the first principles of science are self-evident. Nicholas of Lyre, 'Prologus Primus' in *Biblia Sacra cum glossa ordinaria et Postilla Nicolai Lyrani*, Lyon 1590, as cited in Southern, *Scholastic Humanism* 2, 110.

98 "Omnia enim videntur per se nota que scripta sunt in Biblia, quia per Spiritum sanctum prolata. Deo autem debemus credere per se ipsum, cum sit ipse prima veritas." G. Cremascoli, ed., 'La "Summa" di Rolando da Cremona. Il testo del prologo' *Studi medievali*, series 3a, 16 (1975), 825-866, 864.

99 Muller, *PRRD* 1^2, 88-89.

100 Y.M.J. Congar, *A History of Theology*, New York 1968, 89-90. Cf. Muller, *PRRD* 1^2, 90.

101 Cf. L.F. Tuninetti, *"Per se notum" Die logische Beschaffenheit des Selbstverstandlichen im Denken des Thomas von Aquin*, Leiden 1996, 107. Cf. A. Lang, *Die theologische Prinzipienlehre der mittelalterlichen Scholastik*, Freiburg [1964], 112.

102 Muller, *PRRD* 1^2, 88-89. Muller refers to Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I,q.1,a.2. "Omnis enim scientia procedit ex principiis per se notis." Cf. Muller, *PRRD* 1^2, 92, 326.

for legitimate conclusions drawn within a theological system. Thomas Aquinas agreed that Scripture was a *principium* of theology, but not that Scripture was *per se nota*.

The Latin expression used by Aquinas for the self-evidence of the principles is *principia per se nota*. He frequently appealed to these self-evident principles in all areas of his thought, but did not discuss them explicitly. Aquinas most probably derived the expression *per se nota* from Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (480–524 or 525), who bridged the gap between ancient philosophy and medieval theology by translating Aristotle's works into Latin.[103] Boethius translated ἀξίωμα as *dignitas* and defined the axiom as a *propositio per se nota*.[104] The Greek equivalent of the Latin expression *per se notum* is "δι' αὐτοῦ γνωστόν."[105]

Aquinas uses the concept of the *principia per se nota* in the context of the question of the self-evidence of the existence of God. He discusses the question whether it is self-evident that God exists (*utrum deum esse sit per se notum*).[106] He also uses the expression in the context of the *lex naturalis* where he compares the precepts of natural law with the *principia* of demonstration. The precepts of the natural law can be compared with the first principles of demonstrations in speculative reason, because both are *principia per se nota*.[107] Aquinas distinguishes between things that are evident by themselves (*secundum se*) and those that are evident for us (*quoad nos*).[108] It is possible that Calvin had this distinction in mind when he wrote in the *Institutes* that Scripture only gains authority for us (*apud nos*) through the witness of the Spirit. As we have seen this *apud nos* must not be interpreted as opposed to the authority of Scripture *in se*, but it can be understood as an explanation of the term αὐτόπιστος. In that case, Calvin expresses that Scripture is not αὐτόπιστος in general for every reader, but only for those who are taught by the Spirit. It is difficult, however, to tell what Calvin had exactly in mind.

According to K. Heim, the Franciscan theological school of Alexander of Hales (d. 1245), Bonaventura (1257-1274) and Matthew of Aquasparta (1235-1302) differed from Aquinas in their approach to authority. They regarded the truth as axiomatically self-evident; Scripture only offered a symbolic and material representation of the truth. Aquinas, on the other hand, had an authoritative approach and taught that the truth was not self-evident but contingent and that certainty regarding the truth depended on faith

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103 Cf. Tuninetti, *Per se notum*, 49.

104 'Axiom' in R. Eisler, *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe: historisch-quellenmässig bearbeitet*, 2nd ed., Berlin 1904. Cf. G. Wieland, 'Prinzip II Mittelalter,' in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 7, 1345-1355, 1347. Aquinas refers to Boethius's *De Hebdomadibus* who says that certain axioms or propositions are universally self-evident. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II,q.94,a.2. Cf. Aquinas, *De veritate*, q.10,a.12.

105 Tuninetti, *Per se notum*, 42. Tuninetti discusses the Aristotelian background of the expression *per se notum* from the *Posterior Analytics*, but he does not mention the term αὐτόπιστος probably because he skips the ancient Greek commentaries on Aristotle and turns directly to the Latin texts of Boethius. Tuninetti does refer to *Proclus*. Tuninetti, *Per se notum*, 50.

106 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I,q.2,pr.

107 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II,q.94,a.2.

108 More precisely the distinction was between the *per se nota secundum se et non quoad nos* and *per se nota secundum se et quoad nos*. Aquinas divided the second group in *per se nota* for all and for the *sapientes*. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I[a],q.2,a.1. Cf. Huning, 'Per se notum,' 264, Tuninetti, *Per se notum*, 24.

in the authority of Scripture and tradition.[109] The Reformation offered a synthesis of both views in the *autopistia* of Scripture; Scripture has the evidence of the axioms, but its content is contingent. Though Scripture is self-evident, it does not have the compelling force of an axiom, but can only be accepted though faith.[110]

After Aquinas the expression *per se notum* even gained a broader meaning. Richard of Middleton (d. ca. 1300) and William de la Mare (d. 1290) argued that a proposition that is *per se notum* is easily known. Peter Auriol (d. 1322,) a Franciscan lector, defined these propositions as those that come immediately to our mind without the aid of a teacher and with a temporal suddenness, such as the proposition that snow is white.[111]

One of the reasons that Calvin prefers the term αὐτόπιστος to the Latin *per se notum* might lie in the broadening and the devaluation of the meaning of the Latin expression. For philosophical purposes in the context of the theory of knowledge *per se notum* is a good equivalent of αὐτόπιστος, but for Calvin the element of faith might have been too important to drop the Greek. Calvin was familiar with the Latin expression as well, for he uses it in a rather trivial context. Explaining the second commandment, he says that God means the sun, the moon, the other luminaries, and perhaps the birds by those things that are "in heaven above." Regarding the other parts of the universe mentioned in this commandment he remarks: "I pass over the remaining parts, because they are known of themselves (*per se nota*)."[112]

A more detailed study of the church fathers and of the Middle Ages may show that Calvin is less original at the point of the self-convincing character of Scripture than his use of the term αὐτόπιστος suggests. From what we have found it seems to be probable that Calvin introduced the term into theological discourse, but we cannot prove this with absolute certainty. The idea that the truth of Scripture has the ultimate authority and does not depend on anything else, but is known by itself or is self-evident was not an invention of Calvin; he could draw on medieval tradition at this point.

Although the term αὐτόπιστος is somewhat foreshadowed in the medieval concept of Scripture as a *principium* of Christian knowledge, yet the way in which Calvin uses the concept in the Reformation context is innovative. The fact that as a Renaissance scholar he returns to the original Greek term that had more force of language may indicate that he was aware of this new context. In medieval theology Scripture was one of the principles of theology, and even though it had the highest authority, it was not the only *principium*. The question that we still have to answer is whether Calvin was fully aware of the philosophical meaning and the original context of the term αὐτόπιστος. The

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109 Heim, *Gewißheitsproblem*, 21, 31. Cf. Krusche, *Wirken des Heiligen Geistes*, 203. In the Franciscan school two forms of faith were distinguished; the *fides acquisita* that was based on authority or on rational proof and the *fides inspirata* or *infusa* that was obtained through an immediate insight in the truth. Only the *fides inspirata* was saving and could be compared with the immediate knowledge of the Aristotelian *principia* of science. Heim, *Gewißheitsproblem*, 16-19.

110 Heim, *Gewißheitsproblem*, 281.

111 C. Bolyard, 'Knowing naturaliter: Auriol's Propositional Foundations,' *Vivarium* 38 (2000), 162-176, 166, 170.

112 "Itaque reliqua membra, quia per se nota sunt, praetermitto." Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.17, *OS* 3, 359.

use of the expression *per se notum* in medieval theology points in this direction. At the very least it shows that Calvin did not introduce this term in a theological vacuum.

3.3.3 The Independency of Scripture in the Reformation

The term αὐτόπιστος does not seem to be used by most of the other Protestant Reformers. Martin Luther (1483-1546) does not deal systematically with the concept of Scripture, though many quotations can be given from his works in which he states the independent character of its authority and of the testimonium of the Spirit.[113] It ought to be above all settled and established among Christians that the Holy Scriptures are a spiritual light far brighter than the sun itself.[114] In 1539 – the same year Calvin first discussed the theme in the *Institutes* – Luther wrote that it was a blasphemy of the pope to say that Holy Scripture had its authority from him and not he from Scripture, placing the church above Scripture.[115] Defending himself against the papal bull of excommunication of 1520, he wrote: "Holy Scripture must necessarily be clearer, simpler, and more reliable than any other writings."[116] All other writings must be tested and proved by Scripture. No occurrence of the term αὐτόπιστος or a word derived from it is found in his works.[117]

In a booklet titled *Of the Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God* – written as early in the Reformation as 1522 – Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) gives some examples from the Old Testament to illustrate that the Word of God brings its own illumination with it. In the case of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, God "so enlightened him with the Word that he knew it to be the Word of God, even though he was commanded to do something quite contrary to God's former promise."[118] By clarity (*Klarheit*) Zwingli means the power of the Word that brings its own inward illumination and assurance with it.[119] Zwingli, however, does not apply this self-convincing power of the Word of God immediately to Scripture.[120] Martin Bucer (1491-1551) wrote that all *doctrina* must

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113 "Certus erit de Euangelio unusquisque in semetipso testimonium habens spiritus sancti, hoc esse Euangelion." Luther, *WA* 30 II, 688.

114 In *De servo arbitrio* Luther says : "Scripturas sanctas esse lucem spiritualem, ipso sole longe clariorem." H.-U. Delius, ed., *Martin Luther: Studienausgabe*, vol. 3, Berlin 1983, 222. Cf. "Also ist die Schrift ihr selbst ein eigen Licht." Luther, *WA* 10 III, 238.

115 Luther, *WA* 39 II, 57.

116 "Es musz yhe die heilige schrift klerer leichter unnd gewissere sein den aller anderer schrifft." Luther, *WA* 7, 317.

117 The following indices were checked: Luther, *Weimarer Ausgabe*, several volumes, J.W. Lundeen, ed., *Luther's Works: Index*, vol. 55, Philadelphia 1986. J.G. Walch, ed., *Dr. Martin Luther's Sämmtliche Schriften*, vol. 23, St. Louis 1910. The problem with the indices is that they mostly do not list the Greek terms separately. An exception is Luther, *WABr* 17, 644-648, where it appears that Melanchthon uses the term ἀξίοπιστος twice in his letters to Luther. The digital edition of the *Weimarer Ausgabe* has been searched without any result for αὐτόπιστος or its derivatives. M. Luther, *Luthers Werke im WWW: Weimarer Ausgabe*, ProQuest Information and Learning, Cambridge.

118 U. Zwingli, 'Of the Clarity and the Certainty of the Word of God,' in *Zwingli and Bullinger*, ed. G.W. Bromiley, London 1953, 59-95, 76. Cf. E. Egli, ed., *Huldreich Zwinglis Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 1, Berlin 1905, 363.

119 G.W. Bromiley 'Introduction,' in Bromiley, *Zwingli and Bullinger*, 49-58, 53.

120 It is a pity that there is no useful index of Greek terms in the editions of his works. H. Zwingli, *Opera*, Turici [Zurich] 1828-1861. H. Zwingli, *Huldreich Zwinglis Sämtliche Werke* [Corpus

be derived from the Scriptures and that the interpretation of the Scriptures must be derived from themselves.[121] Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) insisted on the independent authority of Scripture at the Leipzig Disputation (1519), stating that "Scripture is alone of the heavenly Spirit, pure and true in all things."[122] He does not use the term αὐτόπιστος in his *Loci Communes*, but he is familiar with the idea of common notions (κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι) and uses this concept in the context of the natural knowledge of God.[123] In one of the later editions of the *Loci Communes,* Melanchthon added a paragraph on "The Spirit and the Letter" in which he says that the Anabaptists blame the Reformers that they remain in the letter, but he insists on the fact that the Holy Spirit is given through the Word.[124] Wolfgang Musculus (1497-1563) deals with the *locus de Scriptura* in his *Loci communes sacrae theologiae* (1560), but he does not use the term αὐτόπιστος.[125]

The question in this study is not how the concept of the independent authority of Scripture developed during the time of the Reformation, nor whether or how the other Reformers may have influenced Calvin, but more specifically if he could have borrowed the word αὐτόπιστος from one of them. The fact that the term was not found in the general indexes to the critical editions of their works does not imply that they never used it.

3.3.4 Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575)

The only Reformer next to Calvin in whose works we have found the term αὐτόπιστος is Heinrich Bullinger, who had many ideas on the authority of Scripture in common with the Genevan Reformer. Bullinger discussed the authority of Scripture in his *De Scripturae Sanctae authoritate* (1538) but the term αὐτόπιστος is not used in this work. Over against the Catholic claim of the authority of the church, Bullinger insisted on the independent authority of Scripture.[126] We would expect the term here if he was familiar with it at that time.

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reformatorum, vol. 88-101], Berlin [etc.] 1905-1991.

121 M. Bucer, *De regno Christi libri duo (1550)*, ed. F.J. Wendel, Paris [etc.] 1955, 62. Cf. W. Pauck, ed., *Melanchthon and Bucer*, Philadelphia 1969, 232-233. The term αὐτόπιστος does not occur in the indexes of the Latin volumes of the *Martini Buceri Opera*, Paris 1954-.

122 "Una est scriptura coelestis spiritus, pura et per omnia verax, quam canonicam vocant." R.W. Stupperich, ed., *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl: Studienausgabe*, vol. 1, 19. Cf. J.R. Schneider, *Philip Melanchthon's Rhetorical Construal of Biblical Authority: Oratio Sacra*, Lewiston [etc.] 1990, 120, 127, n. 43.

123 "Philosophi hoc lumen vocant notitiam principiorum, vocant κοινὰς ἐννοίας et προλήψεις." Ph. Melanchthon, *CR*, 21:711. Cf. J.E. Platt, *Reformed Thought and Scholasticism: The Arguments for the Existence of God in Dutch Theology, 1575-1650*, Leiden 1982, 41.

124 Melanchthon, *CR* 21:456-458, 930-934. Cf. R. Jenett and J. Schilling, eds., *Philipp Melanchthon Heubtartikel Christlicher Lere*, Leipzig 2002, 447. We have not found the term αὐτόπιστος in Melanchthon's *De ecclesia et de autoritate verbi Dei*. Melanchthon, *CR* 23:595-642. These volumes of the *Corpus Reformatorum* do not have Greek indexes like the volumes of the *Calvini Opera*.

125 The term αὐτόπιστος is not mentioned in the index of the Greek terms and is not used in the *locus de Scriptura*. W. Musculus, *Loci communes in usus sacra theologiae candidat. parati*, Basil 1560.

126 "Haec autem de prisco saeculo ... ut etiam hanc appareat satis es seipsa authoritatis habere." H.

In 1544 he wrote in his *Responsio ad Ioannis Cochlei* against Johann Cochlaeus (1479-1552) that the books of the Old and New Testament were "canonical and authentic, just like someone calls those things αὐτόπιστοι, that gain faith by themselves also without arguments and have their truth and authority completely from themselves and not from elsewhere" and in the margin: "Authentici libri αὐτόπιστοι."[127] This was only one year after Calvin used the term the first time in his *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrina* against Pighius. Calvin did not apply the term immediately to Scripture that first time and therefore in a strict historical sense Bullinger was the Reformer who "introduced" the term αὐτόπιστος into the concept of the authority of Scripture. It is possible that Calvin depended on this work for his later application of the term to the authority of Scripture, but it is also possible that Bullinger depended on Calvin's polemical work for the term itself. Bullinger knew Greek, although he admitted that he remained "a pupil" in that language during his whole life.[128] The quotation from Bullinger makes clear that the term was not only used by Calvin for the self-convincing authority of Scripture at the time of the Reformation. Though we did not find the term in Bullinger's other writings, a closer study of the relationship between both Reformers on this issue may be interesting. Bullinger more often underlines the independent authority of Scripture. In his *Summa christenlicher Religion* (1556) he writes "that the holy biblical Scripture has enough authority or esteem of itself and does not need to be made trustworthy by the church or by human beings."[129] And a little later he says that to found the authority of Scripture on human arguments would be the same as supporting the rising sun by torches.[130] It is blasphemy to judge the authority of God's Word by human reason, because this sets the creature above the Creator.[131] Bullinger's concept of the independent authority of Scripture became influential through the *Confessio Helvetica Posterior* (1566) where he says that the authority of the canon rests on God himself (*Deus ipse*) and where he adds the expression *non ex hominibus* to exclude the authority of the church.[132]

Bullinger, *De Scripturae Sanctae authoritate, certitudine, firmitate et absoluta perfectione, deque episcoporum, qui Verbi Dei ministri sunt, institutione et functione, contra superstitiones tyrannidisque Romanae antistites, ad sereniss*, Tiguri [Zurich] 1538, 5.

127 "Ea de caussa libri Veteris & Novi testamenti a priscis haud dubie appellati sunt canonici ac authentici, quasi quis dicat αὐτόπιστοι, ueluti per se fidem facientes, etiam sine argumentis, ex seipsis utiq; non aliunde ueritas opinionem & authoritatem habentes." Bullinger, *Ad Ioannis Cochlei*, 10b.

128 S.P. Bergjan, 'Bullinger und die griechischen Kirchenväter in der konfessionellen Auseinandersetzung,' in *Heinrich Bullinger und seine Zeit: eine Vorlesungsreihe*, ed. E. Campi, Zurich 2004, 133-160,133-134.

129 "Das die heilig Biblisch gschriffe uß iren selbs autoritet oder ansahens unnd glaubens gnüg habe / nit erst von der kirchen oder menschen bedörffe glaubwirdig gemacht zewerden." H. Bullinger, *Summa christenlicher Religion*, Zurich 1556, 7b. Cf. H. Bullinger, *Compendium Christianae religionis: decem libris comprehensum*, Tiguri [Zurich] 1556, 6.

130 Bullinger, *Ad Ioannis Cochlei*, 8b. Cf. Koch, *Theologie der Confessio Helvetica Posterior*, 28.

131 Cf. E.A. Dowey, 'The Word of God as Scripture and Preaching,' in *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives* [Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies, vol. 22], ed. W.F. Graham, Kirksville 1994, 5-18, 6.

132 W. Niesel, ed., *Bekenntnisschriften und Kirchenordnungen der nach Gottes Wort reformierten Kirche*, Zurich [1938], 222. Cf. Dowey, 'The Word of God as Scripture and Preaching,' 6.

As our draft of the church fathers, medieval theology, and the writings of the other Reformers has shown, the introduction of αὐτόπιστος as a theological term was not only foreshadowed by a longstanding tradition in which Scripture was one of the *principia per se nota* of theology, but also stood in harmony with the opinion of the other Reformers on the independent authority of Scripture. Heinrich Bullinger seems to come closest to Calvin in his use of the term αὐτόπιστος. He introduced the term into the concept of the authority of Scripture before Calvin used it in his *Institutes*, but we have not found the term in his works before 1544, while Calvin first used it in the theological discussion with Pighius in 1543. The introduction of the concept of the *autopistia* of Scripture took place in the broader context of the medieval and Reformation theology. The focus on Calvin in this study is justified by the fact that the influence of the term αὐτόπιστος in Reformed theology flows from the *Institutes* 1.7.5. Moreover, the intimate connection of the term with the *testimonium* of the Spirit is typical for Calvin's position.

3.4 Αὐτόπιστος in Calvin's Commentaries

Calvin uses the term αὐτόπιστος five times in his commentaries; these references will be discussed in chronological order. We will pay special attention to its relation with the work or the witness of the Spirit and keep the philosophical background of the word in our mind. It is interesting to see how αὐτόπιστος is translated in the French editions of the commentaries, although it is not always certain whether Calvin translated them.

3.4.1 Commentary on Hebrews 6 (1549)

Calvin uses αὐτόπιστος as an adjective for *sermo Dei* in his commentary on Hebrews 6,18.[133] With *sermo Dei* Calvin means the Word of God spoken to Abraham. According to Calvin, Abraham expected the fulfillment of God's promises and did not fear because he trusted the Word of God. Next to his promise, God swore an oath to accommodate himself to our slowness.[134] "Because he sees that we do not find rest (*acquiescere*) in his simple Word, he adds an oath to establish it more fully in our hearts."[135] We need an oath, because we do not rest in the Word. Calvin regards the oath as a kind of bonus. God's Word is even as immutable as his oath, it is like gold seven times purified. "Therefore the Word of God is certain truth καὶ αὐτόπιστος, yet the oath is added as a bonus to a full measure."[136] We will discuss the use of *acquiescere* later on in this chapter.

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133 Calvin's commentary on Hebrews was published in 1549 J. Calvin, *Ioannis Calvini Commentarii, in Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, Geneva 1549.

134 J. Calvin, *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, ed. T.H.L. Parker [COR II, vol. 19], Geneva 1996, 101. Cf. *CO* 55, 79. For the use of *accomodatio* cf. Calvin, *Institutes* 1.13.1. Cf. Dowey, *Knowledge of God*, 3-4.

135 "Quia nos videt simplici suo sermoni non acquiescere, ut eum plenius sanciat in cordibus nostris, addit iusiurandum." Calvin, *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, 101. Cf. *CO* 55, 79.

136 "Ergo sermo Dei certa est veritas, καὶ αὐτόπιστος; quum vero additur iusiurandum, quasi cumulus ad plenam mensuram accedit." Calvin, *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, 102. Cf. *CO* 55, 80.

The parallel of αὐτόπιστος with *certa veritas*, strengthened by the Greek καὶ instead of the Latin *et*. Calvin uses many Greek words in this commentary, but mostly these words come from the New Testament.[137] The Greek particle strengthens the impression that αὐτόπιστος is an explanation of *certa veritas*.

If something is true it can stand alone; it does not need anything else to support it. The oath is a bonus; it is not really necessary, because God's Word is αὐτόπιστος, or with the French translation it "deserves faith of itself as the only authority."[138] The promise of God does not need any confirmation, though an oath can be useful for us, because of our unbelief. "Here is a strong comfort for us that God who cannot deceive when he speaks, is not content to promise only, but also swears."[139] The Word is sufficient for faith. Even if God gives a bonus, that it is superfluous, because the Word is αὐτόπιστος. The connection with *veritas* reminds us of Calvin's remark in the 1539 edition of the *Institutes*, where he says that truth does not need to be supported, because it is able to sustain itself by itself alone.[140]

3.4.2 Commentary on 2 Peter 1 (1551)

In his commentary on the Catholic Epistles Calvin uses the term αὐτόπιστος twice.[141] The first time is in the *Dedicatio* to Edward VI. Because of the polemical character of this dedication, we will discuss it together with the other polemical writings. Calvin also uses the word in the explanation of 2 Peter 1,19, where the apostle says that "we have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the daystar arise in your hearts." This is one of the important texts on the authority and inspiration of the Scripture. According to Calvin's comments on the verses 16-18, Peter proclaims the certainty of the gospel; he was an eyewitness of the glory of Christ.[142] We gain certainty in a different way: Christ is not raised from the dead before our eyes, but we know who handed down his resurrection to us. "And the inward testimony of the conscience, the seal of the Spirit, which far exceeds all the evidence of the senses, is added to this."[143] The certainty of the gospel is founded in the oracles of the prophets, for the prophets are the patrons of the apostolic *doctrina*. The truth of the gospel is proved by a double testimony: the solemn declaration of God and all the prophecies. It seems absurd at first that the word of the prophets is called surer or firmer than the voice of God from

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137 There are Greek words on almost every page. According to Parker, this implies that Calvin worked from the Greek text. Calvin, *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, xxiii.

138 "Ainsi la parolle de Dieu est vne verite certaine, & digne de foy d'elle-mesme pour la seule authorité." J. Calvin, *Commentaires de M. Iean Calvin sur les Epistres de l'Apostre S. Paul, & aussi sur l'Epistre aux Hebrieux. Item, sur les Epistres Canoniques de S. Pierre, S. Jean, S. Iaques, & S. Iude, autrement appelees Catholiques,* Geneva 1562, 382.

139 "Hinc nobis valida consolatio, quod Deus qui fallere loquendo non potest, promittere non contentus, etiam iurat." Calvin, *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, 102. Cf. *CO* 55, 80.

140 *OS* 3, 72

141 It was published in Latin and French in the same year. J. Calvin, *Ioannis Calvini Commentarii in Epistolas Canonicas*, Geneva 1551.

142 *CO* 55, 452-453.

143 "Et accedit interius conscientiae testimonium: illa inquam spiritus obsignatio quae omnes sensuum probationes longe superat." *CO* 55, 453.

heaven, but the apostle refers to the Jews who accept the authority of the prophets and for whom their *doctrina* is beyond controversy (*extra controversiam*).[144]

Calvin has more difficulty in explaining what Peter means by the darkness and the dawning of the day. His conclusion is that the darkness is this life and that the dawn of day will come upon us when we shall see Christ face to face.[145] Calvin rejects the opinion of those who explain the day dawning as "the clear knowledge of Christ, when people find rest (*acquiescere*) in the gospel. The darkness they explain as the time when people hesitate in a state of suspense and the *doctrina* of the gospel is not received as αὐτόπιστος."[146] Calvin rejects this explanation because it implies that the prophets are made superfluous by the gospel.[147] Calvin, who always emphasizes the unity of the Old and New Testament, is of the opinion that the teaching of the prophets is not replaced by the gospel, but remains necessary for us to the end of our lives.

Here Calvin uses the term αὐτόπιστος to describe a position that he rejects. Still this comment illustrates what we have found regarding the meaning of the Greek term. As long as people are looking elsewhere for evidences of the truth of the gospel, they do not receive it unconditionally, they hesitate before receiving the *doctrina* of the gospel as αὐτόπιστος. The verb *acquiescere* is used as an equivalent for receiving (*recipere*) the *doctrina* of the gospel. The use of these two words shows that αὐτόπιστος indicates how the gospel must be received. The French translation has: "received as indubitable and having its full certainty of itself."[148] The gospel does not need any other evidence for those who accept it, because to them it gives firm certainty in and of itself.

The broader context shows the relation between accepting the gospel as αὐτόπιστος and the witness of the Spirit as the foundation of the assurance of faith. Everyone who will open his eyes through the obedience of faith shall know by experience that Scripture is a light.[149] Even if the whole world would be unanimously united together against them, still "believers who are inwardly illuminated by the Holy Spirit, would acknowledge only what God says in his Word."[150]

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144 *CO* 55, 455.

145 *CO* 55, 456.

146 "Quibusdam videtur esse dilucida Christi cognitio, dum plane in evangelio acquiescunt homines. Caliginem vero exponunt, dum suspendi adhuc haesitant, necdum evangelii doctrina tanquam αὐτόπισος recipitur." *CO* 55, 455. Αὐτόπισος is a misprint. The original edition of 1551 has αὐτόπιϛος, because in the sixteenth and seventeenth century the Greek letters "στ" were usually printed as "ϛ." The editors of *CO* changed the "ϛ" into an "σ."

147 *CO* 55, 456. It is strange that Calvin uses an explanation here that he rejects in the *Institutes*, where he says that the prophetic doctrine gave up its place after the light of the gospel dawned. Calvin, *Institutes* 1.9.2, *OS* 3, 83.

148 "que la doctrine de l'Euangile n'est point encore recevë comme indubitable, & ayant d'elle-mesme sa plene certitude." J. Calvin, *Commentaires de M. Iean Calvin sur les Epistres de S. Paul & sur les Epistres Catholiques,* 75.

149 *CO* 55, 457.

150 "dum spiritu sancto intus illuminati fideles, quidnam verbo suo velit Deus, agnoscit." *CO* 55, 458.

3.4.3 Commentary on John 20 (1553)

Calvin also uses the term αὐτόπιστος in his commentary on John 20,24-29.[151] Calvin says that Thomas was so slow to believe that he could only be moved to faith through his senses and that this is in complete contradiction to the nature of faith.[152] Faith must have its origin in the Word of God.

> *Blessed are they who have not seen, and have believed*. Christ commends faith here because it finds rest (*acquiescere*) in the plain Word, and does not depend on the senses or carnal reason. Therefore he summarizes the power and nature of faith in a short definition; namely, that it does not stand still in the visible things, but penetrates heaven, to believe those things which are hidden from the human senses. And we must certainly give this honor to God, that to us His truth (*veritas*) is αὐτόπιστος.[153]

The words *veritas* and *acquiescere* attract our attention again; αὐτόπιστος is an adjective of *veritas*. God's truth is αὐτόπιστος; this truth is revealed in his plain Word in which we must find rest. It belongs to the nature and power of faith to honor God in this way. That faith only finds rest in the Word of God. Calvin mentions the human senses, because of the discussion on the sacraments. According to Calvin, the Catholic theologians twist the words "blessed are they who have not seen, and have believed" to prove the doctrine of transubstantiation that contradicts the human senses.[154] True faith does not depend on the senses, but finds rest in God's revelation. God's *veritas* does not need to be proved from the senses, for we honor God when we believe without seeing.

Calvin repeats a few times that faith should honor the Word of God. When we do not give it the honor it deserves, a growing obstinacy is the result and we will lose all reverence for it.[155] Christ blames Thomas for giving less honor to the Word of God than he ought to have done.[156] In the phrase *ut nobis αὐτόπιστος sit eius veritas* he uses the conjunctive *sit* in combination with the dative *nobis*. To honor God, we must let the truth of God be αὐτόπιστος for us. The use of *sit* in combination with *nobis* reminds us of the use of *apud nos* in the *Institutes*. Scripture is the truth and therefore must be trusted and accepted as true.

Calvin does not make the statement that the Word of God is αὐτόπιστος, but he exhorts us to believe that Word unconditionally and without proof of our senses. "Faith is not of the right kind, unless it is founded on the Word of God and rises to the

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151 The commentary was published in 1553 in Latin and French. J. Calvin, *In evangelium secundum Iohannem, commentarius Iohannis Calvini*, Geneva 1553.

152 "Quod prorsus abhorret a fidei natura." J. Calvin, *Commentarii in secundam Pauli epistolam ad Corinthios*, ed. H. Feld [COR II, vol. 15], Geneva 1994, 301. Cf. *CO* 47, 445.

153 "*Beati qui non viderunt et crediderunt.* Hic fidem eo nomine commendat Christus, quod in simplici verbo acquiescens a sensu et ratione carnis minime pendet. Brevi ergo definitione vim et naturam fidei complectitur, nempe quod non subsistit in praesenti aspectu, sed penetrat usque ad caelos, ut credat, quae sunt abscondita ab humano sensu. Et certe hoc dandum est honoris Deo, ut nobis αὐτόπιστος sit eius veritas." J. Calvin, *In Evangelium Secundum Johannem commentarius pars altera*, ed. H. Feld [COR II, vol. 11.2], Geneva 1998, 301-302. Cf. *CO* 47, 445.

154 Calvin, *In Evangelium Secundum Johannem commentarius pars altera*, 302-303. Cf. *CO* 47, 446. Feld could not find examples from Catholics who used this text as a proof for transubstantiation in Calvin's days. Calvin, *In Evangelium Secundum Johannem commentarius pars altera*, 302, n. 75.

155 Calvin, *In Evangelium Secundum Johannem commentarius pars altera*, 299. Cf. *CO* 47, 443.

156 Calvin, *In Evangelium Secundum Johannem commentarius pars altera*, 301. Cf. *CO* 47, 445.

invisible kingdom of God going beyond all human capacity."[157] Apparently for Calvin the term αὐτόπιστος implies that faith in the truth of God excels and excludes all kinds of proof, or with the French translation, his truth is "indubitable and without further proof."[158]

3.4.4 Commentary on Acts 26 (1554)

The term αὐτόπιστος also occurs in the second part of Calvin's commentary on Acts.[159] Chapter 26 describes Paul's defense before Agrippa, who is almost persuaded to become a Christian. According to Calvin, this speech gains the character of a dispute, in which Paul defends the case of the resurrection. Paul says that he is judged because of the hope of the resurrection. Calvin comments: "Now he descends into the *causa*, namely that he labors for the principal point of the whole faith."[160] The sum of his *disputatio* is that the religion of the Jews is worthless unless they turn their eyes to Christ, the author of new life.[161] Paul confirms this in two ways.

> The most important confirmation (*superior confirmatio*) of the *doctrina* was taken from the Word of God, when he cited the promise made to the fathers. Now in the second place, he adds the consent of the church (*consensus ecclesiae*). This is the legitimate way (*ratio legitima*) to assert the dogmas of faith; let the authority of God come first and the consent of the church follow.[162]

The terms *causa, disputatio, confirmatio*, and *ratio legitima* show that Calvin approaches this speech as a legal dispute and explains Paul's speech in rhetorical terms. In this dispute the Word of God is the *superior confirmatio*. At the end of his speech, Paul again appeals to Scripture. According to Calvin, Paul does not take human witnesses, but cites Moses and the prophets, to whom the Lord has given undoubted authority.[163]

The procurator Festus thinks that Paul is beside himself. According to Calvin, this shows how unprofitable the truth is for the reprobate; they proudly trample it down, however clear it may be. After Paul has declared before Festus that he speaks the truth and that his mind is clear, he turns to Agrippa for whom he has more hope. Agrippa knows the things that have happened and believes the prophets; he can conclude that

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157 "Summa est, non esse rectam fidam, nisi quae in verbo Dei fundata ad invisibile Dei regnum consurgit, ut superior sit omni humana apprehensione." Calvin, *In Evangelium Secundum Johannem commentarius pars altera*, 302. Cf. *CO* 47, 445.

158 "Et certes il nous faut donner cest hõneur à Dieu, que sa verité nous foit indubitable sans autre probation." J. Calvin, *Commentaires de Iean Calvin sur la concordance ou harmonie, composee des trois Euangelistes: assauoir, sainct Matthieu, sainct Marc & saint Luc. Item sur l'Evangile sainct Iean*, Geneva 1562, 804.

159 The first part of the commentary (Acts 1-13) was published in 1552, the second part (Acts 14-28) in 1554.

160 "Nunc in causam descendit, quod scilicet op praecipium totius fidei caput laboret." *CO* 48, 538.

161 *CO* 48, 538.

162 "Ita superior doctrinae confirmatio ex Dei verbo sumpta fuit, quum patribus factum promissionem in medium adduceret. Nunc secundo loco adiungit ecclesiae consensum. Atque haec legitima est in asserendis fidei dogmatibus ratio, ut praeeat Dei autoritas: deinde accedat ecclesiae suffragatio." *CO* 48, 538-539.

163 *CO* 48, 545.

what has been predicted of the Messiah is fulfilled in Jesus.[164] Paul says: "Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe" and Calvin comments:

> Paul does not doubt Agrippa's faith and he does this not so much to praise him, but to free Scripture of all controversy so that he is not compelled to remain in the principles themselves. The meaning is therefore that Scripture is αὐτόπιστος, so that a Jew is not allowed to diminish the least of its authority.[165]

Scripture is the *superior confirmatio* of Paul's teaching and therefore it must be beyond all controversy. Agrippa acknowledges the authority of Scripture and therefore Paul can appeal to it. The term αὐτόπιστος indicates something that is so certain that it is not questioned at all; it points to final authority. The French translation of the term αὐτόπιστος illustrates this: "the meaning therefore is that Scripture is beyond all doubt."[166] Paul wants to exempt Scripture of all doubt by declaring that a Jew is not allowed to diminish even a *minimum* of its authority.

It is less clear what Calvin means by the phrase "so that he is not compelled to remain in the principles themselves." It can mean that Paul does not want to be forced to stop at the very beginning (*in ipsis principiis*) and therefore appeals to Agrippa's faith in the Scriptures. The use of *subsistere* together with *principia* can also indicate a logical meaning. Paul appeals to Agrippa's faith in order to settle the *principia* of the discussion.

Calvin has to explain why Paul says that Agrippa "believes" without having true faith. "Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe." According to Calvin, Paul's intention is to establish Scripture as αὐτόπιστος in the discussion and not to praise him or to suggest that Agrippa is a true believer. Paul says this to establish the *principia* of the faith, for he can only convince Agrippa from Scripture that Jesus is the Christ, because as a Jew he accepts the authority of the prophets. Paul wants to bring Agrippa from the *principia* to the conclusion. Agrippa is trained in the principles of the religion and Paul tries to convince him from these principles that Jesus is the promised Christ.[167] This is in accord with the use of other rhetorical or logical terms in this part of his commentary. The French translation "in the primary rudiments" also points in this direction.[168]

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164 *CO* 48, 547-548.

165 "Quod vero de fide Agrippae non dubitat Paulus, non tam facit eius laudandi causa, quam ut scripturam eximat ab omni controversia, ne in ipsis principiis subsistere cogatur. Sensus est igitur, scripturam esse αὐτόπιστον, ut fas non sit homini Iudaeo eius autoritati vel minimum detrahere." *CO* 48, 548. The reference to *CO* 48, 568 in the index of Greek words in the *CO* is a mistake. *CO* 59,420.

166 "Le sens donc est, que l'Escriture est hors de toute doute." J. Calvin, *Commentaires de Iehan Calvin sur la concordance ou harmonie composee de trois Evangelistes, ascavoir S. Mattieu, S. Marc, et S. Luc. Item sur l'Evangile selon S. Iehan, et sur le second livre de S. Luc dict les Actes des Apostres,* Geneva 1561, 658.

167 In his comments on the beginning of the chapter, Calvin remarks that Agrippa was not ignorant of the doctrines and ceremonies of the law. We should be more willing to listen to the definition of the worship of God, if we are already trained in the principles (*principia*). *CO* 48, 537.

168 "Au reste, quant a ce que sainct Paul ne doute point de la foy d'Agrippa, il ne le fait point tãt pour le louer que pour exempter l'Escriture de tout contredit, a ce qu'il ne foit constraint de s'arrester ès premiers rudiments." Calvin, *Mattieu, Marc, Luc, Iehan, les Actes des Apostres,* 658.

Agrippa is not a true believer, according to Calvin; the apostle extorts a confession from him against his will. This illustrates how obstinate human nature is, as long as it is not subjected to obedience by the Spirit of God.[169] Agrippa acknowledges that Scripture is αὐτόπιστος without true faith. Scripture has final authority for him, because as a Jew he knows that he is not allowed to diminish it. Though Agrippa does not honor the Scriptures as he should, still he has accepted them as a principle in his childhood and he is persuaded that they contain the oracles of God.[170] It is obvious that Scripture can also be αὐτόπιστος for an unbeliever, that it can be accepted by a mere "historical faith."[171]

The way Calvin uses the term in 1554 seems to differ from his use in the *Institutes* in 1559. There may have been a certain development at in the use of the term, but perhaps we should not overestimate the fact that Agrippa is an unbeliever. The meaning of the term can be the same, while the use is different. The meaning is that something has final authority and is beyond controversy and doubt. Here it refers to the faith of the Jews in the law and prophets, while in the *Institutes* it refers to the faith by which believers acquiesce in Scripture. The meaning of the term is the same (Scripture is *extra controversiam*): in both cases the logical connotation is evident, but the context is different. We will find other occurrences of αὐτόπιστος, where the connection with the authority of Scripture is absent. On the other hand, the use of the term in this context shows that it is possible to accept the self-convincing authority of Scripture in a certain sense without the *testimonium* of the Spirit. This does not mean that αὐτόπιστος refers to an attribute that Scripture has in itself, for even Agrippa is said to have "accepted" it as αὐτόπιστος. Also in the case of Agrippa the term has a truth-side and a trust-side, but apparently it is possible to accept Scripture as a *principium* and to believe that it is *extra controversiam* without accepting Christ. In the *Institutes* Calvin refers to true faith and uses the term αὐτόπιστος to make a distinction between the general authority of Scripture and the particular authority that it has for believers. Here he uses the term to show that Paul, whose speech he analyzes with rhetorical tools, goes back to the first *principia*. Perhaps the difference in meaning with the *Institutes* is due to the fact that the term is used in a rhetorical context in this *Commentary on Acts* and is connected with the logical term *principium*.

3.4.5 Lecture on Habakkuk 2 (1559)

Calvin uses the word αὐτόπιστος only once in his Old Testament commentaries, to wit, when he discusses Habakkuk 2,1-3. His lectures on the prophets differ from most of the other commentaries, because it is a verbatim report of his exegetical lectures (*leçons*) for students.[172] Calvin comments on Habakkuk's vision, which remains unfulfilled for

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169 *CO* 48, 548.

170 "hoc tamen a pueritia rudimentum imbiberat, ut persuasus esset, nihil praeter Dei oracula illic contineri." *CO* 48, 548.

171 Although Calvin does not develop the distinction between saving faith and historical faith in the *Institutes*, he sometimes uses this concept in his other writings. In his commentary on 1 Cor. 11,27 he says that those who bring with them a mere historical faith (*fides historica)*, without a lively feeling of repentance and faith, receive nothing but the sign in the sacrament. *CO* 49, 492.

172 J. Calvin, *Ioannis Calvini praelectiones in duodecim prophetas (quos vocant) minores*, Geneva 1559. This book is an exposition of the Minor Prophets except Hosea (1557) and Daniel (1561).

some time; the prophet must wait patiently for the accomplishment. So we also must honor God's Word, be fully persuaded that it is trustworthy and be satisfied with His promises.[173] Although we seem to live on vain promises day by day, yet let God speak, that is let him have this honor from you that you are persuaded that he is true, that he cannot disappoint you.[174] "There is no place for faith, if we desire that God's hand immediately fulfills what his mouth promises. It is therefore an evidence of faith to find rest (*acquiescere*) in God's Word, also when its accomplishment does not appear right away."[175] The prophet warns us "that we have no faith unless we are content with God's Word alone and suspend our desires until the appropriate time that God himself has appointed."[176] Commenting on the phrase that "the vision is yet for an appointed time," Calvin underlines the word *adhuc* that indicates faith in the unfulfilled prophecy. Faith must hold to the Word of God, even if all that is visible is in conflict with it.

> Even if God does not extend his hand, still let that which he has spoken be sufficient for you. Let the vision itself be efficient enough for you; let it be αὐτόπιστος for you; so that the Word of God has trustworthiness by itself and is not examined in the normal way.[177]

The fact that these lectures were published in the same year as the final Latin edition of the *Institutes* adds extra weight to this passage. Calvin gives a definition of αὐτόπιστος here: the Word of God must have its *fides per se*. The term is probably explained here, because Calvin's students were not so well versed in Greek.[178] The logical meaning of the term appears in the statement that God's Word may not be examined in the normal way; it is beyond human examination. The trustworthiness of Scripture is connected with personal faith; the use of *fides* already indicates this. This emphasis is even stronger because Calvin uses the conjunctive mode (*habeat*). Calvin does not say that the vision or that God's Word is αὐτόπιστος, but he says: let it be αὐτόπιστος for you. When we believe what God says in respite of everything that is visible, then we hold God's Word as αὐτόπιστος; there is no contradiction between *per se* and *apud vos*. These words remind us of the *Institutes* where Calvin says that Scripture receives the certainty that it deserves with us (*apud nos*) by the testimony of the Spirit. The French translation is rather free, but it points in the same direction; αὐτόπιστος means: "of itself engraved on the heart."[179]

Cf. T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries*, Edinburgh 1986, 13-29. De Greef correctly remarks that the difference between the commentaries and these lectures has not been noticed sufficiently. De Greef, *Johannes Calvijn*, 98.

173 *CO* 43, 523.

174 *CO* 43, 526. The idea of honoring God by believing His Word is the same as in the commentary on John 20.

175 "Atqui nullus erit fidei locus, si petimus ut statim Deus compleat quidquid pronuntiat ore suo. Haec igitur fidei nostrae probatio est, acquiescere in verbo Dei, etiamsi effectus non protinus appareat." *CO* 43, 525.

176 "admonet nullam esse nobis fidem, nisi solo Dei verbo contenti suspendimus nostra desideria usque ad tempus opportunum, quod scilicet ipse Deus statuit." *CO* 43, 525.

177 "Adhuc, adhuc, inquit propheta, sit visio, hoc est, etiamsi Deus manum suam non exserat, sufficiat vobis quod loquutus est. Visio ergo ipsa sit vobis satis efficax: sit apud vos αὐτόπιστος, ut per se habeat fidem verbum Dei, neque examinetur vulgari more" *CO* 43, 525.

178 The Latin of the *leçons* is simpler than that of the *Institutes*. Cf. Parker, *Old Testament Commentaries*, 16.

179 "Que la vision donc vous suffise, qu'elle vous foit d'elle-mesme engrauee au coeur, afin que la

The Greek philosophical term is used here in the context of the trials of faith. In the midst of his struggle the believer must hold vast to the Word of God and acquiesce in it. This is possible because God's revelation is αὐτόπιστος, it is reliable and trustworthy as such. Faith means that we let the Word of God be what it is. In the immediate context Calvin says that we, who creep on the earth, will only be able to ascend to God if his Word attains its authority for us.[180] The prophet teaches us to have such reverence for the Word of God, that it is sufficient for us to hear his voice. If we embrace his Word he will deliver us from all troubles and keep our minds in peace and rest.[181] Satan disturbs us in various ways, but the prophet shows us that God's Word alone must be sufficient for us. The only firm and secure place for believers is to find rest (*acquiescere*) in the Word of God.[182] We should acquiesce in God's Word even if he hides his hand.[183]

3.4.6 The Use of *Acquiescere*

The verb *acquiescere* occurs in connection with αὐτόπιστος in the *Institutes* and in all of the discussed commentaries, except in the case of Agrippa in Acts 26. Though Calvin uses the verb frequently, the repetition of this connection is too striking to be accidental.[184] The etymology of the verb indicates a movement instead of a situation (*ad-quiescere*). Therefore we mostly translate it as "to find rest" instead of the more static "to rest." In the French translations of the *Institutes* and the commentaries *acquiescere* is translated reflexively "se acquiescer," "se reposer," or "se arrester."[185] Next to the translations that refer to 'resting,' the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* also has the meaning: "to find mental peace," or "to find comfort or relief in something."[186] The *Latin Dictionary* of Lewis and Short informs us that the verb is frequently used by Cicero and gives the following translations, among others: "to come to a state of repose in relation to one's wishes, desires etc., to be satisfied with or give assent to."[187]

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parolle de Dieu ait enuers vous telle autorité qu'elle merite, & ne l'examinez pas selõ la façon commune." J. Calvin, *Leçons et expositions familieres de Iean Calvin sur les douze petis prophetes: ascauoir, Hosee, Ioel, Amos, Abdias, Ionas, Michee, Nahum, Habacuc, Sophonias, Aggee, Zacharie, Malachie: Traduites de Latin en François,* Lyon 1563, 376.

180 "modo verbum Dei obtineat suam autoritatem apud nos." *CO* 43, 520.

181 *CO* 43, 521.

182 "quia haec unica est statio firma et secura fidelibus acquiescere in verbo Dei." *CO* 43, 521.

183 *CO* 43, 526.

184 In the *Institutes* the verb occurs 55 times, according to the results of a query via the Latin Search Program, *Calvin's Institutes Latin-English Search and Browser Programs,* H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, [Grand Rapids] [1998].

185 The French translation of the commentary on Hebrews 6 has: "que nous n'acqiesçons pas a sa simple Parolle." Calvin, *Commentaires sur les Epistres de S. Paul*, 382. The French translation of the commentary on 2 Peter 1 has: "quand les hommes s'arrestent plenement à l'Euangile." Calvin, *Commentaires de M. Iean Calvin sur les Epistres de l'Apostre S. Paul*, 75. The French translation of the commentary on John 20 has: "de ce qu'acquiesçant à la simple parole de Dieu," Calvin, *Commentaires sur l'Evangile sainct Iean*, 804. The French translation of the commentary on Habakkuk 2 has: "de nous reposer & acquiescer à la parolle de Dieu," Calvin, *Leçons et expositions familieres de Iean Calvin sur les douze petis prophetes*, 376. In *Institutes* 1.7.5 the verb is translated as: "qui se repose en l'Escriture en droite fermeté." Calvin, Benoit, *Institution* 1, 98.

186 Glare, *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 28-29.

187 Lewis and Short, *Latin dictionary*, 23.

How does Calvin use the verb in connection with the Word of God? He says that believers find rest in the Word (in which God shows his favor) and that a pious mind cannot find rest except in the Word of God.[188] Scripture is the final haven of rest for our faith. The verb is used in the *Institutes* to define faith (*fides*) and particularly the aspect of trust (*fiducia*). From the beginning of the world Christ was set before the elect, so that they should look unto him and find rest in him.[189] "*Fiducia* is the certainty of finding rest in God by the recognition of his attributes."[190] "We confess that we believe in God, because our mind reposes in Him as truthful and our trust finds rest in him."[191] The verb can be used with the ablative case, but more often Calvin uses it with the preposition *in*. Believers find rest in Christ, in God's mercy, in the knowledge of God's goodness or in God himself.[192] Calvin also uses *acquiescere* for the relation between the Father and the Son. God is well pleased in Christ. God loves no one apart from Christ; "he is the beloved Son in whom the love of the Father dwells and finds rest."[193] To acquiesce means to be fully content with, to love something and be well pleased with it.

In *Institutes* 1.7.5 those who are inwardly taught by the Spirit find rest in Scripture. This is the only time in the *Institutes* that we find the expression *acquiescere in scriptura*, but there are other cases where the verb is connected with Scripture. "If we are willing to acquiesce in the plain *doctrina* of Scripture, there will be no danger that anyone deceives us with false colors."[194] Calvin will rather acquiesce in the testimony of Paul that Christ came to save sinners, than speculate about the question whether Christ would have become man if Adam had not sinned.[195] After proving from the prophets and apostles that the church is always imperfect, Calvin adds a quotation from Christ and says: "If anyone is little moved by prophets and apostles, let him at least find rest in the authority of Christ."[196] In the chapter on the *testimonium* of the Spirit and the authority of Scripture Calvin quotes from Augustine: "We should not acquiesce in mere opinion, but rely on sure and firm truth."[197] It is not human *opinio*, but divine *veritas* that gives us the certainty that we need for our faith. In all these cases Scripture is the

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188 Commentary on Acts 20,32. *CO* 48, 472. Commentary on Romans 14,23. *CO* 49, 269.

189 Calvin, *Institutes* 2.6.4, *OS* 3, 325.

190 "Fiducia est, ex virtutum eius recognitione, acquiesendi in eo securitas." Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.16, *OS* 3, 357.

191 "Ideo enim credere in Deum nos testamur, quod et in ipsum ut veracem animus noster se reclinat, et fiducia nostra in ipso acquiescit." Calvin, *Institutes* 4.1.2, *OS* 5, 3.

192 Calvin, *Institutes* 3.19.3, *OS* 4, 284. Calvin, *Institutes* 3.2.22, *OS* 4, 33. Calvin, *Institutes* 3.2.7, *OS* 4, 16, and Calvin, *Institutes* 4.14.14, *OS* 5, 271.

193 "ille est Filius dilectus in quo residet et acquiescit amor Patris." Calvin, *Institutes* 3.2.32, *OS* 4, 43. Cf. Calvin, *Institutes* 3.8.1, *OS* 4, 161 and Calvin, *Institutes* 3.24.5, *OS* 4, 415. In the same sense Calvin says that the weariness of Abraham found rest in Isaac his son. Calvin, *Institutes* 2.10.11, *OS* 3, 412.

194 "Quod si nobis in simplici Scripturae doctrina acquiescere libet, periculum non erit nequis talibus fucis nobis illudat." Calvin, *Institutes* 3.4.9, *OS* 4, 96.

195 Calvin, *Institutes* 2.12.5, *OS* 3, 443.

196 "Si quem parum movent Prophetae et Apostoli, ille saltem Christi authoritati acquiescat." Calvin, *Institutes* 4.1.19, *OS* 5, 22-23. Cf. Calvin, *Institutes* 4.17.32, *OS* 5, 390 and Calvin, *Institutes* 1.13.10, *OS* 3, 122.

197 "non tamen in opinione acquiescendum esse, sed certa et solida veritate nitendum." Calvin, *Institutes* 1.7.3, *OS* 3, 68.

source of comfort in which faith is completely satisfied. There is a final authority outside of himself that gives the believer certainty.

This is confirmed by the connection between *acquiescere* and Scripture or the Word of God in Calvin's commentaries. In his commentary on the introduction to Ezekiel, Calvin says: "We ought to seek in Scripture sure and firm *doctrina*, in which we can come to rest."[198] Though original sin may appear to be absurd, we must acquiesce in the sentence that God has pronounced in the Scriptures.[199] Moses sprinkles the doorposts with blood and "finds rest in God's Word alone, while the matter itself is not yet clear."[200] Jeremiah tells the Jews to remain in Israel and "had God only commanded them in one word to remain, they ought to have acquiesced, but God accommodated himself to their weakness."[201] In most of these cases divine authority is set in contrast with human authority. If you acquiesce in God's authority this is sufficient for you; it is beyond controversy.

In medieval Latin the verb *acquiescere* gains the juridical meaning 'to agree with' or 'to give consent to'; here *acquiescere* indicates the acknowledgement of the verdict by someone who is completely convinced.[202] The former law-student Calvin may have been familiar with this juridical meaning of the verb.[203]

If the believer finds rest in Scripture, this means that he is fully content to trust in Scripture. The Word of God is sufficient for him; he needs nothing else and wants nothing else. The meaning of αὐτόπιστος is colored by *acquiescere*; those who are inwardly taught by the Spirit find rest in Scripture because it is αὐτόπιστος. The narrow relationship between both words is confirmed by Calvin's commentary on 2 Peter 1, where finding rest in the gospel is an equivalent of receiving the gospel as αὐτόπιστος, but also the commentary on Hebrews, John, and Habakkuk confirm the relation between faith that acquiesces in God's Word and the acceptance of this Word as αὐτόπιστος. Only in the commentary on Acts this connection is missing and this underlines that the term αὐτόπιστος has a different meaning in the case of Agrippa.

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198 "sed in scriptura debemus quaerere certam et firmam doctrinam, in qua acquiescamus." Lecture on Ezekiel 1,2. *CO* 40, 26.

199 Commentary on Genesis 3,6. *CO* 23, 62.

200 "quatemus in solo Dei verbo acquiescit, ubi res ipsa non apparet." Commentary on Hebrews 11,28, Calvin, *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, 206; *CO* 55, 164.

201 "si tantum uno verbo iussisset Deus ipsos manere, acquiescendam fuit imperio illius: sed Deus hic infirmitati eorum se accomodat." Lecture on Jeremiah 42,9. *CO* 39, 225.

202 The *Mittellateinische Wörterbuch* has: "zustimmen, einverstanden sein, in Einklang stehen." *Mittellateinisches Wörterbuch bis zum ausgehenden 13. Jahrhundert*, vol. 1, Munich 1967, 121-122. In the Carolingian legislation the word had this juridical meaning. After receiving a sentence, a suspect could either appeal to a higher court or acquiesce. H. Brunner, *Forschungen zur Geschichte des deutschen und französischen Rechtes: gesammelte Aufsätze*, Stuttgart 1894, 138, n. 1. H. Brunner and C. von Freiherr Schwerin, *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte*, 2nd ed. [Systematisches Handbuch der deutschen Rechtswissenschaft, vol. 2.1], vol 1, Leipzig 1906, 480.

203 Maybe he simply copied the use of this term from Augustine or from medieval theology where the verb *acquiescere* was used for reposing in the testimony of Scripture. Gottschalk of Orbais (A.D. 9), for instance, speaks of finding rest in the testimonies of the two Testaments. Godescalc Orbais, *Oeuvres theologiques et grammaticales de Godescalc d'Orbais: textes en majeure partie inedits*, ed. C. Lambot, Louvain 1945, 238.

3.4.7 Summary

In the commentaries αὐτόπιστος always refers to the authority of Scripture, although it is not always used for Scripture itself. Calvin uses the term αὐτόπιστος as an adjective for Scripture or the Word of God twice; it refers to *sermo Dei* in his commentary on Hebrews 6 and to *scriptura* in his commentary on Acts 26. The three other times he uses the term the connection with Scripture is clearly present from the immediate context: αὐτόπιστος is connected with *doctrina evangelii* in the commentary on 2 Peter 1, with *veritas Dei* in the one on John 20 and with the prophetic *visio* in the lecture on Habakkuk 2. The only time in the commentaries that the word αὐτόπιστος refers directly to Scripture, or rather to the Old Testament, as the written Word of God is in Acts 26,. The other times Calvin refers to the Word of God in a more general sense: to God's revelation to Abraham or to the vision of Habakkuk. In Calvin's application the authority of Scripture is present in all five cases.

The example of Agrippa is of special importance, but we must be careful with our conclusions from this single comment. It shows that Calvin can use the term αὐτόπιστος for the authority of Scripture in a more general sense and that Scripture can be accepted as αὐτόπιστος apart from the saving work of the Spirit. It is possible to accept Scripture as αὐτόπιστος without finding rest (*acquiescere*) in it.

Calvin's commentaries show four aspects of the Greek term αὐτόπιστος. In the first place, the philosophical origin of the word is confirmed. The term αὐτόπιστος means that something is beyond controversy (2 Peter 1); the rhetoric style of the commentary on Paul's speech in Acts 26 especially confirms this. There αὐτόπιστος indicates the axiomatic truth of the Scripture as a *principium*. Secondly, the word indicates the sufficiency of Scripture for faith. The promises of God should be enough for Abraham's faith, but God accommodates himself to his weakness and adds an oath (Hebrews 6). Thomas should find rest in the Word of Christ without the perception of his senses, and we likewise should give such honor to God, that his truth is αὐτόπιστος for us. In the third place, the "personal element" or trust-side of αὐτόπιστος is confirmed by the commentaries. God's revelation should be αὐτόπιστος for you (Habakkuk 2) and his truth should be αὐτόπιστος with us (John 20). The term αὐτόπιστος not only indicates what Scripture is in itself, but what it should be for the believer. The term does not indicate what Scripture is *in se* over against what it is *apud nos*. On the contrary, Calvin uses the term to express what Scripture is *apud nos*. Scripture is αὐτόπιστος to those who accept its authority. This is even true in the case of Agrippa, who lacked the saving work of the Spirit. Finally, the connection with the verb *acquiescere* is striking. Believers find rest in Scripture because it is αὐτόπιστος. Scripture is sufficient for them. Calvin's lecture on Habakkuk 2 gives the clearest definition of αὐτόπιστος: let the Word of God (*verbum Dei*) have trustworthiness (*fides*) of itself (*per se*) for you (*apud vos*).

3.5 Αὐτόπιστος in Calvin's Polemical Writings

In his polemical writings Calvin uses the term αὐτόπιστος five times.[204] The contexts are important to understand its meaning in the *Institutes*. We will discuss the five references in

[204] The index of the volumes 1-22 of the *CO* gives four of them. *CO* 22, 493. The fifth reference, in the *Dedicatio Commentarii in epistolas canonicas* (1551) was found via *The Comprehensive*

chronological order. We are especially interested if the use in the polemical writings confirms what we have found thus far and if any new aspects can be added to the semantic range of the term.

3.5.1 *Defensio Sanae et Orthodoxae Doctrina* (1543)

In the second Latin edition of the *Institutes* (1539) Calvin stated that all the church fathers, except Augustine, wrote so ambiguously or variously on the question of free will, that nothing could be concluded from their writings.[205] This statement provoked a detailed reaction by Albertus Pighius (1490-1542) titled: *De libero hominis arbitrio et divina gratia* (1542).[206] To present his reply at the book fair of 1543 in Frankfurt, Calvin only had two or three months to write his *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae de servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii contra Alberti Pighii Campensis*, in which he responded to the first six of Pighius's ten books.[207]

In this work Calvin uses the term αὐτόπιστος for the first time. Pighius had said that the tradition of the church and the consensus of the fathers affirm the doctrine of free will. Calvin summarizes Pighius thoughts and discusses the relation between Scripture and tradition. He accuses Pighius of making every appeal to Scripture senseless, because he will only accept from Scripture what he already believes.[208] According to Calvin, Pighius is of the opinion that "we should seek our *regula fidei* not from the Word of God, but from the tradition of the church."[209] The authority of the church is a necessary defense against the attacks of heretics who always twist the meaning of Scripture.[210] If the church does not define the true meaning of Scripture it becomes a wax nose, which can be bent into any shape. According to Calvin, Pighius in this way denies that we can find rest (*acquiescere*) in Scripture and therefore he orders us to take refuge in the authority of the church.[211]

Every school of philosophy derives its founder's thoughts from his writings and should Christians then look elsewhere for the teaching of their master?[212] For the disciples of Pythagoras the reference to a word of the master was the end of all discussion. "If in the school of Pythagoras the words αὐτὸς ἔφα prevail, would Christ not have sufficient honor among his disciples for them to listen in silence to his sacred

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John Calvin Collection (CD-Rom), AGES Software, Albany 1998.

205 Calvin, *Institutes* 2.2.4, *OS* 3, 245 and Calvin, *Institutes* 2.2.9, *OS* 3, 251.

206 Albertus Pighius, *De libero hominis arbitrio et divina gratia, Libri decem*, Cologne 1542. On the debate between Calvin and Pighius cf. Lane, *John Calvin: Student*, 151-178. According to Lane, this Dutch theologian died on December 29, 1542. A.N.S. Lane, 'When did Albert Pighius Die?' *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis* 80.3 (2000), 327-342.

207 J. Calvin, *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrina de servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii contra Alberti Pighii Campensis*, Geneva 1543. Cf. *CO* 6, 225-404. Cf. J. Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defence of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice against Pighius*, trans. G.I. Davies, ed. A.N.S. Lane, Grand Rapids 1996. It took nine years before Calvin answered Pighius's last four books, discussing predestination. J. Calvin, *De aeterna Dei praedestinatione* Geneva 1552. *CO* 8, 249-366.

208 *CO* 6, 265.

209 "ut fidei regulam, non ex Dei verbo, sed ecclesiae traditione petamus." *CO* 6, 267

210 *CO* 6, 268.

211 *CO* 6, 268, 270. Calvin uses the metaphor of the *nasus cereus* more often. *CO* 7, 31, 412.

212 *CO* 6, 268.

oracles?"[213] We will return to this Pythagorean adage, because Calvin connects αὐτόπιστος with Pythagoras also in his *Dilucida explicatio*, against Heshusen.

Calvin accuses Pighius of calling Scripture uncertain and obscure because he is unable to settle the controversy over the freedom of the will on the basis of the Word of God. For Calvin, on the other hand, the Word of God is not merely the true and certain rule of faith, but also the only rule.[214] If Pighius calls Scripture uncertain it is inconsistent and ridiculous that he appeals to Scripture to refute the Reformers as heretics. Pighius takes his principle (*principium*) from the Scriptures. "But *principia* ought to be αὐτόπιστα, wherefore the uttermost clarity is demanded."[215] If Scripture is a nose of wax it cannot be a *principium* for Pighius at the same time.[216]

Calvin apparently was familiar with the philosophical and logical meaning of the term; the statement *principia αὐτόπιστα esse oportet*, could come from a philosophical textbook. The meaning corresponds with the meaning of the word in Greek philosophy.[217] A *principium* or axiom must be clear at first sight and may not be derived from any other statement. The French translation confirms this: "principles must be so clear that they are acceptable without further proof."[218] The "axiomatic" character of the Word of God for Calvin also appears in the 1543 edition of the *Institutes*:

> Let this be a firm axiom: No other word is to be held as the Word of God, and given place as such in the church, than what is contained first in the Law and the Prophets, then in the writings of the apostles; and the only authorized way of teaching in the church is by the prescription and standard of his Word.[219]

The term αὐτόπιστος does not refer immediately to the authority of Scripture in the *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae*, but the term is used in a discussion of the relation between Scripture and tradition. The *principia* on which an argument is based must be αὐτόπιστος, they must have a *summa claritas*. It is contradictory when Pighius calls Scripture doubtful and at the same time uses it to criticize the Protestants. Calvin has the logical starting point of an argument in mind, which gives ultimate certainty. For Pighius this is the authority of the church, for Calvin Scripture is the *principium*, the final authority that is αὐτόπιστος.

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213 "Ut in schola Pythagorae valeat illud αὐτὸς ἔφα, Christus inter suos discipulos tantum honoris non habeat, ut ad sacra eius oracula conticescant?" *CO* 6, 268-269.

214 "Sic enim loquendo, non modo veram et certam, sed unicam facit regulam fidei." *CO* 6, 271.

215 "Atqui: quae res summam claritatem requirit." *CO* 6, 272

216 Pighius attacked the Reformers and referred to the false prophets (Matt. 24,5), who lead others astray by leading them away from the unity of the church. He based this exegesis on the etymology of the Latin word *seducere* (*seorsum ducere*). Calvin replies that Christ did not speak Latin; the Greek πλανήσουσιν means 'deceive' and 'beguile' and that applies to Pighius. *CO* 6, 272. Cf. Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, 58.

217 Lane says that Calvin is quoting a Greek philosophical principle and refers to Hero's *Definitiones* 136.6. Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, 58. n. 131.

218 "Or faut-il que les principes soyent si patens, que sans autre preuve on les accorde." J. Calvin, *Recueil des Opuscules, c'est a dire petits traictez de Jean Calvin*, Geneva 1566, 300.

219 "Esto igitur hoc firmum axioma, Non aliud habendum esse Dei verbum, cui detur in Ecclesia locus, quam quod Lege primum et Prophetis, deinde scriptis Apostolicis continetur: nec alium esse rite docendi in Ecclesia modum nisi ex eius verbi praescripto et norma." *OS* 5, 139-140. Cf. Calvin, *Institutes* 4.8.8. Calvin also uses the term *axioma* in his commentary on Romans 3:4, where he says that the phrase "God is true" is the primary axiom of all Christian philosophy (primarium axioma totius Christianae philosophiae). CO 49, 48.

3.5.2 *Dedicatio Commentarii in Epistolas Canonicas* (1551)

In the *Dedication* of his commentary on the Catholic Epistles, dated on February 9, 1551, Calvin assumes that the pope is planning to summon the Council of Trent for the second time. Calvin anticipates the coming meeting and formulates his objections against the decrees of the first session (1545-1547) in the *Dedicatio Commentarii in epistolas canonicas*.[220] The Tridentine decrees define the relation between Scripture and the traditions of the church. According to Trent, the oral traditions of the doctrine of Christ, which are preserved in the church, are authoritative for its doctrine and practice. The final text of the decree says that truth and discipline are contained "in the written books and in the unwritten traditions that are received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ himself or dictated to the Apostles by the Holy Spirit and transmitted to us."[221] Scripture and the traditions are equal sources to determine the doctrine of the church. The Council accepts "with an equal affection of piety and reverence" all the books of the Old and the New Testaments – no distinction is made in the list between canonical and apocryphal books – and also traditions, which have been dictated either by Christ or by the Holy Spirit and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession.[222] Finally an anathema is pronounced on all those that do not receive the said books as sacred and canonical and on those who deliberately contemn the aforesaid traditions.[223]

In his *Dedication* Calvin writes that he is willing to accept the authority of a lawful council, but if submission to the pope, the greatest enemy of Christ is a condition and if religion is defined according to human arbitrariness instead of the Word of God then submission means a denial of Christ.[224] Calvin has no hope at all that those who want to

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220 *CO* 14, 31. The *CO* has: *Dedicatio Commentario*, but this seems to be a mistake. In May 1551 the council indeed met again.

221 Decree of the fourth session (April 8, 1546). "hanc veritatem et disciplinam contineri in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus, quae ab ipsius Christi ore ab Apostolis acceptae, aut ab ipsis Apostolis, Spiritu Sancto dictante, quasi per manus traditae." H. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, 32nd ed., Barcelona 1963, 1501. On the text of the decree cf. H. Holstein, 'Der Begriff der *Tradition* auf dem Trienter Konzil,' in *Concilium Tridentinum*, ed. R. Bäumer [Wege der Forschung, vol. 313], Darmstadt 1979, 254-270. J.R. Geiselmann, *Die Heilige Schrift und die Tradition: zu den neueren Kontroversen über das Verhältnis der Heiligen Schrift zu den nichtgeschriebenen Traditionen*, Freiburg 1962, 95. H.A. Oberman, 'Das tridentinische Rechtfertigungsdekret im Lichte spätmittelalterlicher Theologie,' in *Concilium Tridentinum*, ed. Bäumer, 306-329. J. Beumer, *Die mündliche Überlieferung als Glaubensquelle* [Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte, vol. 4], Freiburg 1962, 83-84.

222 "omnes libros tam Veteris quam Novi Testamenti, cum utriusque unus Deus sit auctor, nec non traditiones ipsas, tum ad fidem, tum ad mores pertinentes, tanquam vel oretenus a Christo, vel a Spiritu Sancto dictatas et continua successione in Ecclesia catholica conservatas, pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia suscipit et veneratur." Denzinger and Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion*, 1501.

223 "Si quis autem libros ipsos integros cum omnibus suis partibus […] pro sacris et canonicis non susceperit, et traditiones praedictas sciens et prudens contempserit: anathema sit." Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, 1501. Calvin's most important reaction to the Council of Trent is his publication of the decrees of the first sessions in the *Acta Synodi Tridentinae cum Antidoto* (1547). *CO* 7, 341-364. Calvin rejects the equalization of Scripture and tradition and the equalization of the apocryphal and the canonical books, the acceptation of the Vulgate as the authentic version of the Bible and the claim of the right of interpretation of all difficult passages in Scripture by the church officials. *CO* 7, 411.

224 *CO* 14, 34

purify the church from superstition will be heard. They will be regarded heretics, except if they consent to (*acquiescere*) the decrees of the Council without any objection.

> If the depravity of human nature, its miserable and lost state, the grace and power of Christ or the free cause of our salvation are discussed, they will immediately in arrogance bring forward the musty axioms of the schools, which are regarded as indisputable as the verdicts of a dictator.[225]

If the authority of Scripture were acknowledged, the adversaries would fall silent, but they appeal to the authority of the church because of the supposed ambiguity of Scripture.[226] By laying aside the Word of God, they transfer the whole right of defining things to themselves.

> If they kiss the closed codices of the Scripture with reverence, but still accuse it of obscure and confused ambiguity, then they allow it no more authority than if no part of it was written at all. Let them assume specious titles as they please, so that it seems as if they only bring forth what the Spirit dictates, as they are used to boast, yet this is decided and fixed for them, that only their wantonness is αὐτόπιστος, while they lay all rational evidence aside.[227]

Believers, on the contrary, "lean confidently on the *doctrina* of Scripture, as on a buttress, because they know that nothing is more firm or certain, instructed as they are by the experience of faith."[228]

Apparently αὐτόπιστος is not used exclusively for the authority of Scripture. Here it is even used in a negative sense, as an adjective for the wantonness (*libido*) of the Council of Trent. Nevertheless, the logical connotation appears in the context. Trent lays aside all *rationes*, is irrational and demands faith in its decrees without proving these doctrines from Scripture. The *axiomata scholarum* are beyond dispute (*extra controversiam*) for the Council, it has claimed the highest authority for itself and this makes any appeal to Scripture impossible.[229] Calvin places the authority of Scripture in contrast with the decisions of Trent, when he says that believers know from the experience of faith, that the *doctrina* of Scripture is certain. They rest on it – Calvin uses the verb *recumbere* and not *acquiescere* here – as on a buttress. This implies that for them Scripture and not the Council is αὐτόπιστος. Especially this *experimentum* of faith forms a remarkable parallel to the *Institutes*, where Calvin says that he speaks of nothing else than what each believer experiences within himself.[230]

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225 "Si de naturae humanae pravitate et misero perditoque statu, de Christi gratia et virtute, de gratuita salutis nostrae causa, disputatio habebitur, mox putida scholarum axiomata pro dictatoriis edictis, quibus extra controveriam standum sit, superciliose proferent." *CO* 14, 35

226 *CO* 14, 36.

227 "Quis, obsecro, non videt, posthabito Dei verbo totum definiendi ius ad eos hoc modo transferri? Clausos licet scripturae codices adorantium more osculentur: quum tamen eam obscurae perplexaeque ambiguitatis insimulant, nihilo plus deferunt autoritatis quam si nullus omnino apex scriptus exstaret. Quam volent speciosos sibi titulos induant, ne quid videantur praeter spiritus dictamen, ut iactare solent, in medium proferre: hoc tamen illis decretum fixumque est ut rationibus omnibus valere iussis αὐτόπιστος sola sit eorum libido." *CO* 14, 36-37.

228 "Ergo fideles […] quum scripturae doctrina nihil esse firmius certo fidei experimento edocti norint, in hanc fulturam tuto recumbant." *CO* 14, 37.

229 Cf. the French translation: "ils ont toutesfois ceci pour resolu & arresté, que toutes raisons mises bas, il ný ait que leur plaisir qui doyue auoir pleine authorité." Calvin, *Commentaires de M. Iean Calvin sur les Epistres de S. Paul & sur les Epistres Catholiques,* 4.

230 "Non aliud loquor quam quod apud se experitur fidelium unusquisque." *OS* 3, 71.

3.5.3 *Secunda Defensio* (1556)

The publication of the *Consensus Tigerinus* (1549), in which the agreement between the opinions of Bullinger and Calvin was formulated, occasioned a conflict with the Lutherans about the meaning of the sacraments. Calvin thought that the *Consensus* was important for the German churches and wanted to publish it as soon as possible, but this took until 1551.[231] Joachim Westphal (1510-1574) from Hamburg, one of the gnesio-Lutherans, opposed the *Consensus* in his *Farrago confusanearum et inter se dissidentium opinionum de coena Domini ex sacramentariorum libris congesta* (1552), a farrago of the confused and divergent opinions of the "Sacramentarians" such as Zwingli, Bucer, Bullinger and Calvin.[232] Westphal wished to show that there was absolutely no consensus between them. The result of this book was new tension between Lutherans and Reformed in several German cities; the debate between Calvin and the gnesio-Lutherans became sharp and bitter. Westphal, for instance, pleaded for the banishment of Dutch and English Reformed refugees from Frankfurt, to prevent the spread of their influence.[233]

Calvin published his *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae de sacramentis* in 1555.[234] Westphal reacted to it the same year with a booklet titled: *Adversus cuiusdam sacramentarii falsam criminationem iusta defensio* and Calvin continued the controversy in 1556 with his *Secunda defensio piae et orthodoxae de sacramentis fidei contra Ioachimi Westphali calumnias*.[235] In this publication Calvin denies that the sacraments are empty symbols for him. In the Holy Supper the body and blood of Christ are received, but the way in which they are received is by the Spirit through faith. The body of Christ remains in heaven and is not ubiquitous.[236] In this context Calvin uses the word αὐτόπιστος.

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231 De Greef, *Johannes Calvijn*, 174.

232 "The Calvin-Westphal controversy extended over a period of six years, from 1552 to 1558. To this controversy Westphal made eight contributions, while Calvin supplied three." J.N. Tylenda, 'Calvin and Westphal: Two Eucharistic Theologies in Conflict,' in: *Calvin's Books: Festschrift dedicated to Peter de Klerk on the occasion of his seventieth birthday*, ed. W.H. Neuser, H.J. Selderhuis, and W. Van 't Spijker, Heerenveen 1997, 9-21, 9. Cf. J.N. Tylenda, 'The Calvin–Westphal Exchange: The Genesis of Calvin's Treatises against Westphal,' *Calvin Theological Journal* 9 (1974), 182-209. Cf. Gamble, 'Calvin's controversies,' 193-196. The Second Sacramentarian Controversy is discussed by W. Neuser, 'Dogma und Bekenntnis in der Reformation,' 272-285.

233 H. von Schade, *Joachim Westphal und Peter Braubach: Briefwechsel zwischen dem Hamburger Hauptpastor, seinem Drucker-Verleger und ihrem Freund Hartmann Beyer in Frankfurt am Main über die Lage der Kirche und die Verbreitung von Büchern*, Hamburg 1981, 26. There was a tension in Germany between the Phillipists, followers of Melanchton, who had an open attitude towards the Swiss Reformation and the gnesio-Lutherans led by Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520-1575), who saw the influence of the Swiss Reformation as a threat for Lutheranism. Calvin pleaded for the Reformed refugees in his dedication of the commentary on the synoptic gospels to the city council of Frankfurt. *CO* 15, 710-712. Cf. De Greef, *Johannes Calvijn*, 92.

234 *OS* 2, 263-287. Westphal calls Calvin *insanias* in one of his letters. Schade, *Joachim Westphal und Peter Braubach*, 234, 238.

235 A summary of the discussion can be found in the Institutes 4.17.20-4.17.34.

236 *CO* 9, 76. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 199.

Westphal accuses Calvin of using philosophical arguments against the Lutheran doctrine of the sacraments. According to him, Calvin rejects the *immensitas* of the body of Christ for geometric reasons.[237] Calvin to the contrary emphasizes that he appeals to the words of Christ who has said: "Touch me and see, for a spirit has no flesh and bones" (Luke 24,39). This text proves that the resurrected body of Christ is not omnipresent. "We do not call in the aid of Euclid to assist us, but are content (*acquiescere*) with the declaration of the Son of God, from whom we can best learn what the nature of his body is."[238] Because his opponents accuse him of using mathematic arguments in his doctrine of the sacraments, Calvin states that instead of the principles of geometry, for him the authority of Christ is αὐτόπιστος.

If Westphal asks whether we are to believe carnal reason or the Son of God, Calvin answers that he would rather perish a hundred times than put one little word of Christ into the balance and counterweigh it by the whole body of philosophy. "The authority of Christ is not only holy and αὐτόπιστος for us, but also abundantly sufficient to subdue all the wisdom of the world."[239] This context underlines the philosophical meaning of the word αὐτόπιστος. Philosophy and geometry do not lead to the conclusion that the body of Christ is not omnipresent. Westphal's charge that Calvin leans more on philosophy than on the Word of God is untenable.[240] He does not depend on the axioms of Euclid, but on the authority of Christ.

This passage shows that Calvin does not only use the term in discussion with the Catholic position on the relationship between tradition and Scripture. In the controversy with the orthodox Lutherans the relation between *ratio* and *scriptura* is at stake. Not rational arguments but the authority of Christ in the Scriptures must be our principle. One *verbulum* of Christ weighs more than all the wisdom of the world. The use of the dative *nobis* is striking here and it expresses that the authority of Scripture must be acknowledged by us, as we have seen this in the commentaries. The parallel with *sacrosanctus* also draws our attention; Scripture is the absolute authority for believers because of its majesty and holiness.[241]

3.5.4 *Dilucida Explicatio* (1561)

The *Secunda Defensio* was not Calvin's final word on the controversy over the holy Supper. In 1561 he wrote the *Dilucida explicatio sanae doctrinae de vera participatione*

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237 *CO* 9, 78.

238 "Nos Euclidem hic non asciscimus nobis patroneum: sed acquiescimus Filii Dei sententiae, ex quo optime discemus quaenam sit corporis eius natura." *CO* 9, 78. Calvin also uses Euclid as an example in his commentary on Philippians 1,10, where he says that the theology of the Sorbonne is of no more spiritual advantage than the demonstrations of Euclid. *CO* 52, 12. Cf. *CO* 18, 160.

239 "Neque enim sacrosancta modo, et αὐτόπιστος nobis est Christi autoritas, sed ad fraenandos omnes hominum sensus, totamque mundi sapientiam subigendam abunde sufficit." *CO* 9, 79. Cf. "Car l'autorité de Christ […] est saincte & sacree, & inviolable, ayant en elle-mesme assez de certitude" J. Calvin, *Recueil des Opuscules,* 1533.

240 "Iniuste ergo Westphalus ex philosophiae dictatis nos magis pendere insimulat, quam ex verbo Dei." *CO* 9, 80.

241 Calvin uses *sacrosanctus* in connection with *maiestas*. Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.22, *OS* 3, 363. Calvin, *Institutes* 3.20.31, *OS* 4, 341. Cf. Calvin, *Institutes* 1.6.1, *OS* 3, 60-61. Calvin, *Institutes* 3.2.6, *OS* 4, 15, and Calvin, *Institutes* 4.7.30, *OS* 5,133.

carnis et sanguinis Christi in sacra coena ad discutiendas Heshusii nebulas. This *Clear Explanation of Sound Doctrine* occasioned in the tension in Heidelberg between the ultra-orthodox Lutheran Tilemann Heshusen (1527-1588), superintendent and professor of theology at Heidelberg and the alleged Zwinglian Wilhelm Klebitz (c. 1533-68), who were expelled from the Palatinate in September 1559 by Count Frederick III on account of quarrelling.[242] In 1560 Heshusen wrote *De praesentia corporis Christi in coena Domini contra sacramentarios*; Calvin was shocked and felt compelled to react in a burst of anger.[243] Again the relation between *ratio* and *scriptura* is at stake in the debate on the ubiquity of the body of Christ. Calvin declares that he does not regard physical arguments, but finds rest (*acquiescere*) in the testimonies of Scripture. From Scripture, it is plain that the body of Christ is finite, and has its proper dimensions. He has not learned this from geometry both from the teaching of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles.[244] Heshusen accuses Calvin of explaining Christ's words "this is my body" as a metaphor.[245] According to Calvin, in the sacraments the name of the thing (*res*) is applied to the sign (*signum*). So the bread as a sign bears the name of the thing that is signified: the body of Christ.[246] Heshusen, on the contrary, is of the opinion that in the sacrament *signum* and *res* are one and the same. Calvin wonders how the bread and the body of Christ are joined together and asks by what authority Heshusen can prove

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242 Heshusen was a pupil of Melanchthon, who later on joined the gnesio-Lutherans and opposed Melanchthon's doctrine of the holy Supper. On the controversy between Heshusen and Calvin cf. D. Steinmetz, 'Calvin and His Lutheran Critics,' *The Lutheran Quarterly* 4 (1990), 179-194, reprinted in D. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, New York 1995, 172-186. On Heshusen cf. P.F. Barton, 'Tileman Heshusius,' in *TRE* 15, 256-260. The negative opinion of Heshusen in the Reformed tradition goes back to Calvin, who calls him a monkey of Luther. *CO* 18, 84. On his opponent Wilhelm Klebitz cf. W. Janse, *Albert Hardenberg als Theologe: Profil eines Buces-Schülers* [Studies in the History of Christian thought, vol. 57], Leiden 1994, 399-400, 408-412. W. Janse, Non-conformist Eucharistic Theology: The Case of the alleged 'Zwinglian Polemicist' Wilhelm Klebitz (c. 1533-68),' *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis/Dutch Review of Church History*, 81 (2001), 5-25. W. Janse, 'Der Heidelberger Zwinglianer Wilhelm Klebitz (um 1533-1568) und seine Stellung im aufkommenden Konfessionalismus,' in *Die Zürcher Reformation: Ausstrahlungen und Rückwirkungen* [Zürcher Beiträge zur Reformationsgeschichte, vol. 18], ed. A. Schindler and H. Stickelberger, Bern 2001, 203-20. W. Janse, 'Die Melanchthonrezeption des Nonkonformisten Wilhelm Klebitz (ca. 1533-1568)' in *Melanchthon und der Calvinismus*, ed. G. Frank and H.J. Selderhuis [Melanchthon-Schriften der Stadt Bretten, vol. 9] Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 2005, 257-290.

243 Calvin writes this in a letter to H. Bullinger in 1560. *CO* 18, 255.

244 "quum saepe antehac professus sim me in hac causa nihil morari physicas rationes, nec insistere philosophorum placitis, sed tantum scripturae testimoniis acquiescere? Corpus Christ finitum esse, et constare suis dimensionibus, ex scriptura patet. Hoc nos geometria non docuit: sed quod per apostolos tradidit spiritus sanctus, nobis eripi non patimur." *CO* 9, 507.

245 At the background of this discussion stands Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*, where Augustine says that an expression is figurative if the literal meaning is absurd. The example of Christ's command to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man is also used by Augustine in *De doctrina christiana* 3.16.24, *PL* 34, 74-75. See also Smits, *Augustin dans l'oeuvre de Jean Calvin*, 2, 117, 171. Calvin also refers to this chapter of *De doctrina Christiana*. Calvin, *Institutes* 4.17.6, *OS* 5, 348.

246 Calvin calls this a *metonymia*, "quae rei signatae nomen ad signum transfert." *CO* 9, 513.

this.[247] "Now then, although he persuades himself that he like another Pythagoras is αὐτόπιστος, how does he hold the body of Christ to be one with the bread?"[248]

In Calvin's eyes, Heshusen cannot prove his opinion with any external authority, therefore he must be persuaded that he does not need to prove it, he places his statements beyond all doubt. This passage illustrates that αὐτόπιστος is not a term exclusively used for Scripture, for Calvin applies it ironically to his Lutheran opponent. Nevertheless, the meaning again corresponds with the meaning in the other passages and the term refers to final authority.

With the *alterus Pythagoras* Calvin refers to the disciples of Pythagoras, who assigned divine authority to everything their teacher said and used the words αὐτὸς ἔφα to express this.[249] This expression of the Pythagoreans was well known in the Renaissance. Erasmus writes in his *Adages* that *ipse dixit* is used when we want to express that someone's authority is so great as to justify our belief in something even with no reason given. For Erasmus only the Holy Scriptures have this absolute authority.[250] Also Bullinger compares the authority of Scripture with the Pythagorean expression: αὐτὸς ἔφα.[251] Luther used the expression to refute the authority of the pope.[252] Although the term αὐτόπιστος has no direct relation with the Pythagorean adage, the fact that Calvin relates the term twice to the Greek mathematician is an interesting illustration of the kind of authority that he had in mind. It is possible that Calvin refers to the traditional Lutheran argument for the local, substantial presence on the words of the institution: 'Dominus dixit: hoc est corpus meum'.[253]

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247 *CO* 9, 514.

248 "Agedum, quamvis persuadeat se quasi alterum Pythagoram, αὐτόπιστον esse: quomodo corpus Christi cum pane unum esse vult?" *CO* 9, 514 Cf. "Courage, combien qu'il se persuade, comme un second Pythagoras, que ce qu'il dit merite assez de foy & d'authorité de soy-mesmes: comment est-ce qu'il veut que le corps de Christ soit un avec le pain?" Calvin, *Recueil des Opuscules*, 1747.

249 In his commentaries Calvin refers Pythagoras a few times when he discusses reincarnation or the transmigration of the soul (μετεμψύχωσις). Cf. the commentary on Luke 1,17, *CO* 45, 16, and the commentary on John 9,2, *CO* 47, 218. He calls Peter Lombard the Pythagoras of the Sophists. Calvin, *Institutes* 3.15.7, *OS* 4, 246. He also compares the authority of Sorbonne ironically with the *ipse dixit* of Pythagoras. *CO* 7, 5.

250 "Ut, in arcanis litteris satis est, αὐτὸς ἔφα. In reliquis non item." Erasmus even compares this adage with the Biblical expression *dominus dixit*. D. Erasmus, *Adages*, 2.5.87. Cf. D. Erasmus, *Adages [3]: II i 1 to II vi 100*, trans. R.A.B. Mynors [Collected Works of Erasmus, vol. 33], Toronto 1992, 279. According to Erasmus, the adage took its rise from Pythagoras, who in order to achieve more respect and authority for himself and his school, used it in his lectures just as if he were not repeating his own opinions, but utterances that he had received from some oracle. He leaves the possibility open that the adage was invented by the Pythagoreans rather than by Pythagoras himself. On the expression αὐτὸς ἔφα cf. P. Gorman, *Pythagoras: A Life*, London 1979, 117.

251 Bullinger, *Summa*, 7b. Cf. Bullinger, *Compendium Christianae religionis*, 6. Cf. Dowey, 'The Word of God as Scripture and Preaching,' 6.

252 Luther, *WA* 39 II, 341. Cf. M. Luther, *Dr. Martin Luther's Sämmtliche Schriften*, ed. J.G. Walch, vol. 10, St. Louis 1885, 186.

253 In early Lutheran theology the question why Christ was present in the Lord's Supper was answered with a reference to its institution by the phrase "Christus dixit." Cf. Th. Mahlmann, *Das neue Dogma der lutherischen Christologie: Problem und Geschichte seiner Begründung*,

3.5.5 *Responsio ad Versipellem quendam Mediatorem* (1561)

In 1561 Catherine de Medici brought Catholic and Protestant theologians together at the Colloquy of Poissy.[254] Shortly before the start of this conference an anonymous booklet, stressing unity on the basis of the Apostolic Creed, was published, titled: *De officio pii viri in hoc religionis dissidio* (1561).[255] The author was George Cassander (1513-1566), a tolerant Catholic humanist and admirer of Erasmus. He pleaded for the royal way, from which both the pseudo-Catholics and papists, who denied the need of reformation and the anti-Catholics, who had gone too far in criticizing the church, had departed. It is the duty of a pious man to plead for unity by reflection on the common sources, the Scriptures and the *traditio catholica*.[256] Calvin thought that the author of the book was the jurist François Baudouin (1520-1573), who had been Calvin's secretary in 1547, but later changed his religious opinions and broke with Calvin.[257] Calvin wrote an anonymous response with the title: *Responsio ad versipellem quendam mediatorem qui pacificandi specie rectum evangelii cursum in Gallia abrumpere molitus est*. With the unreliable mediator he meant his former secretary.

In the *Responsio* Calvin especially opposes the acknowledgement of the authority of the Catholic tradition in the explanation of Scripture.[258] He blames the author of *De officio* that he "decorates the plain testimonies of Scripture, which he first held to be αὐτόπιστα."[259] The term αὐτόπιστος does not occur in *De officio*; Calvin uses it to indicate the position the author seems to take at first.

Cassander indeed underlines the authority of Scripture. "No judgment should be accepted as firm and certain, except if it is stated by Holy Scripture itself, according to its true and sound meaning."[260] But this is only seemingly so, because the sound meaning of Scripture must be decided according to the *traditio*. "Tradition is nothing else than explication and interpretation of Scripture itself, so that you can say that Scripture is as it were implicit and sealed tradition, and tradition in fact is explicit and unsealed Scripture."[261] The important role for tradition also appears when Cassander

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Gütersloh 1969, 51-52, 239. The expression "dominus dixit" is common in Luther's works and sometimes even occurs in German texts. Cf. Luther, *WA* 48, 203.

254 On this conference cf. D. Nugent, *Ecumenism in the Age of the Reformation: the Colloquy of Poissy*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1974, 24-25, 177

255 G. Cassander, *Opera Quae reperiri potverunt omnia*, Paris 1616, 781-797.

256 M. Erbe, *Francois Bauduin (1520-1573): Biographie eines Humanisten*, Gütersloh 1978, 136.

257 As Calvin wrote to Beza, the leader of the Calvinist delegation in Poissy. *CO* 18, 684. Baudouin is often blamed of treachery and opportunism. E. Stähelin e.g. says that he changed his religion seven times in twenty years. E. Stähelin, *Johannes Calvin: Leben und ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 2, Elberfeld 1863, 346. Even a modern biographer speaks of his "sprunghaften Persönlichkeit." M. Erbe, *Francois Bauduin*, 23.

258 *CO* 9, 532. See also Erbe, *Francois Bauduin*, 140.

259 "Sed in eo se prodit turpior nequitia, quod nunc claris scripturae testimoniis exornat, quae prius αὐτόπιστα esse voluit." *CO* 9, 537. The French text shows that αὐτόπιστος as we have seen before never can be isolated from its reception. "qui par ci devant il a voulu estre receves en elle-mesme." Calvin, *Recueil des Opuscules*, 1893.

260 "nullumque firmius & certius iudicium inueneri, quam si ipsa Scriptura sacra, eiusque vera & sana intelligentia proponatur." Cassander, *Opera omnia*, 782.

261 "cum hec traditio nihil aliud sit, quam Scripturae ipsius explicatio & interpretatio: ita ut non inepte dici posset, Scripturam esse implicatam quandam & obsignatuam traditionem, traditionem vero esse Scriptura explicatam & resignatam." Cassander, *Opera omnia*, 782-3.

wants to maintain all the ecclesiastic customs of the church except when they are in clear opposition to Scripture.

In the *Responsio* Calvin objects that if someone worships Baal without explicitly declaring that there are more gods, he can also deny that he is in explicit opposition to Scripture.[262] Though the logical terms are absent in the context, it is clear that for Calvin the *testimonia scripturae* form the final authority in matters of doctrine and worship. He accuses the author of *De officio* of no longer holding them as self-convincing.

3.5.6 Summary

In his polemical writings Calvin does not connect the term αὐτόπιστος as closely to Scripture or the Word of God as in his commentaries; sometimes he uses the term loosely and ironically. Nevertheless, in all cases, except for the *Dilucida explicatio*, the authority of Scripture is present in the immediate context. Calvin is aware of the philosophical meaning of the term from the very beginning when he writes against Pighius that *principia* ought to be αὐτόπιστα. In the discussion with the Lutherans Calvin mentions the mathematicians Euclid and Pythagoras; perhaps this is due to the original link of the term with the Euclidian axioms, but it can also be influenced by the specific discussion on the ubiquity of the human body of Christ.

In the *Institutes* Calvin uses the term to indicate that Scripture is not subjected to proof or reasoning, that it is *extra controversiam*. Its authority is not subjected to the authority of the church or to the power of human reason. Still he does not call Scripture the *principium* of theology in the philosophical sense. The frequent use of *acquiescere* underlines that for Calvin the meaning of the term goes beyond the sphere of philosophy. He "baptizes" it and uses it theologically to denote the only ultimate authority in which our consciences can find rest. What we have found in the commentaries and polemical writings underlines that the meaning of αὐτόπιστος in the *Institutes* is mainly theological, although the original philosophical flavor of the term determines the way in which Calvin applies it to Scripture.

3.6 Conclusions and Theological Considerations

Calvin's use of αὐτόπιστος in connection with Scripture was foreshadowed by the medieval concept of the *principia per se nota*. Calvin, who was of one accord with the other Reformers regarding the primacy of Scripture, may have been influenced by Bullinger in the use of this Greek term. The intimate connection of the self-convincing character of Scripture with the *testimonium* of the Spirit was typical for Calvin.

We have found only eleven occurrences of αὐτόπιστος in Calvin's works. We have discussed the occurrences in detail, because the importance of the term does not lie in the frequency of its use, but in the theological meaning for Scripture in the *Institutes*. These occurrences underline and illustrate what we have already found in the *Institutes*:

1. The term always refers to Scripture in the commentaries, although it is not always connected to *scriptura*. In his polemical works Calvin uses the term in a more general sense and sometimes even ironically.

2. As we have seen in chapter one, αὐτόπιστος has a truth-side and a trust-side. One of the reasons for choosing the Greek term may have been this double connotation.

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262 *CO* 9, 537.

With his remarkable linguistic sensitivity Calvin must have realized that the original connotations and the double meaning of the term could be lost if he used a Latin translation. Budé's dictionary underlines that αὐτόπιστος means that something creates its own *fides*. Scripture creates trust because it is the truth.

3. The personal side or trust-side of αὐτόπιστος is confirmed by its use in the commentaries. Scripture should be accepted as self-convincing for us. This is in line with the use of *apud nos* in the *Institutes*. On the other hand, the example of Agrippa shows that Scripture can be accepted as αὐτόπιστος by someone apart from the saving work of the Spirit. This occurrence of the term makes the picture more complicated, because it illustrates that although there is close connection and intimate relationship between the *testimonium* and the *autopistia* of Scripture, they do not always necessarily go together. The example of Agrippa shows that it is possible to accept the authority of Scripture merely as a principle of "historical faith."

4. The connection with the verb *acquiescere* is striking. Believers can find rest in Scripture because it is αὐτόπιστος. The philosophical meaning determines the use of αὐτόπιστος in the *Institutes* only to a certain extent. Calvin uses the term to indicate that Scripture is not subjected to proof or reasoning or to the authority of the church. Calvin uses the term theologically to denote the only ultimate authority in which believers find rest (*acquiescere*) for their consciences.

Our historical research on the source and sense of αὐτόπιστος evokes some theological considerations, especially regarding the relationship between the philosophical background and the theological use of the term. In the introductory chapter we asked what happens to a philosophical term when it is applied to Scripture. We have taken a close look at the introduction of the term, at the sources that were used, and at the semantic field in which it functioned in the Reformation. Calvin does not call Scripture a *principium* of theology in the Aristotelian sense, but uses the term metaphorically. For several reasons Calvin's metaphorical use of the term is important for a revaluation of the *autopistia* of Scripture for Reformed theology today.

1. The term is linked with the biblical term for faith, πίστις. This is possibly why Calvin introduced αὐτόπιστος instead of a Latin equivalent. The word πίστις has the connotations of truth or faithfulness and trust; saying that Scripture is αὐτόπιστος means confessing that it is the truth and that therefore it deserves our trust. It ought to be believed because of its content and not because it is an axiom in the proper philosophical sense of that term. Although the philosophical meaning of the term resonates in the background, the expression *scriptura est αὐτόπιστος* in the *Institutes* must be read as a confessional statement and not as a philosophical principle.

2. The metaphorical or theological use is also important because of the completely different concept of science. From the Middle Ages through the Renaissance and the Enlightenment and far into the nineteenth century the Aristotelian theory of science has been the ruling paradigm. In that context a philosophical interpretation of αὐτόπιστος makes sense, because every science is based upon *principia*. In contemporary theories of science however the concept of *principia* is no longer used. Axioms are no longer seen as self-evident truths and mathematical axioms are assumptions, on which a mathematical

theory is based, rather than self-evident first principles.[263] In our final chapter we will discuss how the postmodern philosophical context influences the meaning of an ancient Greek philosophical term for theology today. At this point it suffices to say that an emphasis on the formal and philosophical meaning of the term would isolate theology from the other sciences. If we want to use the term αὐτόπιστος to explain the Scriptural foundation of Reformed theology, we will have to use it in a metaphorical or theological sense.

3. In the introduction of the concept of Scripture's self-convincing authority flows from Calvin's desire to found the certainty of faith on God and not on human authority. The conscience can only find rest if it hears the voice of the living God in Scripture. Because the certainty of faith differs from the certainty of reason, the philosophical term to express this certainty is transformed in an existential and experimental sense. Scripture is not self-convincing for believers in the same way as the Euclidian axioms are for mathematicians.

By "metaphorical" we do not mean that the philosophical background of the term is irrelevant. Calvin is aware of this background and it resonates in the use of αὐτόπιστος in the *Institutes*. Both the philosophical and the theological use have many things in common. In philosophy the first principles cannot be proved, but are necessarily true. In the same way for Calvin the authority of Scripture cannot be so proved that true faith is the result. Even in philosophy both the truth-side and the trust-side of αὐτόπιστος are relevant; the axioms are self-convincing and must be accepted as self-convincing. Both sides determine the meaning of the term for Calvin and may have caused his choice for the Greek instead of the Latin in this case. In philosophy the term is used in the context of education and for Calvin the Spirit is the teacher and we are the pupils. In philosophy the *autopistia* of the axioms is sometimes compared with sensual perception and Calvin uses the example of black and white, sweet and bitter things.

By "metaphorical" we mean that by the introduction of αὐτόπιστος in his theological discourse Calvin does not want to say that Scripture is an axiom or *principium* of theology, but that it is accepted by those who are taught by the Spirit in the same way as the axioms or *principia* in science are accepted. Scripture is just as true and immediately convincing for believers as a Euclidean axiom for mathematicians. When he calls Scripture self-convincing, he does not mean that it is irrational not to believe Scripture, but that for those who believe it there is no other reason to do so than Scripture itself. As we will see, this metaphorical use differs from the scholastic or formal use of the term in Reformed orthodoxy. Calvin expresses the Christian truth with a philosophical term, in a similar way as the early church expressed the doctrine of the Trinity with the terms ὑπόστᾶσις and *persona*. The "baptism" of philosophical terms serves the cause of proper communication. Nevertheless, this "baptism" implies a transformation of the original meaning of the term. For faith *autopistia* has a different meaning than for science.

The example of Agrippa shows that Calvin can also use αὐτόπιστος for the acceptance of Scripture in the context of the Jewish religion. This leads to the question how the *autopistia* of Scripture is related to saving faith. It is quite clear that Calvin

[263] H. Holzhey and P. Schaber, 'Prinzip III Neuzeit' in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 7, 1355-1373, 1372.

refers to true faith in the *Institutes*; he introduces the term to make a distinction between the general authority of Scripture and the particular authority that it has for those who are taught by the Spirit to find rest in Scripture. How is it possible that Calvin uses the term αὐτόπιστος for the "faith" of Agrippa that is not true faith? As we stated before, this example should not be stretched too far, because Calvin even uses the term ironically in other instances. Nonetheless, the question must be faced whether Scripture is only αὐτόπιστος for those who accept it, or if it is αὐτόπιστος in itself, regardless of faith. The *autopistia* of Scripture is not a characteristic of believers, but of the text by which they are convinced and led to faith. The emphasis lies on the external authority of Scripture. Scripture stands "over against" us and comes to us from the outside, making a strong appeal to our hearts. In that sense the *autopistia* is a characteristic of Scripture regardless of our faith in Scripture. Scripture comes first and then faith. Scripture is already αὐτόπιστος before it is believed and it is believed because it is αὐτόπιστος and not the other way around. The same Spirit who has inspired Scripture witnesses in our hearts. The *autopistia* of Scripture may never be isolated from the *testimonium* of the Spirit; still the voice of God in Scripture comes first and it speaks even if it is not heard. The example of Agrippa underlines that the *autopistia* of Scripture logically and chronologically comes before the *testimonium* of the Spirit.

The example also shows that it is possible to accept Scripture as a principle of "historical faith." In his *Commentary on Acts* Calvin does not use αὐτόπιστος in the same way as in the *Institutes* to distinguish between the general authority (*maiestas*) of Scripture and the special authority that it has for believers. There he uses the term for a different purpose, namely to show that Paul in his speech, analyzed by Calvin with logical and rhetorical tools, goes back to the first principle, the authority of Scripture that Agrippa accepted. The use of αὐτόπιστος in the *Commentary on Acts* stands close to the use of *maiestas* in the *Institutes*. It is possible to use the term especially for the truth-side of Scripture. In a theological revaluation of the term *autopistia* we will have to keep the distinction in mind between the acceptance of Scripture as a "historical" truth and the acceptance of Scripture as the living voice of God through the Spirit. It is possible to acknowledge the *autopistia* of Scripture as a fact without finding rest (*acquiescere*) in it, to accept Scripture as the truth, without really trusting it and resting in it.

All that we have found thus far in Calvin leads to a definition of the *autopistia* of Scripture: The *autopistia* of Scripture is the self-convincing character of Scripture as the written Word of God, whereby Scripture itself causes believers to find rest in it independently of any other authority, through the witness of the Holy Spirit. In our final chapter we will discuss the relationships between the *autopistia* of Scripture and the *testimonium* of the Spirit, between the *autopistia* of Scripture and the authority of the church, and between the *autopistia* of Scripture and the evidences for its majesty.