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ABSTRACT

In this article I will argue that through civic and theological reforms, John Calvin, along with reforming Christian doctrine within the church and city and Geneva, reformed the institution of marriage specifically to encourage mutual love between spouses while still retaining the traditional discipline found within the marriage relationship. However, when it came to broken and failing relationships, Calvin also used marriage reforms to save and restore these relationships for the overall betterment of the community. I will examine Calvin’s theology through his sermons, Bible commentaries, and marriage reform laws. I will also examine a case from the Genevan Consistory, in which Calvin was directly involved, to explicate how this theology of love, discipline, and restoration enacted itself in the lives of Geneva’s citizens. Through my analysis I conclude that Calvin found a balance between encouraging mutual love and a disciplined marriage relationship in order to restore people to a right standing with the church and community.

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Love, courtship and marriage were as complex in John Calvin’s day as they are now. In this work, Caleb explores the personal foibles of people in love in Calvin’s Geneva. As Caleb recounts, Calvin and his followers recognized that love is sometimes misguided and that decent people sometimes fall from grace. Caleb shows that religious courts often overlooked the rigors of doctrine in order to maintain a harmonious community. Caleb is gifted with a curious spirit and incisive intellect; he employs those qualities with generosity, modesty and elegance. He is a pleasure to mentor.

AUTHOR

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Caleb Flores is a graduating senior majoring in History with an emphasis on the European continent. He is primarily concerned with the history of the Christian Church and its effect on society. This research article stems out of an interest in the Protestant Reformation and the smaller movements within it. Caleb thanks Professor Dana Simmons for her support and guidance while conducting the research for this project. He would also like to thank his beautiful wife, Katy, for all of her love and encouragement throughout his academic career.

A copy of this paper in its entirety can be found online at www.ugr.ucr.edu in Volume VI.