

**Feeding and Forming:**

**John Calvin, Materiality, and the Flourishing of the Liturgical Arts**

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor  
of Theology in the Divinity School  
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# ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I examine Calvin's trinitarian theology as it intersects his theology of materiality in order to argue for a positive theological account of the liturgical arts. I do so believing that Calvin's theology of materiality not only offers itself as a rich resource for thinking about the nature of Christian worship, it also opens up a trinitarian grammar by which we might discern the theological purposes of the arts in public worship.

Using Calvin's commentary on musical instruments as a case study, generally representative of his thinking on all the liturgical arts, I identify four emphases: that the church's worship should be (i) devoid of the "figures and shadows" which marked Israel's praise and that it emphasize instead a (ii) "spiritual," (iii) "simple," and (iv) "articulate" worship suitable to a new covenantal era. A common feature of these emphases is an anxiety over the capacity of materiality to occlude or distort the public worship of God and to mislead the worship of the faithful in idolatrous or superstitious ways. While a more narrowly patrological argument dominates Calvin's thinking on the arts in worship, I contend that it is in his thinking on creation, the resurrected body of Christ, the material symbols of worship, and the material elements of the Lord's Supper, that a distinctly trinitarian pattern of thought becomes conspicuous. Here materiality discovers its *telos* in the economy of God by way of its participation in the dynamic activities of Christ and the Spirit.

Taking the first three emphases in turn, while setting aside his concern for “articulate” worship as an issue more directly related to the question of metaphor rather than materiality, I argue, sometimes against Calvin, sometimes with and beyond Calvin, for a more integral role for materiality in public worship, even if this means following the logic of Calvin’s theology to conclusions which he himself did not imagine. I contend that just as the triune God appropriates these distinctive material things to form and feed the church, so he takes the liturgical arts, as material artifacts, to form and feed the church in their own way, even if not on their own terms.

# DEDICATION

To Phaedra Jean Taylor: *juntos*.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

<i>CO</i>	<i>Ioannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia</i> (Baum, Cunitz, Reuss)
<i>CR</i>	<i>Corpus Reformatorum</i> (Braunschweig, 1834-)
<i>Tracts &amp; Treatises</i>	<i>Tracts and Treatises of John Calvin</i> (Beveridge)
<i>Institutes</i>	<i>1559 Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> (Battles)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Stanley Hauerwas, in his memoir *Hannah's Child*, describes his work as a theologian in the terms of a bricklayer. You can only lay a single brick at a time, he writes, in the construction of any project, and you would never know how to do it well if it were not for the many people who had instructed you along the way. This metaphor of bricklaying has returned to me again and again in writing this dissertation, and there are many people to which I owe thanks. A first debt of gratitude goes to Jeremy Begbie, my supervisor. It was Jeremy who first sparked my interest in theological aesthetics, nearly twenty years ago. He introduced me to the riches of the Reformed theological tradition, challenged me to do theology in a clear-headed, disciplined fashion, for love of the church, and kept encouraging me to allow myself to be interrupted by a God who actually might have something to say to me in the process. I am also grateful to my dissertation committee: to Sujin Pak, for encouraging me to pursue Calvin more deeply; to Sam Wells, for introducing me to an ecclesially rooted Christian ethics; to Lester Ruth, for inspiring me with a vision of good Christian worship both ancient and new; and to John Witvliet, in permitting me to be his teaching assistant fourteen years ago, offered a chance to observe the personal virtues of a good teacher. To these, and to all my teachers in seminary, who have inculcated a love of learning and a desire for God, and who have offered me the gift of friendship, I am immensely grateful.

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# INTRODUCTION

“Genuine piety begets genuine confession.” – John Calvin<sup>1</sup>

“Physical erasure was part of the vitalizing ferment of the new age.” – Margaret Aston<sup>2</sup>

## Calvin and the liturgical arts?

In a paper delivered at Wheaton College in 2011, titled “The Future of Theology Amid the Arts: Some Reformed Reflections,” Jeremy Begbie observes that

as the theology and arts conversation continues to unfold apace, resources from the Reformed world – so often buried beneath an understandable but exaggerated shame – have considerably more to offer than is often supposed, especially if we are seeking to delve more deeply into the plotlines and harmonies of a scripturally rooted and vibrant trinitarian faith.<sup>3</sup>

The question is: Which Reformed resources are those? And if resources can be found that were helpful to theological reflection on the arts, will these same resources be helpful to theological reflection on the *liturgical* arts? The wager of this dissertation is that John Calvin, standing at the headwaters of the Reformed tradition, represents such a resource, even if not in the ways one might initially suppose.<sup>4</sup> For plenty of supporters and critics

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<sup>1</sup> “On Shunning the Unlawful Rites of the Ungodly and Preserving the Purity of the Christian Religion,” in *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 3, 366.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Aston, *England’s Iconoclasts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Jeremy Begbie, “The Future of Theology amid the Arts: Some Reformed Reflections,” in *Christ Across the Disciplines: Past, Present, Future*, ed. Roger Lundin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 182.

<sup>4</sup> Interest, of course, has never been in want with respect to Calvin’s influence on the arts. See, for example, Léon Wencelius, *L’esthétique de Calvin* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1979); Jérôme Cottin, *Le Regard et la Parole: Une théologie protestante de l’image* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1994); Paul Corby Finney, ed.,

of the Frenchman, such a conclusion will likely be regarded with a measure of skepticism. Voltaire, not surprisingly perhaps, held Calvin responsible for the dour artistic life of Geneva, while Orentin Douen believed that Calvin was the “ennemi de tout plaisir et de distraction, même des arts et de la musique.”<sup>5</sup> Philip Benedict blames Calvin’s heirs for a kind of “visual anorexia,”<sup>6</sup> even as Trevor Hart admits that a certain perception of Calvinism as “the chief perpetrator of art’s adroit castration” might be linked to Calvin himself.<sup>7</sup> And Peter Auksi maintains that “Calvin’s systematic removal of the regenerate Christian away from ... over-sensuous involvement in the earthly arts receives its seminal inspiration from a reading and interpretation of several key scriptural models.”<sup>8</sup>

Common to these observations, and many more like them,<sup>9</sup> is a sense that a persistently negative view of materiality underpins Calvin’s ambivalence towards the liturgical arts, and that the fate of the latter hinges, as it were, on the fate of the former—that the arts in

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*Seeing Beyond the Word: Visual Arts and the Calvinist Tradition* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999); Christopher R. Joby, *Calvinism and the Arts: A Reassessment* (Leeuven: Peeters, 2007); William A. Dyrness, *Reformed Theology and Visual Culture: The Protestant Imagination from Calvin to Edwards* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Victoria Ann George, *Whitewash and the New Aesthetic of the Protestant Reformation* (London: The Pindar Press, 2012), particularly chapter 7: “one of the major objectives of this book remains to demonstrate how the aesthetics of Calvin’s theology contrive to make sense, or to demand, whitewash as a solution to the image problem in Calvinistic ecclesiastical interiors” (364).

<sup>5</sup> Both cited in William Edgar, “The Arts and the Reformed Tradition,” in *Calvin and Culture: Exploring a Worldview*, eds. David W. Hall and Marvin Padgett (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2010), 41.

<sup>6</sup> Philip Benedict, “Calvinism as a Culture? Preliminary Remarks on Calvinism and the Visual Arts,” in *Seeing Beyond the Word*, 31.

<sup>7</sup> Trevor Hart, “Unseemly Representations,” in *Between the Image and the Word: Theological Engagements with Imagination, Language and Literature* (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2013), 176.

<sup>8</sup> Auksi, *Christian Plain Style: The Evolution of a Spiritual Ideal* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), 224. According to Daniel K. L. Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 33, Calvin would have believed that the function of music was “to channel human verbiage from the mind to the heart to align concept with passion.”

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Millet, “Art and Literature,” in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 424; Auksi, “Simplicity and Silence,” 216; William Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 80.

fact have little hope to flourish in a liturgical context if materiality is regarded in antipathetic fashion. Dorothy Sayers regards “hatred of the flesh” as one of the “four certain marks” of Calvin’s legacy,<sup>10</sup> while Julie Canlis, more subtly, suggests that Calvin’s theological and ecclesial heirs have been left “with a legacy of an ambiguous relationship to the physical world.”<sup>11</sup> In *Calvin Against Himself*, Suzanne Selinger argues that “Abstraction in Calvin the introverted intellectual was above all a dephysicalizing.”<sup>12</sup> This conclusion is comparable to the one which Carlos Eire draws in his seminal work, *War Against the Idols*. In the oft-quoted but not altogether accurate comment by Eire: “Calvin forcefully asserted God’s transcendence through the principle *finitum non est capax infiniti* and His omnipotence through *solī Deo gloria*.”<sup>13</sup>

This pessimistic regard for materiality is seen by many to be particularly conspicuous in Calvin’s theology of worship. Larry Harwood, in *Denuded Devotion to Christ*, observes:

[Calvin] is emphatic that worshippers not presume their whole duty to God accomplished in ‘naked ceremonies’ but Calvin rarely concedes much value in ceremonies. Like other Reformed thinkers, Calvin presumes that truth is optimally encountered for the worshipper in its barest or ‘naked’ form.... False religion is to be understood as impoverishing religion, because for Calvin, it is a mark of true religion to have little need for things of a physical or material nature.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Sayers, *Further Papers on Dante: His Heirs and His Ancestors*, vol. 2 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 167. Calvin is not, of course, to be regarded as interchangeable with Calvinism, but the unfortunate perception in popular circles is that the one is indistinguishable from the other, and that Calvin is ultimate, though unjustifiably, responsible for any ills associated with Calvinism.

<sup>11</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 249.

<sup>12</sup> Selinger, *Calvin Against Himself: An Inquiry in Intellectual History* (Hamden, CT.: Archon Books, 1984), 80.

<sup>13</sup> Carlos Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 316; cf. 197-198, emphasis original.

<sup>14</sup> Larry D. Harwood, *Denuded Devotion to Christ: The Ascetic Piety of Protestant True Religion in the Reformation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 9, 86-87.

Philip J. Lee adds that Calvin would have preferred that the gospel stand apart from any dependence on material, visible and “primitive means of grace,” such as the sacraments.<sup>15</sup> In William Dyrness’ estimation, Calvin sought to empty the worship space, “so that it could be filled with God’s word.”<sup>16</sup> And, while not exactly fair or charitable, the Anglo-Catholic Evelyn Underhill gives voice to a widespread perception of Calvin’s liturgical ethos:

In the type of worship which [Calvin] established, we seem to see the result of a great religious experience—the impact of the Divine Transcendence on the awe-struck soul—and the effort towards a response which is conditioned by a deep sense of creaturely limitation, but deficient in homely and child-like dispositions; and, with intrepid French logic, refuses the use of creaturely aids. Calvin desired, as so many great religious souls have done, a completely spiritual cultus; ascending towards a completely spiritual Reality, and rejecting all the humble ritual methods and all the sensible signs by which men are led to express their adoration of the Unseen.<sup>17</sup>

Calvin, it needs to be conceded, offers evidence in his own writings to corroborate the above judgments.

### **Calvin’s self-implication?**

In his commentary on the psalms, Calvin maintains that musical instruments not only prompt the faithful to cling to “earthly” things, they also contravene God’s requirement for a simple, spiritual and articulate worship. Now that Christ has now appeared,

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<sup>15</sup> Lee, *Against the Protestant Gnostics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 63. Killian McDonnell, *John Calvin, the Church and the Eucharist* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), 184, adds this qualifying note: “Though Calvin did not consider the sacraments as necessary means of salvation, and though union with Christ was not considered as dependent on the sacraments ... he did consider union with Christ as quite unthinkable apart from the sacraments.”

<sup>16</sup> William A. Dyrness, *Poetic Theology: God and the Poetics of Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 192.

<sup>17</sup> Evelyn Underhill, *Worship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 286-287.

moreover, for the church to persist in the use of musical instruments is “to bury the light of the Gospel” and to “introduce the shadows of a departed dispensation.”<sup>18</sup> With respect to the visual shape of worship, Calvin contends that it “would be a too ridiculous and inept imitation of papistry to decorate the churches and to believe oneself to be offering God a more noble service in using organs and the many other amusements of that kind.”<sup>19</sup> Calvin insists that to include images in public worship, as Rome does, arises out of *cupiditas*, which is a far cry from the *oblectatio* which God allows in the enjoyment of paintings of things imagined.<sup>20</sup> More bluntly, he dismisses the whole affair with icons as “sheer madness.”<sup>21</sup> He states his theological concern this way:

God’s majesty is sullied by an unfitting and absurd fiction, when the incorporeal is made to resemble corporeal matter, the invisible a visible likeness, the spirit an inanimate object, the immeasurable a puny bit of wood, stone, or gold.<sup>22</sup>

In comments such as this we begin to perceive the close link between Calvin’s worry over the liturgical arts and his worry over the material realm. While Calvin concedes that certain embodied “exercises of godliness” are needed in public worship, they are offered, to his mind, as accommodations to human weakness.<sup>23</sup> As he remarks in book four of the 1559 *Institutes*, since “in our ignorance and sloth (to which I add fickleness of disposition) we need outward helps to beget and increase faith within us, and advance it to its goal, God has also added these aids that he may provide for our weakness

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<sup>18</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 92:3.

<sup>19</sup> *CO* 30:259; from Calvin’s sermon on 1 Sam. 18.

<sup>20</sup> I.XI.12. He adds: “Even if the use of images contained nothing evil,” Calvin argues, “it still has no value for teaching.”

<sup>21</sup> “An Admonition, Showing the Advantages which Christendom Might derive from an Inventory of Relics,” in *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 2, 297.

<sup>22</sup> I.11.2.

<sup>23</sup> *Comm.* Jn. 4:23.

[*infirmirati*].”<sup>24</sup> Calvin consistently considers it a regrettable thing that Scripture and preaching are not enough for the faithful.<sup>25</sup> If Christians were “wholly spiritual,” like angels, he believes, they would not have need of material symbols of worship.<sup>26</sup> And when he exclaims, “How great is the distance between the spiritual glory of the Word of God and the stinking filth of our flesh!”<sup>27</sup> it is not difficult to imagine why both friend and foe have regarded Calvin as an enemy of the physical body,<sup>28</sup> a pessimist towards creation,<sup>29</sup> and a negative influence on the liturgical arts.<sup>30</sup>

To imagine this, however, is to imagine only half the story, through a glass darkly. For even if Calvin is hardly the first place to go to discover a vision for the flourishing of the liturgical arts, the above comments do not tell the whole story, which, as I propose in this dissertation, is both far more complicated and far more interesting than commentators have often allowed.

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<sup>24</sup> IV.1.1.

<sup>25</sup> “Confession of Faith,” 152, 159.

<sup>26</sup> “Catechism of the Church of Geneva,” in *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 2, 84, 91; hereafter “Catechism.” Cf. III.20.30; IV.5.18.

<sup>27</sup> *Comm.* John 1:14.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas J. Davis, in “Not ‘Hidden and Far Off’: The Bodily Aspect of Salvation and its Implications for Understanding the Body in Calvin’s Theology” *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 406-418.

<sup>29</sup> Karl Barth remarks on Calvin’s ascetic ethos in his work, *The Theology of John Calvin*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). With the concern to preserve the distance, or improper mingling, between God and creation, Calvin, according to Barth, “confronted the whole colorful world of phenomena with such remarkable and painfully serious restraint... In him we find as little of the supposedly French joy in the concrete and real as we do of the French *esprit*...” (125). Barth adds, with a touch of hyperbole, “We have to search his works with a magnifying glass to find any traces that he could laugh” (126).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Segiusz Michalski, *The Reformation and the Visual Arts: The Protestant image question in Western and Eastern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1993); David Morgan, *Icons of American Protestantism: The Art of Warner Salaman* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1996), 6.

## **The argument of this project**

In this dissertation I examine Calvin's trinitarian theology as it intersects his theology of materiality in order to argue for a positive theological account of the liturgical arts. I do so believing that Calvin's theology of materiality offers itself, perhaps surprisingly, as a rich resource for the practice of Christian worship, and that it opens up a trinitarian grammar by which we might understand the theological purposes of the arts in public worship.

Using Calvin's commentary on musical instruments as generally representative of his thinking on all the liturgical arts,<sup>31</sup> I identify four emphases that mark his thinking: that the church's worship should be (i) devoid of the "figures and shadows" which marked Israel's praise, and that it emphasize instead a (ii) "spiritual," (iii) "simple," and (iv) "articulate" worship, suitable to a new covenantal era. A common feature of these emphases, I suggest, is an anxiety over the capacity of physical things to mislead the worship of the faithful in idolatrous or superstitious ways. As it concerns public worship, Calvin's account of materiality is quite frankly a largely pessimistic one. Here the material creation is seen as an especial temptation to distort the true worship of God and as a lesser vehicle by which the faithful offer their praises to God.

Calvin's account of materiality outside of the liturgical context, however, is in many ways a distinctly optimistic one. A close reading of his views on creation, the resurrected body of Christ, the material symbols of worship, and the material elements of the Lord's

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<sup>31</sup> Properly speaking, this point remains an assumption in the dissertation, rather than a fully developed argument. A different set of conclusions might well be reached if the focus revolved around Calvin's views of visual art in public worship.

Supper points to a more integral role for materiality in the economy of God. And while a more narrowly “patrological” argument dominates Calvin’s thinking on materiality in public worship, I suggest that his arguments in these particular doctrinal *loci* are marked by a distinctly trinitarian frame of mind. Here the material creation is seen not as especially problematic, nor “merely there,” but rather *for* something, *headed* somewhere, *caught up* in the activities of the Two Hands of God, to use Irenaeus’ language.<sup>32</sup>

While setting aside his concern for “articulate” worship as an issue more directly related to the question of metaphor rather than of materiality, I focus this project on the first three emphases: “shadows” (chapters two and three), “spiritual” (chapter four), and “simple” (chapter five). In a careful investigation of each of these domains of thought in Calvin, I discover a trinitarian reading of the material creation which, in turn, opens up the possibility of a trinitarian reading of materiality in public worship. Though I follow the logic of Calvin’s theology to conclusions which he himself did not imagine, I believe they remain sympathetic to his best instincts and that a robust theological account of the liturgical arts is hereby brought to light.

Even, then, as Calvin perceives that God appropriates material things, such as the Eucharistic bread or the “affluence, sweetness, variety and beauty” of creation,<sup>33</sup> to form and feed the church, so this project argues, sometimes with and beyond Calvin, sometimes against Calvin, that God takes the liturgical arts as intensively material artifacts to form and feed the church too.

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<sup>32</sup> The language “two hands” is peculiar to Irenaeus (see, e.g., *Against Heresies* 4.20.1) and is developed at length, along parallel lines, in Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, e.g., 20, 187-195, 234-235.

<sup>33</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 2:8.



## Methodological considerations

One of the chief aims of this dissertation is to let Calvin speak for himself. Hence primary rather than secondary sources factor largely.<sup>34</sup> “A clever theologian can accommodate Calvin to nearly any agenda,” writes Richard Muller, while “a faithful theologian—and a good historian—will seek to listen to Calvin, not to use him.”<sup>35</sup> Whether or not it is right to “use” Calvin, or whether it is a matter of *how* one uses Calvin, the aim here is to listen as carefully as possible to Calvin himself. So, for instance, while it is tempting to obsess over Calvin’s emphasis on “spiritual” worship, accenting as it often does the priority of the invisible and internal over against the visible and external, a more careful reading of Calvin discovers an equal concern for what might be called “Spirit-ual” worship, namely that worship which the Holy Spirit makes possible, and the ways in which this theological perspective opens up a more positive role for materiality in the “pure worship” of God. On this account, whereas the Reformed tradition in its theological accounts of worship has made much of Calvin’s christological statements, the tradition has made much less of his pneumatological ones. In multi-author works, like *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition*<sup>36</sup> and *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions*,<sup>37</sup> no focused treatment of Calvin’s view of the Holy Spirit is to be found. But if B. B. Warfield is right to say that the “doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit is a gift from John Calvin to the Church of Christ,” then it is

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<sup>34</sup> Calvin, not the “Reformed” tradition or “Calvinism,” remains the focus of this dissertation.

<sup>35</sup> Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 188.

<sup>36</sup> Donald K. McKim, ed., *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992).

<sup>37</sup> David Willis and Michael Welker, eds., *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

incumbent upon the careful student of Calvin to discern the ways in which the Reformer's pneumatology informs his liturgical theology, including the material character of public worship.

To this general end, our project attends not only to Calvin's 1559 *Institutes*, as too often has been done, but also to his biblical commentaries, sermons, catechisms, treatises and the worship orders which he authored. Without a proper consideration of these other sources, Calvin's liturgical theology risks distortion. In Harwood's judgment, for instance, Calvin's liturgical theology results in a "denuded" devotion to Christ, yet Harwood's engagement with such a small number of Calvin texts vitiates the plausibility of his thesis. John Witvliet and Nathan Bierma rightly stress that "understanding liturgical participation in Calvin's Geneva requires attention not just to formal liturgical texts, but also to architecture, music, preaching, church order documents, town regulations, and sacramental theology. It requires complementary methods of intellectual, material, and social history, along with attention to scattered liturgical references in the complete corpus of Calvin's writings, including his letters, treatises, sermons, and commentaries."<sup>38</sup> Though this project focuses in on Calvin's theological commentary, the sources which Witvliet and Bierma recommend instills an appropriate caution in the sorts of judgments which this project may wish to propound. One might of course argue that the *Institutes* function as a definitive distillation of Calvin's theology or that his Geneva liturgy represents a final form of his ideal public worship, and that nothing more is needed to discern Calvin's thought and practice. But to do so is to assume, wrongly, that

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<sup>38</sup> Witvliet and Bierma, "Liturgy," in *The Calvin Handbook*, 408. On this account, see also Edgar, "The Arts and the Reformed Tradition," 40-68.

Calvin's theology is simple rather than complex, and that his ideas about worship are straightforward rather than complicated, and richly promising too.

That being said, it is important to state that this project is chiefly a constructive rather than historical enterprise.<sup>39</sup> To use Oliver Crisp's language, this project involves a retrieval of Calvin's ideas for the purpose of constructive theology.<sup>40</sup> Where it is felt necessary, I make note of relevant historical data in the footnotes. While some may wish to argue that Calvin's social location generated the plausible conditions for his intense allergic reaction to "Popish" excesses and his rejection of the plastic and performing arts in public worship, I suggest that no necessary causal relation needs to be inferred between historical circumstances, theological ideas, and actual liturgical reforms. And while the historical data rightly tempers the judgments of a systematic theologian, that data does not necessarily preclude the possibility of collegial disagreement on theological and liturgical questions. In fact, while I remain sympathetic to Calvin at many points, I part ways with him at times where I think he has gotten it wrong, at other times where I think he has not carried far enough the logic of his own trinitarian theology. In a sense,

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<sup>39</sup> Though this project is not historical in nature, the historical circumstances of Calvin's life and work will need to be given their appropriate weight in a proper evaluation of Calvin's liturgical theology and of his recommended liturgical practices. The pressures which he faced both internal to the "evangelical" movement (Farel, Bucer, Bullinger, Melancthon, Beza, Knox et al) and external to the movement (Rome, the libertines, the Anabaptists, the enthusiasts et al) must at some level account for the shape of his thought and the tenor of his rhetoric about public worship, even if the limited scope of this project precludes the possibility of fully teasing out the relation between social location and theological and liturgical habits. The work of particular historians is especially helpful to this project, for example, David Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Carl Trueman, "Calvin and the Calvinists," in *The Calvin Handbook*, 472-479; as also Muller, Pitkin, Hesselink, and Oliphant Old. On the use of musical instruments in the sixteenth-century Catholic Mass, as a historical backdrop to Calvin's liturgical reforms, see Leslie Korrick, "Instrumental Music in the Early 16<sup>th</sup>-Century Mass: New Evidence," *Early Music* 18.3 (1990): 359-365+367-370.

<sup>40</sup> Oliver D. Crisp, *Retrieving Doctrine: Essays in Reformed Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2010), viii. I am particularly sympathetic to this observation: "the ideas of the past are shown to have importance for the theology of the present, even where they have to be 'corrected' or where their ideas are incomplete or, perhaps, mistake in some respect" (ix).

this project argues Calvin against himself, but in a charitable spirit, trusting that Calvin's theology of materiality has something invaluable to offer to academy and church alike.

To the extent that Calvin's theological ideas rest on the exegesis of Scripture, as he himself regarded his primary task, I argue with Calvin on his own preferred terms. Thus I venture in this project the study of key biblical texts upon which the role of materiality in worship is seen to hinge.<sup>41</sup> Three exegetical issues are seen to be especially important: the relation in Scripture between temple, creation and worship; the relation of the physical body to the *imago Dei*; and the relation of John 4:23-24 to the kinaesthetic shape of worship. Each of these exegetical exercises occupies, respectively, a substantial place in the dissertation. Inasmuch as Calvin regards himself as a biblical theologian and views his liturgical proposals as the result of a faithful interpretation of Scripture, I provide an extensive reading of the relevant biblical data, at times concurring with his judgments, at other times disagreeing with his exegesis or with the conclusions which he draws from it. Where the original languages are seen to be critical to the meaning of a text, whether Latin and French as with Calvin, or Hebrew and Greek as with Holy Scripture, I have chosen to use them instead of the available English translations. In most cases I have placed them side-by-side so that readers might themselves perceive the nuances of meaning. In this vein, all biblical texts are taken from the New American Standard Bible, where I do not use my own translations. Likewise, unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from the *Institutes* are taken from the 1559 edition.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> With John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3, I would agree that any work of dogmatic theology cannot "replace or eclipse the work of exegesis."

<sup>42</sup> All citations from his New Testament commentaries are taken from *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas J. Torrance, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959-

A final note about exegesis is perhaps required. For certain scholars in Reformed circles, Calvin's liturgical theology is a straightforward result of his biblical hermeneutics. R. Scott Clark, for example, considers Calvin an exemplar of the Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW),<sup>43</sup> or what by some might be termed "liturgical biblicism."<sup>44</sup> To understand Calvin's exegesis, and therefore his commitment to worship "according" to Scripture, is to understand the reasons for the Reformer's liturgical proposals. Nothing more is needed, so it is believed. Plenty of evidence in Calvin's own writings substantiates this view. In book four of the *Institutes*, for example, Calvin writes, "I approve only those human constitutions which are founded upon God's authority, drawn from Scripture, and, therefore, wholly divine."<sup>45</sup> In a 1544 treatise, Calvin remarks, "Justly, therefore, does the Lord, in order to assert his full right of dominion, strictly enjoin what he wishes us to do, and at once reject all human devices which are at variance with his command."<sup>46</sup> So fundamentally important did Calvin regard public worship that he insists that "the whole substance of Christianity" consists in the mode by

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72); all citations from his Old Testament commentaries are taken from *Commentaries of John Calvin*, 46 vols. (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844-55). Repr. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979. Latin quotations are derived from *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. Wilhelm Baum, Edward Cunitz, and Edward Reuss, 59 vols. (Braunschweig: C. A. Schwetscke, 1863-1900).

<sup>43</sup> For an introduction to this view of worship, see R. J. Gore, Jr., *Covenantal Worship: Reconsidering the Puritan Regulative Principles* (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2002). Advocates of this view would include the contributors to the multi-author book, *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship*, eds. Philip Graham Ryken, Derek W. H. Thomas and J. Ligon Duncan III (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2003).

<sup>44</sup> R. Scott Clark, *Recovering the Reformed Confession: Our Theology, Piety, and Practice* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008); see also, Michael Bushell, *The Songs of Zion* (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown and Covenant Publications, 1980); Terry Johnson, *Reformed Worship: Worship that is according to Scripture* (Reformed Academic Press, 2000); Ligon Duncan, "Traditional Evangelical Worship," in *Perspectives on Christian Worship: 5 Views*, ed. J. Matthew Pinson (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009), 99-123.

<sup>45</sup> IV.10.30. Cf. I.11.8; *Comm.* Matt. 15:1-2, 9; *Comm.* Ps. 9:11.

<sup>46</sup> "On the Necessity of Reforming the Church," in *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 1, 148.

which “God is duly worshipped.”<sup>47</sup> This study argues that Calvin’s liturgical theology is far more complex, and indeed far more engaging, than a straightforward recitation of his exegesis of Scripture. Why he parts ways with Luther, Bucer or Zwingli on the substance or details of public worship cannot, in fact, be accounted for on strictly exegetical terms. A careful examination of his theological ideas is required in order to illumine the larger landscape of his views of public worship.

### **Key terms**

A few terms require definition at the outset. In an attempt to keep as close as possible to Calvin’s own terminology, I have chosen to use the language of “faithful,” “redeemed,” “church,” “Christians” in an interchangeable fashion. In my use of the term *liturgy*, I mean to denote the activities and purposes of corporate worship. To speak of the liturgical arts, then, is to speak of the arts in public worship. At times I use the term *kinaesthetic* to emphasize the sensory, metaphorical-symbolical, and en-cultured quality of the liturgical arts; at other times, I simply use the language of *material condition* of public worship. Additionally, I frequently argue that Calvin’s thinking on public worship is governed by a *patrological* argument. I use this term, rather than the generic “theological” or the more ambiguous “metaphysical” or “ontological,” to accent Calvin’s concern for the “essence” or “nature” of God. As Calvin himself reasons, for example, the “spiritual” nature of God, which as often as not designates the non-material nature of God, establishes the requirement of “spiritual” worship for the New Testament church.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 126. IV.1.5: “believers have no greater help than public worship, for by it God raises his own folk upward step by step.”

<sup>48</sup> Cf. II.8.17. He follows a similar line of thought in the Geneva Catechism, in *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 2, 58: because “God is an eternal, incomprehensible Spirit” (*Esprit éternel, incompréhensible*), therefore

To the extent that Calvin treats the nature of the Godhead as synonymous with the nature of God the Father, I name this habit of thought *patrological*. Where it is important to isolate the particular work of the First Person of the Trinity, in Calvin or in my own argument, I do so.

### **The significance of this project**

The general hope of this project is that it might make a minor contribution to Calvin studies and liturgical studies, and perhaps a significant contribution to the church's discourse on and practice of the liturgical arts.

For Calvin studies, the hope is that this project offers a correction to hasty or erroneous judgments of Calvin's theology of materiality. At one level, this project attempts to carry further the work of both Julie Canlis, in *Calvin's Ladder*, and of Randall Zachman, in *Image and Word in the Theology of John Calvin*.<sup>49</sup> With Canlis, I believe that Calvin fails to consistently relate the work of Christ as mediator of the material creation to the work of the Spirit as the one who enables the physical world to be "in Christ."<sup>50</sup> While sympathetic to many of Canlis' conclusions, our project nonetheless offers a more intensive treatment of Calvin's understanding of materiality in a liturgical context. Where

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worship ought to be "spiritual." It will be crucial to note the contexts in which Calvin's patrology occurs in relation to his exegesis of Old Testament texts, wherein Calvin discusses the Father in synonymous relation to YHWH, the One to whom Jesus prayed. I owe John Witvliet thanks for pointing this out.

<sup>49</sup> Zachman, *Image and Word in the Theology of John Calvin* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

<sup>50</sup> See, in particular, ch. 6 in *Calvin's Ladder*. While Werner Krusche, in *Das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes nach Calvin* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957), provides invaluable data on Calvin's pneumatology, it is Colin Gunton's treatment of the Holy Spirit in relation to the material creation that I seek to extend. See, especially, *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), and *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

Zachman argues against the view which he terms the “old thesis,” wherein Calvin is seen to give exclusive privilege to the knowledge of God that is “heard,” rather than “seen,”<sup>51</sup> our project, like Zachman’s, draws attention to the aesthetic features of Calvin’s theology of materiality, with its persistent appreciation for all the senses in the creaturely encounter with God.<sup>52</sup> With Zachman, as also with Mary Potter Engel,<sup>53</sup> Susan Schreiner,<sup>54</sup> and Barbara Pitkin,<sup>55</sup> I believe there is a more integral role for sensory data in Calvin’s liturgical theology than the “old thesis” suggests, and correlatively that Calvin’s views of the material creation are more positive than is commonly granted.<sup>56</sup> In a sense, our project argues the reverse of Eire’s dictum. *Finitum est capax infiniti*, I propose, but only because *God* enables creation to become a vehicle of his glory.<sup>57</sup>

In this vein, the hope is that liturgical studies will, yet again, discover Calvin as an important resource for theologies and practices of public worship.<sup>58</sup> In particular, this

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<sup>51</sup> Zachman includes Ed Dowey, David Willis, T. F. Torrance, Lucien Richard, Alexandre Ganoczy, Carlos Eire, William Bouwsma, Brian Gerrish, Dawn de Vries, and Bernard Cottret as representative of what he terms the “Old Thesis.”

<sup>52</sup> Charles Partee, in “The Soul in Plato, Platonism, and Calvin,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 22 (1969), is especially helpful to counter the common charge of platonic dualism in Calvin’s theology.

<sup>53</sup> Mary Potter Engel, *John Calvin’s Perspectival Anthropology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1988).

<sup>54</sup> Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin* (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1991).

<sup>55</sup> Barbara Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Can See: Calvin’s Doctrine of Faith in its Exegetical Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>56</sup> This project capitalizes on the insights of G. K. Beale, in *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2004), but apply these insights to the forms of public worship in a way that Beale, an ordained minister in the OPC, does not.

<sup>57</sup> This is a point which both Heiko A. Oberman, in “The ‘Extra’ Dimension in the Theology of Calvin,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 21.1 (1970): 43-64, and Daniel W. Hardy, in “Calvinism and the Visual Arts: A Theological Introduction,” *Seeing Beyond the Word*, 1-18, advance, and which this dissertation extends.

<sup>58</sup> Other works of note include: John H. Leith, *An Introduction to the Reformed Tradition: A Way of Being the Christian Community* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977), esp. ch. 6, “Liturgy and the Reformed Tradition,” 165-187, and 200-202; Robert M. Kingdon, “Worship in Geneva Before and After the Reformation,” in *Worship in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Change and Continuity in Religious Practice*, eds. Karin Maag and John D. Witvliet (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 41-62; LindaJo H. McKim, “Reflections on Liturgy and Worship in the Reformed Tradition,” in *Major*



project extends the work of scholars like John Witvliet,<sup>59</sup> Elsie Anne McKee,<sup>60</sup> Hughes Oliphant Old,<sup>61</sup> Michael Farley,<sup>62</sup> Jean-Jacques von Allmen,<sup>63</sup> and Philip Butin,<sup>64</sup> who, each in their way, seek to rehabilitate Calvin's liturgical proposals for a modern audience.<sup>65</sup> Hughes Old, like the rest of this group, is right to assert that the perception of

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*Themes in the Reformed Tradition*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 305-310, "Worship, Genevan Style"; Edmund P. Clowney, "Presbyterian Worship," in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 110-122; David W. Music, *Instruments in Church: A Collection of Source Documents* (London: The Scarecrow Press, 1998); Emily R. Brink and John D. Witvliet, "Contemporary Developments in Music in Reformed Churches Worldwide," in *Christian Worship in Reformed Churches Past and Present*, ed. Lukas Vischer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 324-347; Pamela Ann Moeller, *Calvin's Doxology: Worship in the 1559 Institutes with a View to Contemporary Worship Renewal* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1997); Adrienne T. Bailey, "Music in the liturgies of the Reformers: Martin Luther and John Calvin," *Reformed Liturgy & Music* 21.2 (1987): 74-79; Howard G. Hageman, "Changing Understandings of Reformed Corporate Worship," *Reformed Liturgy & Music* 18.4 (1984): 155-158.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, "The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Theology and Practice of Christian Worship in the Reformed Tradition," Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1997; "Toward a Liturgical Aesthetic: An Interdisciplinary Review of Aesthetic Theory," *Liturgy Digest* 3 (1996): 4-86; "Images and Themes in John Calvin's Theology of Liturgy," in *Worship Seeking Understanding: Windows Into Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 127-148.

<sup>60</sup> Elsie Anne McKee, "Context, Contours, Contents: Towards a Description of the Classical Reformed Teaching on Worship," *Princeton Theological Seminary Bulletin* 16 (1995), 172, offers this wry observation: "It is common knowledge that Calvin and worship are incongruous topics, and that, whatever the strengths of those who are predestined to the glory of God, they are hopeless failures when it comes to liturgy."

<sup>61</sup> Of particular relevance are two works: *Worship: Reformed According to Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002); *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1975).

<sup>62</sup> Farley's taxonomy of Reformed theologies of worship, in "What is 'biblical' worship? Biblical hermeneutics and evangelical theologies of worship," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51 (Sept. 2008): 591-613, is especially helpful. While Peter J. Leithart rarely engages Calvin himself in scholarly dialogue, his work as a Reformed theologian is especially promising to this project, as, for example, "Synagogue or Temple? Models for the Christian Worship," *WTJ* 63 (2002): 119-133; and "Embracing Ritual: Sacraments as Rites," *Calvin Theological Journal* 40 (2005): 6-20.

<sup>63</sup> Particularly noteworthy are "Theological Frame of a Liturgical Renewal," *The Church Quarterly* 2 (1969): 8-23; "Short Theology of the Place of Worship," *Studia Liturgica* 3.3 (1964): 155-171; and "Worship and the Holy Spirit," *Studia Liturgica* 2.2 (1963): 124-135; and *Worship: Its Theology and Practice*, trans. Harold Knight and W. Fletcher Fleet (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965).

<sup>64</sup> See "Constructive Iconoclasm: Trinitarian Concern in Reformed Worship," *Studia Liturgica* 19 (1989): 133-142 and *Revelation, Redemption, and Response: Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>65</sup> I might also add to this list the work of Reformed scholars James K. A. Smith, in particular, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009; James B. Torrance, *Community and the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 1996; and J. J. von Allmen, "Short Theology of the Place of Worship," *Studia Liturgica* 3.3 (1964): 155-171.

Calvin as a theologian uninterested in worship “is seriously misleading,”<sup>66</sup> the strange omission in *Cambridge Companion to John Calvin* notwithstanding.<sup>67</sup> In this vein, Witvliet notes that if Calvin is given two paragraphs in liturgical histories, “there may be mention of his un-Zwinglian sacramental theology and his promotion of vernacular metrical psalmody, but no more.”<sup>68</sup> The contention of this project is that there is indeed far more to be discovered—not least on behalf of the arts in public worship. Building on the work of the above Calvin scholars, then, this project draws attention to Calvin’s trinitarian *denkform* and suggests, in a paraphrase of both Alasdair Heron and Sue Rozeboom, that while Calvin himself did not pursue far enough the implications of his trinitarian theology for his liturgical proposals, it nonetheless offers itself as a significant resource for theologians, pastors and worship leaders today.<sup>69</sup>

With respect to the liturgical arts, our project argues that they serve the church’s worship in their own ways (with their own logics and their own powers), though not on their own terms, for the sake of a deeper fellowship with God and a robust Christian witness in the world. For liturgical arts studies, there is no want of interest in biblical or missional or traditional arguments for any given art form in public worship.<sup>70</sup> What there is less of is

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<sup>66</sup> Old, “John Calvin and the Prophetic Critique of Worship,” in *Calvin Studies III*, ed. John H. Leith (Davidson, NC: The Colloquium on Calvin Studies, 1986), 79.

<sup>67</sup> The *Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), fails to include any significant treatment on Calvin and worship.

<sup>68</sup> Witvliet, “Images and Themes in John Calvin’s Theology of Liturgy,” 127; esp. 128.

<sup>69</sup> Alasdair Heron, *Table and Tradition* (Edinburgh: Handel Press, 1983), 154, makes this point with respect to the role of the Holy Spirit in Calvin’s Eucharistic theology. Much the same, Sue A. Rozeboom, “The Provenance of John Calvin’s Emphasis on the Role of the Holy Spirit Regarding the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper,” Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2010, 6, draws attention to Calvin’s failure to bring to bear his pneumatologically rich treatment of the Lord’s Supper in his *Institutes* upon his proposed orders of worship. The following sections in Calvin’s 1559 *Institutes* are representative of his distinctly trinitarian sensibility: I.13.18; III.1.4; IV.14.10; IV.14.26.

<sup>70</sup> For example, Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).

expressly theological argument—even less so, trinitarian theological accounts of the arts in public worship. At first glance, of course, Calvin’s views on the liturgical arts hardly promise such an account. In fact, quite the opposite. The liturgical arts, Calvin repeatedly warns, risk occluding the clear light of the gospel, while also endangering the clarion voice of Christ, and they suffer guilt by association with Rome’s intemperate liturgies. To borrow from Alan Jacobs’ work, in *The Book of Common Prayer: A Biography*, Calvin worries (rightly, I believe) that a glut of liturgical arts will allow “the specific language of the prayers to disappear into a sensuous impressionism constructed primarily through architecture, incense, vestments, and melody.”<sup>71</sup>

Yet while Calvin may fret that the liturgical arts immerse the faithful in an excess of materiality, he also argues that the material creation is a sphere fit for God’s glory. The aim of this project therefore is to capitalize upon Calvin’s trinitarian sensibility toward the material creation, but to press it in new directions, specifically on behalf of the material aspects of corporate worship. Calvin’s theology includes rich veins in some cases, slight traces in others, which yield a more positive outcome for materiality in public worship and, it is hoped, for the proper flourishing of the liturgical arts too. In charting this course, finally, our project hopes that common tensions regarding the arts in worship might be fruitfully addressed: including, for instance, the ways in which form and freedom, order and non-order, are rendered; how a pneumatic form and

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<sup>71</sup> Jacobs, *The Book of Common Prayer: A Biography* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2013), 147. Jacobs in this instance describes the Anglo-Catholic Ritualist movement of the nineteenth century, associated chiefly with John Mason Neale and John Henry Newman, both of whom sought to restore a love for liturgical ceremony. The Ritualists, Jacobs writes, “transformed [Thomas] Cranmer’s powerful words into a kind of ambient music, often heard without acknowledgement, received aesthetically but not necessarily with the ear of understanding.”

christomorphic freedom open up better ways of understanding the dynamic role of the arts in worship; and how the introduction of new art media or new uses of existing art media form, reform or malform a given congregation.

## **Summary of chapters**

### **Chapter one: “Musical Instruments in Calvin: A Case Study”**

In chapter one I argue that the language of “shadows” alone, as scholars have often done, cannot account for the logic of Calvin’s thought on musical instruments, nor does it explain the tangle of theological and biblical ideas or the pastoral circumstances which inform his argument, even if we might discover in them a clear enough cast of mind. To the language of “shadows” must be added three distinctive emphases in Calvin’s thinking: “spiritual,” “simple” and “articulate.” I argue that, together, these four emphases establish the complex shape of his argument regarding musical instruments in public worship and that a common thread in each of these emphases is a view of materiality as problematical. While it will need to remain an assumption for the present chapter, I hope to demonstrate in the chapters that follow that Calvin’s commentary on musical instruments constitutes a case study, generally representative of his thinking on all the liturgical arts. Finally, while a more narrowly patrological argument governs Calvin’s thinking on musical instruments (arguing, as he does, according to the “nature” or “essence” of God), I suggest that strands of his thinking on musical instruments open

out to more explicit trinitarian reflection and indeed to a more positive regard for material condition of the church's worship.

### **Chapter two: "Shadows": The *telos* of the material creation: Part I**

In this chapter I begin by examining, first, aspects of Calvin's theology of creation, and, second, his understanding of material symbols. With the former, I argue that Calvin's commentary involves a fulsome, rather than a pessimistic, regard for the material creation, while with the latter, I maintain that a careful and in many ways commendable grammar governs Calvin's thinking on the material symbols of public worship. With regard to both, I observe a persistently patalogical line of thought, largely devoid of explicit discussion of the roles of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, along with a consistent anxiety that the materiality inherent to the external helps of worship is somehow hazardous to the church. With regard to both, I suggest, furthermore, that discontinuity figures prominently. Following this exposition, I offer a critical response to Calvin, along two basic lines, biblical and theological. I argue that Calvin's ideas about worship and the material creation are haunted by a metaphysical dualism, where the capacity of the material realm to mediate the presence and work of God to the church is regarded by the Reformer with considerable suspicion.

### **Chapter three: "Shadows": The *telos* of the material creation: Part II**

In this companion chapter, I argue, first, along exegetical lines, that the language of "weakness" which Calvin uses to describe the material symbols of worship is not the preferred language of the New Testament, and that his habit of aligning material aids

with the language of ignorance, frailty, and infirmity, among other terms, is largely foreign to the gospels and epistles. In this vein, over against Calvin, I argue that a “temple theology” provides a more compelling way to read the worship-creation relationship. Working with elements of Calvin’s trinitarian theology, I argue, second, that the material creation does not cease to be significant for public worship with the advent of Christ, but rather receives a new orientation under the constitutive work of the Spirit. To use Calvin’s own language, the church at worship exists in the “school of the beasts,” learning to see and to love God *in* and *through* the stuff of creation. In this light, I propose that the material condition of public worship is caught up in a double movement: the movement of creation’s praise at large and the movement of the Two Hands of God to enable creation to become the theater of God’s glory.

#### **Chapter four: “Spiritual”: The *telos* of human bodies**

As I seek to show in this chapter, Calvin is at his most persuasive when he interprets the meaning of the human body in light of Christ’s resurrected body. He similarly persuades when he traces out the logical implications of the body as a “temple of the Spirit,” for it is here that the body’s constitutive role in the *Spirit*-ual life of the Christian is most clearly seen. And when faced with what he regarded as the hypocritical conduct of the “Nicodemite” believers, I show how Calvin brings body and soul into a mutually determinative relation. Where Calvin is less persuasive is in a rhetorical habit that fails to do justice to the more positive role of the body that Scripture presents to us and in his insistent stress for “spiritual” worship that prioritizes the interior activities of the soul in correspondence to the theological priority of God’s non-material essence. Constructively,

I argue that the human body discovers its proper orientation as both a “member of Christ” and “a temple of the Holy Spirit.” As Calvin himself insisted, I argue that Jesus’ Spirit-constituted body shows us what bodies are for, and that the Spirit makes the faithful partakers now of the sort of physical life that the ascended Christ enjoys, thereby enabling all other human bodies to discover their proper *telos*. With a view to public worship, I argue that human bodies, as bearers of a distinct glory, are to be seen not as sources of exceptional provocation to sin, nor as lesser servants of the soul, but rather as domains of the Spirit’s habitation, re-ordered to Christ’s bodily order, through which the faithful, in the context of worship, engage in re-formative corporeal activities, not only internal and invisible ones.

#### **Chapter Five: “Simple”: the *telos* of the material shape of public worship**

In this final chapter, I argue that Calvin’s notion of “simple” points not to a single meaning but rather to a plurality of meanings, even if we may discover in them a family resemblance. I concentrate on the link between “simple” and the phrase from John 4, “in spirit and truth,” because of the central role that this Johannine passage plays in Calvin’s liturgical theology. While Calvin’s understanding of “simple” worship involves two distinct, but interrelated, concerns—i.e., the need for a minimal number of ceremonies and a minimal role for materiality in worship—I leave these concerns fluid, although the primary focus of my examination remains on the relation between “simple” and materiality. In contrast to previous investigations, in this chapter I find myself parting ways with Calvin to a greater degree. Over against Calvin, I argue that the narrative of John’s gospel follows a trinitarian rather than a narrowly patrological line of thought; that

the pericope of John 4 is concerned with a christological and pneumatological orientation to worship rather than an anthropological one; and that a positive regard for materiality is discernable throughout the Johannine narrative, rather than a negative one. With and beyond Calvin, I suggest that matter *matters* in John precisely for the kind of worship which the Father seeks in this “new hour.”

**Conclusion: “The flourishing of the liturgical arts”**

In the conclusion I summarize the thesis of the dissertation. I propose a vision for the flourishing of the liturgical arts on Calvinian terms. And I suggest possible future studies.



# CHAPTER ONE

## Musical Instruments: A case study

“It would be a too ridiculous and inept imitation of papistry to decorate the churches and to believe oneself to be offering God a more noble service in using organs and the many other amusements of that kind.... All that is needed is a simple and pure singing of the divine praises, coming from heart and mouth, and in the vulgar tongue.... Instrumental music was tolerated in the time of the Law because the people were then in infancy.” – **John Calvin**<sup>1</sup>

“[Calvin’s] exemplary liturgy will be *simplex, pura and spiritualis*, ‘plain’, ‘unadorned’ and ‘spiritual’ (XLVII.90).” – **Peter Auksi**<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Calvin’s appreciation for both music and the psalms is well known by those who count themselves his liturgical heirs.<sup>3</sup> In his *Epistle to the Reader*, his foreword to the very popular Genevan Psalter, he writes:

Now among the other things which are appropriate for recreating people and giving them pleasure, music is either the first or one of the principal, and we must value it as a gift of God deputed to that use.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CO 30:259; from Calvin’s sermon on 1 Sam. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Auksi, “Simplicity and Silence,” 354.

<sup>3</sup> That he acquired a definite appreciation for psalm-singing *prior* to his sojourn to Strasbourg is an argument Beati A. Föllmi advances in “Calvin und das Psalmsingen: Die Vorschichte des Genfer Psalters,” *Zwingliana* 36 (2009): 59-84. For the particular role that Strasbourg plays in the development of Calvin’s liturgical thinking, see G. J. van de Poll, *Martin Bucer’s Liturgical Ideas: The Strasbourg Reformer and his Connection with the Liturgies of the Sixteenth Century* (Assen, Netherlands: Koninklijke Van Gorcum & Comp., 1954); Marc Honegger, “La place de Strasbourg dans la musique au XVIe siècle,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 25.1/2 (1994): 233-249; Allen B. Mullinax, “Musical Diversity in Reformation Strasbourg: Martin Bucer’s Strasbourg Song Book (1541),” *The Hymn* 45.1 (1994): 9-13; John Witvliet, “The Spirituality of the Psalter in Calvin’s Geneva,” in *Worship Seeking Understanding: Windows Into Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 203-229.

<sup>4</sup> In *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety*, ed. Elsie A. McKee, *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 95. Hereafter *Pastoral Piety*.

The singing of psalms, Calvin remarks in 1537, “can incite us to lift up our hearts to God and move us to an ardor in invoking and exalting with praises the glory of his Name.”<sup>5</sup> In the tradition that followed Calvin, the singing of metrical psalms would become one of the singular distinguishing features of Calvinists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>6</sup> How Calvin viewed musical instruments, however, is a mixed bag. While he envisions a legitimate place for their use “at home” and “in the fields,” he does not regard them as appropriate to corporate worship.<sup>7</sup> Typical of his thinking is this observation:

For even now, if believers choose to cheer themselves with musical instruments, they should, I think, make it their object not to dis sever their cheerfulness from the praises of God. But when they frequent their sacred assemblies, musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law.<sup>8</sup>

If scholars make note of Calvin’s ideas about instruments, it will be to observe the fact that he locates them under the era of “figures and shadows.” More often, however, the

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<sup>5</sup> John Calvin, “Articles concerning the Organization of the Church and of Worship at Geneva proposed by the Ministers at the Council, January 16, 1537,” in *The Library of Christian Classics: Volume XXII: Calvin: Theological Treatises*, trans. J.K.S. Reid (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 53; hereafter “Articles.” This echoes Martin Luther’s earlier, and here significantly influential, estimation of the psalms. See Hans Schwarz, “Martin Luther and music,” *Lutheran Theological Journal* 39.2/3 (2005): 210-217.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: From Andrewes to Baxter and Fox, 1603-1690* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 270-272; see also James H. Nichols, *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 38-40. On average it is estimated that the Genevan Christian would have sung at any given service between 16 and 30 psalm stanzas, which according to Paul S. Jones, in “Calvin and Music” in *Calvin and Culture: Exploring a Worldview*, eds. David W. Hall and Marvin Padgett (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2010), 235, amounts to “the equivalent of five hymns of up to 6 stanzas each.” Cf. William D. Maxwell, *John Knox’s Genevan Service Book 1556: The Liturgical Portions of the Genevan Service Book used by John Knox while a Minister of the English Congregation of Marian Exiles at Geneva, 1556-1559* (London: The Faith Press, 1965), 63.

<sup>7</sup> This is in contrast to Martin Bucer and the *Strasbourg Psalter* (1525). Cf. G. J. van de Poll, *Martin Bucer’s Liturgical Ideas*, and Bruce Allen Mullinax, *Martin Bucer and the “Strasbourg Song Book,” 1541* Master of Church Music thesis (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, 1985). See also Hugh Oliphant Olds, *Worship: Reformed According to Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 43-45.

<sup>8</sup> *Comm. Ps.* 33:2.

matter is left altogether untreated. In the case of Charles Garside's seminal essay, "The Origins of Calvin's Theology of Music: 1536-1543," the focus remains exclusively on music as a general topic.<sup>9</sup> Peter Auksi properly identifies "simplicity" as a dominant aesthetic in Calvin's liturgical ideas, but says little more, though that more is sharply incisive.<sup>10</sup> Jeremy Begbie rightly presses Calvin in his underestimation of music's particular capacities,<sup>11</sup> while Herman Selderhuis offers a fine summary of Calvin's views within the context of the Psalter.<sup>12</sup> H. P. Clive's exceptional treatment does more than most, for he situates Calvin's concerns about instruments within a wider historical context and thus brings to light the kind of historical "pressures" that may account for the Reformer's conclusions in a way that exegetical or theological scrutiny alone cannot.<sup>13</sup> The aim of the present exercise is to press the topic in a more thoroughgoing manner and to suggest that Calvin's thinking on musical instruments in public worship is far more complicated and interesting than commentators have often allowed.

In this chapter I argue that the language of "shadows" alone cannot account for the logic of his thought, nor does it explain the tangle of theological and biblical ideas or the pastoral circumstances which inform his argument, even if we might discover in them a clear enough cast of mind. To the language of "shadows" must be added three distinctive

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<sup>9</sup> Garside, "The Origins of Calvin's Theology of Music: 1536-1543," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 4 (1969): 1-36.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Auksi, "Simplicity and Silence," 343-364.

<sup>11</sup> Jeremy S. Begbie, "Shifting Sensibilities: Calvin and Music," in *Music, Modernity and God: Essays in Listening* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 10-40. Begbie also elucidates the priority of language in Calvin's thinking.

<sup>12</sup> Herman J. Selderhuis, *Calvin's Theology of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), esp. 208-209.

<sup>13</sup> H. P. Clive, "The Calvinist Attitude to Music, and its Literary Aspects and Sources," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 19.1 (1957): 80-102. Paul Jones, "Calvin and Music," 217-253, engages the topic in some measure of breadth, but his exposition remains largely *ad hoc*.

emphases in Calvin's thinking: "spiritual," "simple" and "articulate." I argue that, together, these four emphases establish the complex shape of his argument regarding musical instruments in public worship and that a common thread in each of these emphases is a view of materiality as problematical. I raise questions and point to patterns of thought that will require a more thorough investigation in subsequent chapters. Finally, while a more narrowly patrological argument governs Calvin's thinking on musical instruments, I suggest that strands of his thinking on musical instruments open out to more explicit trinitarian reflection and indeed to a more positive regard for material condition of the church's worship.

This chapter falls into four parts. After summarizing Calvin's view of singing in corporate worship, I engage, first, a focused examination of Calvin's comments on instruments in the psalms. While he makes passing note about instruments in other biblical texts, it is in the Psalter that we discover a concentration of commentary. Raising a few questions that arise from this survey, I then follow Calvin into the New Testament. Here I briefly investigate his reading of John 4:23-24 and First Corinthians 14:1-17, because of the important role that both passages play in bringing to light Calvin's statements on the psalms. Third, I propose the language of "cast of mind" as a way to make sense of Calvin's thesis, and, finally, I offer a critical response to his argument and raise the question whether musical instruments might be included in public worship on Calvin's own terms.

## 1.2 EXPOSITION OF CALVIN

### 1.2.1. Calvin and congregational song

In order to locate Calvin's ideas about musical instruments within a larger "liturgical ecology," I suggest the following five articles as a way to summarize Calvin's view of congregational song:<sup>14</sup>

1. Singing obtains not only a possible place in the liturgy but a positive place, for it intensifies our capacity to worship God.
2. Not just any singing will do. We must sing rightly and that involves a consideration for both the mind and the heart, for both understanding and affection.
3. The kind of singing that pleases God most is the kind that is done commonly, as if with "the same mouth."
4. Because our worship must accord with God's holy word, God has provided us with good, fitting words, namely the psalms of David, and when these are sung well they lead to maximal edification and to right moral formation.
5. Because not any melody will do for corporate worship but only that which befits congregational song, God has provided us with skilled musicians to compose melodies suitable to corporate worship.

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<sup>14</sup> I draw this summary from Calvin's remarks in his foreword to the Genevan Psalter, the *Institutes*, and his "Articles" concerning the organization of Genevan worship (see notes above).

Whereas the 1559 *Institutes*, “Articles” and *Epistle* omit mention of musical instruments, Calvin directly addresses their use in his psalms commentaries. The context he presumes in these commentaries is public worship, while the aim is, as always, “pure worship.” Calvin makes two kinds of statements about musical instruments—positive and negative. I will take each in turn.

### **1.2.2 Positive comments on musical instruments**

Positively, musical instruments perform a double benefit for Israel’s worship. On the one hand, they incite the heart to exuberant praise: they *express* ardent affection for God,<sup>15</sup> they *stimulate* increased devotion to God, stirring the worshiper “up more actively to the celebration of the praise of God with the heart,”<sup>16</sup> and they *indicate* that even the “most ardent attempts” to celebrate God’s mighty deeds will fall “short of the riches of the grace of God.”<sup>17</sup> In his comments on Psalm 150, Calvin regards the enumeration of instruments as a kind of metaphor for corporate singing. Even as one instrument piles on top of another, producing a hyperbolic sound, so our individual praise piled on top of the praises of others, producing a kind of hyperbolic praise, could not capture the full measure of adoration which God deserves; and yet instruments, for the Jews, attained that kind of vibrant adoration.

On the other hand, musical instruments serve as deterrents to an “unruly flesh” and therefore perform a crucial moral function in Jewish life. They protect the worshiper not

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<sup>15</sup> *Comm.* Pss. 33:2; 57:8.

<sup>16</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 92:3.

<sup>17</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 98:5-6.

only from a “cold faith” but also from the possibility of sliding into error.<sup>18</sup> God commanded a multiplicity of songs, Calvin explains in his commentary on Psalm 150:3, in order

that he might lead men away from those vain and corrupt pleasures to which they are excessively addicted, to a holy and profitable joy. Our corrupt nature indulges in extraordinary liberties, many devising methods of gratification which are preposterous, while their highest satisfaction lies in suppressing all thoughts of God. This perverse disposition could only be corrected in the way of God’s retaining a weak and ignorant people under many restraints, and constant exercises.<sup>19</sup>

### 1.2.3 Negative comments on musical instruments

On the negative side, Calvin’s argument against instruments in a new covenantal liturgy involves four contentions. First, he stresses that instruments belong to *the era of figures and shadows*. As he comments on Psalm 33, “I have no doubt that playing upon cymbals, touching the harp and the viol, and all that kind of music, which is so frequently mentioned in the Psalms, was a part of the education; that is to say, the puerile instruction of the law.”<sup>20</sup> Instruments thus represent the “infancy of the Church,”<sup>21</sup> forming a “part of the training of the Law,”<sup>22</sup> “under the legal economy,”<sup>23</sup> and correspond to the “dispensation of shadows and figures” which characterized Jewish believers.<sup>24</sup> When the Israelites used harp and lyre, this was done because of the “generally prevailing custom

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Sermons on 2 Samuel: Chapters 1-13*, trans. by Douglas Kelly (Carlisle, PN: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), 409.

<sup>19</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 150:3.

<sup>20</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 33:2.

<sup>21</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 149:3. A similar argument is made with respect to Miriam and the women of Exodus 15:20 as well as of David’s dancing in 2 Samuel 6:14. See Jon Balsarak, *Divinity Compromised: A Study of Divine Accommodation in the Thought of John Calvin* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 78-79.

<sup>22</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 71:22.

<sup>23</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 150:3-5.

<sup>24</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 71:22.

of that time.”<sup>25</sup> Christians are not to insist on their continuation, for to do so is to perpetuate “the ceremonies of the law.”<sup>26</sup> God commanded timbrels and trumpets to “train his people, while they were as yet tender and like children, by such rudiments, until the coming of Christ,”<sup>27</sup> and the Jews “who were yet under age” required the use of “such childish elements.” In one sense, Calvin says, instruments were not in themselves necessary; they were only “useful” as elementary aids to the people of God. Now that the church has “reached full age,” instruments can be set aside.<sup>28</sup>

Second, Calvin insists that the re-introduction of instruments into public worship leads people to cling to “earthly” things, when God has expressly commanded that they worship him in *spiritual* fashion.<sup>29</sup> He comments: “We are to remember that the worship of God was never understood to consist in such outward services, which were only necessary to help forward a people, as yet weak and rude in knowledge, in the spiritual worship of God.”<sup>30</sup> He elaborates on this point in a sermon on Second Samuel:

[To reinsert such external elements] would be nothing but a silly performance now, which would obscure the spiritual worship spoken of in the fourth chapter of St. John. For there our Lord Jesus Christ declares to us how we must no longer govern ourselves by the Law.<sup>31</sup>

In this light, musical instruments risk contaminating the true praise of God. As Selderhuis observes, Calvin “fears that, by using musical instruments, the correct balance would be

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<sup>25</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 71:22.

<sup>26</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 98:5.

<sup>27</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 81:2-3.

<sup>28</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 92:3.

<sup>29</sup> *Sermons on 2 Samuel*, 234-239. Cf. *Comm.* Col. 3:16.

<sup>30</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 92:3.

<sup>31</sup> *Sermons on 2 Samuel*, 412; see also 236, 310.



disturbed between the joy caused by music and the joy due to the praise of God.”<sup>32</sup> Calvin asks:

Does anyone object, that music is very useful for awakening the minds of men and moving their hearts? I own it; but we should always take care that no corruption creep in, which might both defile the pure worship of God and involve men in superstition.<sup>33</sup>

The use of instruments in public prayers, in short, defiles such worship.

Third, Calvin insists that God is more pleased with *simple* worship. This idea functions as a kind of corollary to the first: that is, the opposite of “shadowy” worship is “simple” worship. Likewise, the opposite of a ceremonially and materially substantial worship is a ceremonially and materially simple worship. Papists “ape” Israel in their employment of instruments. They do so, Calvin maintains, in “a senseless and absurd manner,” “exhibiting a silly delight in that worship of the Old Testament which was figurative, and terminated with the Gospel.”<sup>34</sup> Fond of “outward pomp,” Rome persists in a “wicked and perverse obstinacy,” causing Christians to stumble into superstitious activities.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, simple worship occurs under “the clear light of the gospel”<sup>36</sup> which has dissipated the shadows of the law. To the extent that musical instruments represented a form of “outward service,” they were necessary for a people who are weak, ignorant and

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<sup>32</sup> Selderhuis, *Calvin's Theology of the Psalms*, 209. Echoes of Augustine can be heard here.

<sup>33</sup> *Comm. Ps. 33:2*. In *Comm. Ps. 93:2*, Calvin claims that, unlike humans, God does not take delight “in mere melody of sounds.” Cf. Begbie, “Music, Word and Theology Today,” 24-27.

<sup>34</sup> *Comm. Ps. 92:3*.

<sup>35</sup> *Comm. Ps. 33:2*.

<sup>36</sup> *Comm. Ps. 81:2*.

frail.<sup>37</sup> Because Christ has now appeared, however, for the church to persist in the use of musical instruments is to be “to bury the light of the Gospel” and to “introduce the shadows of a departed dispensation.”<sup>38</sup>

Finally, instruments fail St. Paul’s requirement that praise be offered in an *articulate* voice. This contention appears as a new line of argument. While “simple” worship operates as an obverse to an externally “thick” worship, the idea of “articulate” worship functions as an ancillary argument to the above contentions, while also central to Calvin’s presuppositions about public worship. As Calvin forthrightly states: “The name of God, no doubt, can, properly speaking, be celebrated only by the articulate voice.”<sup>39</sup> More strongly even, Calvin argues that instruments “are banished out of the churches by the plain command of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>40</sup> For this judgment Calvin appeals to First Corinthians 14:13-16. From this New Testament passage, Calvin infers that instruments can only generate an inarticulate voice and *ipso facto* cannot meet the standards of right worship. Curiously, Calvin excludes chanting on similar grounds because it “fills the ears with nothing but an empty sound.”<sup>41</sup>

#### 1.2.4 Questions

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. his thoughts in *Comm.* 1 Sam. 18; *Comm.* 2 Cor. 4:16; *Comm.* 1 Tim. 4; and “Confession of Faith, in the Name of the Reformed Churches of France,” in *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 2, 152, 159.

<sup>38</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 92:3.

<sup>39</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 33:2.

<sup>40</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 71:22.

<sup>41</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 33:2.

A few questions arise at this point. How exactly did instruments “train” the Israelites? If they intensified the affections and enlarged the praise of God,<sup>42</sup> do Christians no longer require such training? Did Calvin place musical instruments under the era of “figures and shadows” because of their ceremonial function or because of their status as physical media?<sup>43</sup> Calvin argues that instruments by virtue of their resemblance to an “inarticulate” voice cannot properly praise God. If that is the case, what do we make of the worship that Israel offered God with pipes and cymbals? Is Saint Paul’s command in First Corinthians 14 an arbitrary command—that while God was once pleased to command and receive both articulate (voice) and inarticulate (instruments) worship, God no longer deems that pleasing?

If answers are to be found to these questions, they will be discovered by following Calvin into the New Testament, specifically in his interpretation of John 4 and First Corinthians 14. While we cannot here treat the rich complexity of commentary in either of these books, Calvin’s reading of John opens up for us insight into how Calvin relates “spiritual” to the notions of both “simple” and “shadowy,” while his exegesis of the epistle yields a more complicated picture of “articulate” worship than Calvin’s comments on the psalms might at first lead us to believe. The initial insights that this brief investigation yields will require a more thorough examination in the chapters that follow.

### **1.3 CALVIN AND THE NEW TESTAMENT**

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<sup>42</sup> Jeffrey T. VanderWilt, “John Calvin’s Theology of Liturgical Song,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 25.1 (1995): 63-82, argues the thesis that Calvin understood the singing of psalms as a way to train the affections in the school of faith.

<sup>43</sup> *Comm.* Col. 2:17.

### 1.3.1 Calvin's exegesis of John 4:23-24

Calvin summarizes the exchange between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4:23-24 by noting that their conversation concerns the nature of “the pure worship of God.”<sup>44</sup> Pertinent to our concerns, Calvin states that with the coming of Christ the era of ceremonies has come to an end. Nothing “is hidden or obscure.”<sup>45</sup> The substance of the gospel brings to light what Jews, with their use of incense, candles, holy garments, altar and vessels, could know only in “shadow” form. Rome’s burden is precisely the “foolish affectation of copying Jewish ceremonies.”<sup>46</sup> In so doing, they obscure Christ again. What does it mean then to worship “in the spirit”? It means, in this context, to worship spiritually, which is another way of saying that God must be worshipped inwardly.

The worship of God is said to consist in the spirit, because it is nothing else than that inward faith of the heart which produces prayer, and, next, purity of conscience and self-denial, that we may be dedicated to obedience to God as holy sacrifices.<sup>47</sup>

To stress the chiefly inward character of pure worship, Calvin describes it as “faith, prayer, thanksgiving, purity of heart, and innocence of life”; and to reinforce the point, he adds that “at no time did [God] delight in any other sacrifices.”<sup>48</sup> Conversely, non-spiritual worship corresponds to outward or external worship, which is the kind of worship that the Jewish people had grown accustomed to but which Christ had now

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<sup>44</sup> *Comm.* Jn. 4:23. Cf. Eire, *War Against the Idols*, 197-212.

<sup>45</sup> *Comm.* Jn. 4:23.

<sup>46</sup> *Comm.* Jn. 4:20.

<sup>47</sup> *Comm.* Jn. 4:23.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

abolished. Does this mean that Jewish worship was devoid of spiritual content? No, to the contrary, says Calvin, such worship as God had commanded the Jewish people was in fact spiritual, only it was concealed under figures and shadows—“it was enveloped in so many outward ceremonies that it resembled something carnal and earthly.”<sup>49</sup> Calvin cites Paul’s statement in Galatians 4:9 as warrant for this conclusion. There Paul describes ceremonial practices, such as the observance of “days and seasons,” as “weak and worthless elemental things.”<sup>50</sup>

Is there a place, then, for “outward exercises of godliness”? Calvin concedes that Christians will have need of these, but insists that they be few, moderate and sober and that they not “obscure the plain truth of Christ.”<sup>51</sup> With such “plain and simple worship” God is well pleased. The “simple” truth of Christ, then, must express itself in a “simple” liturgy. Anything more, Calvin insists, will “deprive the Church of the presence of Christ.”<sup>52</sup> While the “spirit” was indeed concealed by the shadows of the Law, the masks of Popery “disfigure” it altogether. “Therefore we must on no account connive at such horrible and unworthy corruptions.”<sup>53</sup> Why do we have need of such outward exercises? Calvin answers: “our weakness renders” these necessary.<sup>54</sup> What then constitutes worship “in spirit and truth”?

What it is to worship God in spirit and truth appears plainly from what has been already said. It is to remove the coverings of the ancient ceremonies and retain

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> *Comm.* Gal. 4:9.

<sup>51</sup> *Comm.* Jn. 4:23.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

simply what is spiritual in the worship of God. For the truth of the worship of God rests in the spirit, and ceremonies are so to say adventitious.<sup>55</sup>

For Calvin the phrase “spirit and truth” functions metonymically. Rather than referring to two distinct realities, they describe a common one, namely, that worship with the coming of Christ designates chiefly an inward reality.<sup>56</sup> While “spirit” can be seen to describe for Calvin the interior domain of worship, whether as faith or prayer, “truth” seems to refer to their “substance.” “Truth” is not contrasted with falsehood but rather “with the *outward* addition of the figures of the Law.”<sup>57</sup> To restate his point one last time, Calvin notes that the kind of worship that the Father seeks “is the pure and simple substance of spiritual worship.”<sup>58</sup> Finally, what does Jesus mean when he says that “God is Spirit”? Calvin answers that this describes the essential nature of God. Against certain patristic theologians, who employed this text to defend the full deity of the Spirit, Calvin believes that Jesus simply wished to underscore the “spiritual” nature of his Father. Calvin stresses this idea with strong, perhaps exaggerated, language: “that God is so far from being like us, that those things which please us most are the objects of his loathing and abhorrence.”<sup>59</sup>

### **1.3.2 Calvin’s exegesis of First Corinthians 14**

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Calvin elaborates on his meaning of “inward man” in his commentary on 2 Cor. 4:16-18. The phrase “outward man” refers to “everything that relates to the present life”; or again, the “outward man is the maintenance of the earthly life.” This includes, for Calvin, such things as strength and health as well as “riches, honors, friendships, and other resources.” He mentions no “spiritual” or “religious” goods that belong to our present life.

<sup>57</sup> *Comm.* Jn. 4:23.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> *Comm.* Jn. 4:24.

Shifting to Calvin’s commentary on First Corinthians 14, it may be helpful first to summarize Paul’s train of thought in 14:6-19.<sup>60</sup> Revolving around a discussion of the relative place of tongues and prophecy in public worship, Paul uses musical instruments as a metaphor to explain human speech. If a flute or bugle is blown indiscriminately, he reasons, only a rambling of sounds will result (v. 7-8). Conversely, if a person were to blow distinct sounds through a bugle, then one might prepare himself for battle. All human languages, Paul argues analogously, retain a meaning but only for the one who recognizes the intent of the language. Otherwise it will be like speaking to a foreigner or “barbarian” (v. 11). In the context of corporate worship the aim should be to “abound for the edification of the church,” and this can only occur if the speech is “intelligible” (v. 12; cf. vv. 3-4, 6).<sup>61</sup> Tongues benefit the “spirit” (πνεῦμα) but not the “mind” (νοῦς, v. 14; cf. v. 2, 4). “Therefore,” Paul writes, “let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret” (v. 13), so that edification may ensue for the church.<sup>62</sup> Paul’s resolution is noteworthy: “I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing [ψαλῶ] with the spirit and I will sing [ψαλῶ] with the mind also” (v. 15; cf. 27-33, 39!). If, Paul adds, prayer occurs only with the spirit, i.e. tongues, others will neither understand what is being prayed nor be edified (vv. 16-17); and then he ends his admonition with a hyperbolic declaration: “in the church I desire to speak five words with

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<sup>60</sup> See Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 221-235. See also Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 652-676; Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 233-252; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1087-1168.

<sup>61</sup> Verse 26 reiterates this point but in a way that might in fact undermine Calvin’s conclusion.

<sup>62</sup> Fee, in *God’s Empowering Presence*, 228, notes that the presumed conclusion to Paul’s point here would be that prophecy should prevail over tongues in worship, but, he writes, “prophecy is not Paul’s first concern, intelligibility is.”

my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue”  
(v. 19).<sup>63</sup>

Whereas Paul employs musical instruments as a metaphor, Calvin interprets Paul to mean them literally. And whereas Paul enjoins both prophecy and tongues (appropriately exercised), Calvin concludes that only prophecy, as a work of the mind, will result in an edifying experience for the assembly.<sup>64</sup> “How foolish then it is and preposterous in a man, to utter in an assembly a voice of which the hearer understands nothing.”<sup>65</sup> And again, paraphrasing, “What can be plainer than this prohibition — ‘let not prayers or thanksgivings be offered up in public, except in the vernacular tongue’.”<sup>66</sup> As Calvin sees it, Paul argues that all public prayer must involve the mind: “Let us take notice, that Paul reckons it a great fault if the mind is not occupied in prayer.”<sup>67</sup> With regard to 14:15, Calvin notes that Paul teaches “that it is lawful, indeed, to pray with the spirit, provided the mind be at the same time employed”;<sup>68</sup> or put negatively, “the prayers of every one of us will be vain and unfruitful, if the understanding does not go along with the voice.”<sup>69</sup> He grants “spirit” prayer has a place in the assembly so long as the mind is also at work, but he appears here to conflate in a single experience what Paul envisions as separate experiences for the believer.

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<sup>63</sup> Fee, *Ibid.*, 261, relates this verse to Paul’s injunction that all worship be done in a “fitting and orderly” fashion (1 Cor. 14:40).

<sup>64</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 14:14, stresses the inwardness of such worship: “as prayer is the spiritual worship of God, what is more at variance with the nature of it, than that it should proceed merely from the lips, and not from the inmost soul?”

<sup>65</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 14:11. In Calvin’s mind the “papists” fail repeatedly on this account.

<sup>66</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 14:16.

<sup>67</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 14:14.

<sup>68</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 14:15.

<sup>69</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 14:16.



## 1.4 A CAST OF MIND

As a way towards clarity, I propose that it might be useful at this point to speak in terms of a cast of mind. Whereas any given line of argument in Calvin's writings lands us in disparate hermeneutical and dogmatic territory, there are certain orientations which remain consistent. I suggest at least three distinctive casts of mind: biblical, theological, and historical/pastoral.

### 1.4.1 Biblical cast of mind

Calvin's biblical approach is not one we might initially suspect. While he argues repeatedly that the church's worship should accord to God's explicit commands in Scripture, this is not the approach which he adopts towards musical instruments. Calvin *does not* say: God fails to command or commend instruments in the New Testament (as God does with song), therefore we ought to avoid them.<sup>70</sup> Calvin *does* say: instruments belong to the era of figures and shadows, therefore we ought to leave them there. To bring them into public worship is to "ape" Israel's worship, to "bury Christ" and to "pervert" true Christian worship. Where he does appeal to command language in his psalm commentaries is in reference to two decisive texts: John 4 and First Corinthians 14. God commands worship that is "in spirit and truth" and "articulate."

Calvin's biblical logic, then, might be summarized this way: just as we have received the "clear light of the gospel," so we must worship God in substantially inward, formally simple and rationally intelligible fashion.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; James 5:13; Heb. 2:12; 1 Cor. 14:15.

<sup>71</sup> Acts 2 must also be seen to factor significantly in Calvin's thinking here.

### 1.4.2. Theological cast of mind

Calvin's theological cast of mind involves a conflict of interest: between an enthusiastic doctrine of creation (largely outside of the context of public worship) and a "creaturely pessimism" (largely within the context of public worship).<sup>72</sup> As Begbie points out, Calvin's affirmation of creation as the theater of God's glory might lead us to believe that musical instruments will be given their own distinctive contribution to human flourishing, grounded, that is, in a theology of creation rather than in a theological anthropology.<sup>73</sup> But in Calvin's argument it does not. While, for example, the Lord was "pleased to use such visible figures" (like the embodied practice of baptism),<sup>74</sup> we also find, in Calvin, that God "did not delight in these external things" (like the ornaments of Israel's worship, including musical instruments) but rather made them available "because of the infirmity of the times."<sup>75</sup> While Calvin affirms that the glory of God rightly shines "in the several parts of our bodies,"<sup>76</sup> he concedes that material ceremonies are permitted because our "weakness renders these necessary."

Calvin's theological logic, then, is this: the "spiritual" nature of God, the "gravity" of heavenly worship, and the "crude and weak" capacity of humans, prone to misuse material reality, require an internally oriented, sober, moderate public worship. To

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<sup>72</sup> This is a phrase which Canlis employs in *Calvin's Ladder*, 243.

<sup>73</sup> Begbie, *Music, Modernity and God*, 34.

<sup>74</sup> IV.15.14.

<sup>75</sup> *Sermons on 2 Samuel*, 413.

<sup>76</sup> III.20.31.

include musical instruments in worship is “to make a confused mixture which confounds heaven and earth.”<sup>77</sup>

### **1.4.3 Historical and pastoral cast of mind**

With respect to Calvin’s historical and pastoral cast of mind, we must be careful not to presume simple causal lines of influence. What we can say is this. Calvin follows the patristic line of thinking almost exclusively, save in his encouragement of instruments “at home” and “in the fields.”<sup>78</sup> Following the Antiochene rather than Alexandrian exegesis of music, Calvin echoes the patristic concern for “logocentricity,” togetherness in worship, the moral power of music, and the close link between “spiritual” and “internal.”<sup>79</sup> With respect to the humanist scholars of the day, Calvin reiterates their concern for simplicity, decorum, intelligibility, clarity, spiritual worship, togetherness and a respectful deference to the “ancients.”<sup>80</sup> While Erasmus, for example, allowed space for musical instrumentation in the Mass, he strongly warned against semi-profane ceremonies, the indulgent behavior of choristers, “lascivious” melodies, and song that was disconnected from the text.<sup>81</sup> Pastorally, Calvin worried time and again over the liturgical conditions for ready abuse (per Rome) and over the human proclivity to turn

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<sup>77</sup> *Sermons on 2 Samuel*, 241.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship*, 45.

<sup>79</sup> Particularly helpful on this account is Everett Ferguson, “Toward a Patristic Theology of Music,” *Studia Patristica* 24 (1993): 266-283. On a kind of parallel note, see James W. McKinnon, “The Exclusion of Musical Instruments from the Ancient Synagogue,” *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 106 (1979-1980): 77-87.

<sup>80</sup> Hyun-Ah Kim, “Erasmus on Sacred Music,” *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 8.3 (2006): 277-300. See also Clement A. Miller, “Erasmus on Music,” *The Music Quarterly* 52.3 (1966): 332-349; Charles Garside, Jr., “Calvin’s Preface to the Psalter: A Re-Appraisal,” *The Musical Quarterly* 37.4 (1951): 566-577.

<sup>81</sup> Kim, “Erasmus on Sacred Music,” 290-296.

material objects into idolatrous and superstitious use (per the Genevan Christians under his care).

Calvin's pastoral logic, then, is this: better to remove the sources of temptation. The human tendency to abuse material aids to worship is "a contagion disease of sorts," as Carlos Eire puts it,<sup>82</sup> and only an "economical" ceremonial apparatus is able to preserve for the believer the plain truth of Christ.<sup>83</sup>

## 1.5 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

What kind of critical response might we offer in light of the above?

### 1.5.1 Critique of Calvin's exegesis

With respect to Calvin's exegesis, we might begin by questioning his reading of the principal texts. In Calvin's writings, the notion of "spiritual" is transposed in two ways: on the one hand to designate the inward encounter with God and on the other to indicate a minimal ceremonial apparatus. For Calvin, at issue in John 4 is the immaterial, invisible essence of God which confronts the human spirit by way of the heart and mind.<sup>84</sup> Might a careful re-reading of the Johannine narrative, however, lead us to a different

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<sup>82</sup> Eire, *War Against the Idols*, 231-232.

<sup>83</sup> This is a term Leith, in *An Introduction to the Reformed Tradition*, 167, deems preferable to "austere" to describe Calvin's liturgical sensibility: "Calvin's worship is not so much austere as it is economical. All unnecessary motions, actions, or words are eliminated. Moreover, the words, actions, and paraphernalia of worship must be appropriate to the reality they communicate or express."

<sup>84</sup> In *Sermons on 2 Samuel*, 232, 235, 311, Calvin states that God's essence is "spiritual," "invisible" and "celestial." Cf. Dyrness, *Reformed Theology and Visual Culture*, 71-72. William J. Bouwsma, in "The Spirituality of John Calvin," in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1987), 323, adds this observation: "Calvin's emphasis on the transcendence and power of God—his biblicism to the contrary notwithstanding—was as much a speculative inheritance from Ockhamism as a product of his spiritual experience."

conclusion? If, as recent scholarship suggests, the phrase “God is Spirit” describes not the nature of God but rather the person of the Spirit, and if “Spirit and Truth” identifies something about God instead of humanity, the narrative presses us, I believe, to read this passage in a rather more trinitarian light than in an essentialist one.<sup>85</sup> When we consider certain trajectories in John, we also discover a healthy estimation for the material dimension of creation—from the enfleshed Logos to the new creation subtext that runs throughout. From these emphases, John’s narrative invites us to infer a far more interesting relationship between the “spiritual” and “material” dimension of corporate worship than perhaps Calvin himself imagined.<sup>86</sup>

According to Calvin, the so-called simplicity of Christ requires a simple liturgical ceremony.<sup>87</sup> Heirs of the Frenchman have questioned this rationale. Hughes Oliphant Old, for example, writes, “The Scriptures themselves do not even suggest that [the musical accompaniment in worship] should be restrained, simple or unadorned. If the early Reformed Church was of that opinion, it was probably more because of the warnings of the Church Fathers than because of the directions of either Old or New Testament.”<sup>88</sup> Philip Butin argues that an “unnecessarily spare” worship in Reformed churches betrays a defective trinitarian orientation, to which the New Testament consistently testifies in its

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<sup>85</sup> This is a line of argument which Calvin adopts in his commentary on 2 Corinthians 4:4. Cf. Arnold Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation in John Calvin’s Theology: Analysis and Assessment* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 239.

<sup>86</sup> These ideas are explored more fully in chapter 5.

<sup>87</sup> On this account, Calvin argues for a certain translation of the phrase in 2 Corinthians 11:3, ἀπὸ τῆς ἀπλότητος [καὶ τῆς ἀγνότητος] τῆς εἰς τὸν Χριστόν, that is not widely followed by New Testament scholars, believing that the phrase modifies Christ rather than the believer. I offer a critique of this reading in chapter 5.

<sup>88</sup> *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship*, 268-269; see esp. n. 1, 269. Cf. VanderWilt, “John Calvin’s Theology of Liturgical Song,” 74.

liturgical formulae.<sup>89</sup> More forcefully, Auksi asserts that Calvin's liturgical aesthetic drives "towards ultimate simplicity in means and ends, towards an intense spiritualism independent of sensory stimulation" and away from "the profound actuality of a tangible communion."<sup>90</sup> More will indeed be said on this idea of simplicity in chapter five of the dissertation.

With respect to Calvin's reading of First Corinthians 14, we point out a possible discrepancy. If Calvin has read Paul rightly, that "spirit" prayer can occur in corporate worship only if the mind is involved, the analogy to musical instruments still breaks down. Calvin affirms that prayer involving the "spirit" (i.e. inarticulate prayer), even in its subordinate status to prayer involving the mind (i.e. articulate prayer), belongs in the church's liturgy.<sup>91</sup> But for reasons which cannot be explained from his Corinthians exegesis alone, his argument in the psalms commentaries cannot envision a way that musical instruments—as a form of "spirit" and therefore inarticulate prayer—could also be included in corporate worship. On the reasoning of his Corinthian exegesis, one might argue for instruments so long as they were exclusively used as accompaniment and therefore in a subordinate role to congregational song. If St. Paul has not proscribed the use of tongues-speaking in public worship (a big *if*, I grant), then surely there is a place for musical instruments as an analogous means of inarticulate though still intelligible worship. What Calvin, unlike Bucer, could not countenance was a place for instrumental

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<sup>89</sup> Philip Butin, "Constructive Iconoclasm: Trinitarian Concern in Reformed Worship," *Studia Liturgica* 19 (1989), 140.

<sup>90</sup> Auksi, "Simplicity and Silence," 361, 363.

<sup>91</sup> Calvin in fact concedes Paul's argument (in 14:26-33) that tongues, while not as enthusiastically commended as prophecy, do have a place in the church's worship.

music alone, where believers did not lend their voices with “understanding” in the praise of God.<sup>92</sup>

### 1.5.2 Critique of Calvin’s theological reading of materiality

With respect to Calvin’s theological reading of materiality, we encounter a rhetoric that remains consistently wary of the physical media of worship. In his exegesis of Psalm 9:11, Calvin remarks:

The design of God from the commencement in the appointment of the sacraments, and all the outward exercises of religion, was to consult the infirmity and weak capacity of his people. Accordingly, even at the present day, the true and proper use of them is, to assist us in seeking God spiritually in his heavenly glory, and not to occupy our minds with the things of this world, or keep them fixed in the vanities of the flesh.<sup>93</sup>

As God is “spiritual,” Calvin writes in the *Institutes*, so “only spiritual worship delights him.”<sup>94</sup> God “descends to us,” he adds in his sermons on Second Samuel, “not to stupefy or bind our senses in these low and feeble things ... but rather that we should be lifted on high to adore him spiritually, and that we should thereby rise above the world by our faith.”<sup>95</sup> And again: “It is certain that God would never be worshiped except agreeably to His nature; from which it follows, that His true worship was always spiritual, and therefore by no means comprised in external pomp.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Cf. R. Gerald Hobbs, “‘Quam Apposita Religioni Sit Musica’: Martin Bucer and Music in the Liturgy,” *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 6.2 (2004): 174. Bucer also conceded the use of Latin in the church’s liturgical song.

<sup>93</sup> *Comm. Ps. 9:11*. Cf. Eire, *War Against the Idols*, 200-202; Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 120-121. See also IV.19.15; 17.5; 17.10.

<sup>94</sup> II.7.1; cf. I.13.1.

<sup>95</sup> *Sermons on 2 Samuel*, 235-236. See also Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 169.

<sup>96</sup> *Comm. Exod. 25:8*, cited in Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding*, 137.

Calvin repeatedly warns against the abuse of external aids to worship, and rightly so.<sup>97</sup> False attachments to them jeopardize true worship. Yet one is frequently left with the impression that Calvin, much like Zwingli but unlike the New Testament, remains suspicious of external aids *as such*.<sup>98</sup> His ambiguous use of “ascent” language to describe the purpose of material aids often gives the impression that they are unfortunate requirements.<sup>99</sup> Since “we are surrounded by flesh and blood,” we require physical helps “to lift our spirits up to God.”<sup>100</sup> Our ignorance, sloth and fickle disposition make these needful.<sup>101</sup> The “prison house of our flesh” leads us to crave external aids, while the “infirmity of our flesh” or “the idle splendor of the flesh” accounts for Rome’s attraction to a “mass of ceremonies.”<sup>102</sup> When combined with a sharp turn towards “interiority,”<sup>103</sup> a curious fascination with the incorporeal nature of angels, and the frequent emphasis on the “crude,” “feeble,” “cold,” “lazy,” “vain” and “rude” nature of humanity,<sup>104</sup> one wonders whether the “weakness” that concerns Calvin pertains to sinful physical reality or to creaturely physical reality.<sup>105</sup> One wonders why the physical nature of the incarnate Christ and the work of the Spirit to make us partakers of Christ’s “flesh” carries so little

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<sup>97</sup> See especially II.10.8; 10.23, and III.20.30.

<sup>98</sup> Against a too quick dismissal of Calvin’s views of gestures, rites and ceremonies, however, see Zachman’s exposition in *Image and Word*, 355-367.

<sup>99</sup> On this account, see Witvliet’s excellent exposition in *Worship Seeking Understanding*, 133-140.

<sup>100</sup> *Sermons on 2 Samuel*, 241.

<sup>101</sup> IV.1.1.

<sup>102</sup> See his comments on Psalms 24:7 and 28:2, and John 4:23. The ambiguous meaning of the phrase “prison house of our body” is explored in chapter four.

<sup>103</sup> In *Comm. Jer. 31:4*, Calvin interprets mention of tambourines and dances as a reference to “holy joy” rather than actual musical instruments.

<sup>104</sup> See *Sermons on 2 Samuel*, 232-237, 309.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Garside, “Origins,” 9. See also McKee, “Context, Contours, Contents,” 167-168; and Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 3.



theological weight in Calvin's formulation of public worship.<sup>106</sup> The intention of chapter four in the dissertation is to attempt to make sense of the issues raised in this section.

### 1.5.3 Comment on Calvin's historical and pastoral context

With respect to his historical and pastoral context, it will not do to charge Calvin with failing to think of things which, under the circumstances of his social location, we believe he *should* have thought. His pastoral concerns are acute and the worry over relapses into idolatrous worship cannot be treated lightly.<sup>107</sup> Why he parts ways with Luther, Bucer or Zwingli in his vision of liturgical music, however, cannot be accounted for on exegetical terms alone. Where Luther extolled the psychological tonic of music, Calvin, like Augustine and Zwingli, downstream from Plato, fretted over its ability to distort the heart, despite his belief that Israel had benefited from music's affective powers.<sup>108</sup> Where Luther extolled both *musica naturalis* and *musica artificialis*, Calvin could only make room for *musica humana* in public worship. Where, in this vein, Luther engages the medieval cosmological outlook on music, Calvin remains silent on it.<sup>109</sup> With Zwingli, Calvin stressed the importance of rational understanding in the people's praise. Unlike the Zurich pastor, however, who insisted that "the piety of mind is the most pleasing

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<sup>106</sup> Cf. Elsie Anne McKee, "Reformed Worship in the Sixteenth Century," in *Christian Worship in Reformed Church Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 20.

<sup>107</sup> Clive, "The Calvinist Attitude to Music," 94, 98: "Calvin's reaction against the Catholic service and mass, in which music played so predominant and all-pervading a part, was too great to permit any compromise.... [Rome's abuses] must have confirmed Calvin in his opinion that a clean sweep was the best solution." While we may not be able to go as far as that, contextual pressures surely played their role in Calvin's liturgical prescriptions.

<sup>108</sup> Appealing to Plato, Calvin warns against the ways in which music might inflame "disordered delights" in use. Cited in *Pastoral Piety*, 95,

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Begbie, *Music, Modernity and God*, 27ff. Luther also grounds his musical propositions in a doctrine of creation, which is something Calvin fails to do. See *Luther's Works 53: Liturgy and Hymns* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1965), 321-324. See also Friedhelm Krummacher, "Luthers musikbegriff und die Kirchenmusik Bachs" *Luther* 56.3 (1985): 136-151

worship” and that St. Paul’s meaning in Colossians argued for a voice-less singing of the heart, Calvin believed that the mind, heart and voice *could* sing to God in one accord.<sup>110</sup>

Moreover, while Bucer’s typological reading of Israel’s worship made room for instruments in Christian worship, Calvin’s reading excluded them altogether.<sup>111</sup> Where Bucer, appealing to the principle of simplicity, saw how they might provoke the believer to a “more fulsome praise of God,” Calvin, likewise appealing to the need for simplicity, saw them as real distractions.<sup>112</sup> His commendation of “grave” and “restrained” singing appears to be at odds, we might add, to the kind of singing which the Psalter itself commends—with its repeated exhortation to shout, burst, revel, clap, cry, exult and dance unto the Lord. And the fact that angels in heaven repeatedly blow trumpets fails to factor in Calvin’s understanding of the eschatological dimension of public worship.<sup>113</sup> This is in contrast, on the one hand, to Bucer who believed that instrumental praise anticipated “the blessed festivities of the life to come”<sup>114</sup> and, on the other, to Luther who believed that the music of heaven directly influenced the music of the church.<sup>115</sup> Finally, while “experience” compels him to include song as a stimulant to praise and a medicine for cold affections, it is curious that Calvin also appeals to “experience” to exclude musical

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. Charles Garside, Jr., *Zwingli and the Arts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 37, 45, 53.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Hobbs, “‘Quam Apposita Religioni Sit Musica’,” 165, 169, 175-176. Key textual loci for Bucer include Col. 3, Eph. 5, Deut. 6 and the narratives of king David and the prophet Elisha. Bucer also made space for hymns, not just psalms, so long as they were “in conformity with Scripture.”

<sup>112</sup> Hobbs, “‘Quam Apposita Religioni Sit Musica’,” 170, 176-177. For Bucer, the prevailing dictum was *abusus non tollit usum*.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. *Pastoral Piety*, 94-97. See also *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:52; *Comm.* 1 Thess. 4:16; *Comm.* Matt. 24:31.

<sup>114</sup> Hobbs, “‘Quam Apposita Religioni Sit Musica’,” 170. On the positive role that heaven plays in Calvin’s estimation of churchly music, see Clive, “The Calvinist Attitude to Music,” 83-84.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Andreas Loewe, “‘Musica est Optimum’: Martin Luther’s Theory of Music” on *academia.edu* (*Melbourne College of Divinity*) website, 33-38; accessed on 17 August, 2012. Loewe comments: “The music of heaven was not restricted to the music of the angels in heaven, that from time to time ... could be heard on earth, providing an occasional musical bridge between heaven and earth. Rather, whenever human beings sang the praises of God, they aligned their voices with those of heaven, and so the music of heaven could resound on earth, Luther held” (41).

instruments in the public assembly.<sup>116</sup> Many of the issues highlighted here will be examined at length in chapters two and three of the dissertation.

## 1.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have looked at Calvin's view of instrumental music in worship, noting patterns of thought and points of contact with his contemporaries. While fellow Reformers invariably appealed to common biblical texts in their proposals for the church's worship, the actual musical shape of that worship varied significantly from case to case, hinging, as it did, on a range of theological priorities, exegetical habits and pastoral circumstances. Disagreements existed among them over what constituted a "childish" practice of Israel's worship and what could be fittingly translated into Christian worship. At stake for many of them was the manner in which materiality could mediate the presence of God and the way in which the arts might serve the purposes of "acceptable" worship. As this chapter has attempted to show, Calvin's argument against musical instruments cannot be attributed solely to his appeal to the notion of "figures and shadows." Equally important, as he understood it, was the need for the church's worship to be "spiritual," "simple" and "articulate." A common feature of all these emphases, we

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<sup>116</sup> Unless prayers "spring from deep feeling of the heart," Calvin writes in the *Institutes* (III.20.31), neither voice nor song has any benefit before God. In his "Articles" he notes that the only way to compute the profit which would arise from the kind of congregational singing which he witnessed in Strasbourg is to experience it. And in the *Epistle to the Reader*, Calvin writes: "And in truth we know from experience that song has great force and vigor to arouse and inflame people's hearts to invoke and praise God with a more vehement and ardent zeal." Cf. *Pastoral Piety*, 94. Negatively, with respect to Job 21:21, Calvin adds: "Some people can enjoy themselves without losing their self-control but here Job tells us that the wicked turn to abuse the gifts and graces of God.... The flute and tabor and similar things are not blameworthy in themselves, but only their abuse by men, who most commonly turn them to bad ends." As cited in Percy A. Scholes, *The Puritans and Music in England and New England: A contribution to the cultural history of the two* (London: Oxford, 1934), 339.

remarked, was a sense that the material aspect of musical instruments was somehow hazardous to the church's worship.

While it is clear from our present investigation that the material aspect of public worship provokes in Calvin certain anxieties and that his views on musical instruments are more complex than scholars might initially imply, it also appears that our investigation has confronted us with a host of questions which demand further inquiry. Because the primary interest of this dissertation is on Calvin's ideas about materiality in public worship, the following four chapters will be devoted to discerning the broader theological and exegetical patterns of thought in Calvin related to the first three emphases identified in this chapter. With each of his emphases I shall explore a specific dimension of his theology of materiality: respectively, his thoughts on the material creation and the material symbols of worship (chapters 2 and 3: "figures and shadows"), the resurrected body of Christ (chapter 4: "spiritual"), the material shape of public worship (chapter 5: "simple"). As I show in the following chapters, though a more narrowly patrological argument dominates Calvin's thinking on the material character of musical instruments, a more distinctly trinitarian pattern of thought becomes conspicuous with respect to these particular theological loci. It is to this possibility that we now turn, first, in a study of Calvin's thinking of "shadowy" worship as it relates to the material creation.

# CHAPTER TWO

## “Shadows: Part I”

“All creatures are aflame with the present glory of the Lord.” – **Jürgen Moltmann**<sup>1</sup>

“[God gives witness to himself in creation as in an] “immense fresco which unfolds itself across all of time.” – **Léon Wencelius**<sup>2</sup>

“We *see*, indeed, the world with our eyes, we *tread* the earth with our feet, we *touch* innumerable kinds of God’s works with our hands, we *inhale* a sweet and pleasant fragrance from herbs and flowers, we enjoy boundless benefits; but in those very things of which we attain some knowledge, there dwells such an immensity of divine power, goodness, and wisdom, as absorbs all our senses.” – **John Calvin**<sup>3</sup>

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

As we have seen in the previous chapter, one key element of Calvin’s argument against musical instruments is that they belong to the “shadowy” dispensation of the church and must not therefore be brought forward into the “clear light” of New Testament worship. As Calvin explained, while God was pleased to use such material aids, they were made available to the church because “the dullness of men is so great, that they do not perceive the presence of God unless they are put in mind by external signs.”<sup>4</sup> To inquire into the nature of “shadowy” worship, as I do in the following two chapters, is to inquire, among things, after the question of continuity. For the biblical writers, the advent of Christ and the Spirit undoubtedly necessitated liturgical changes: certain practices would need to be

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<sup>1</sup> Moltmann, *The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life* (London: SCM, 1997), 134.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Dyrness, *Reformed Theology and Visual Culture*, 73.

<sup>3</sup> *Comm. Gen.*, “The Argument,” emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup> *Comm. Ps. 99:7*. Cf. *Comm. John 4:23*; IV.15.14; *Sermons on 2 Samuel*, 413.

discontinued, while other practices would more certainly be continued but perhaps in different manner. In our present two-part investigation, the question of continuity will focus on the relationship between the material creation and the public worship of the church. At stake here is 1) the relative continuity between the “work” of the material creation in general and the “work” of the material creation in a liturgical context; and 2) the purpose of material symbols in old and new covenantal worship. At stake, fundamentally, is the *telos* of materiality in the doxological purposes of God for the church.

In this chapter I examine, first, pivotal aspects of Calvin’s theology of the material creation, and, second, his understanding of material symbols. With the former, I argue that Calvin’s commentary involves a fulsome, rather than a pessimistic, regard for the material creation. Here we discover creation functioning as a context for praise, as enacting praise, as summoning praise, and as subsisting to the extent that right praise is lifted up to the Creator by the human creature. With the latter, I maintain that a careful and commendable grammar governs Calvin’s thinking about the material symbols of public worship. With regard to both, I observe a narrowly patrological line of thought, largely devoid of explicit discussion of the inter-related roles of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, along with a consistent anxiety that the materiality inherent to the external aids to worship is somehow hazardous to the church. With regard to both, again, I suggest that discontinuity figures largely. Following an exposition of Calvin’s commentary in this chapter, in chapter three I offer a critical and constructive response.

The structure of this chapter is twofold: first, I offer an extensive exposition of Calvin's observations on the material creation; and second, I survey Calvin's remarks on the material symbols in the public worship of Israel and the apostolic church.

## **2.2 EXPOSITION OF CALVIN (I)**

### **The "work" of the material creation**

In *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, Nicholas Wolterstorff writes, "If ever there was a theologian who saw the universe sacramentally it was Calvin. For him, reality was drenched with sacrality.... Calvin's reforms meant a radical turn towards the world. But for him ... the world to which one turns is a sacrament of God."<sup>5</sup> While this comment surprises and perhaps strains credulity, a close look at Calvin's language about creation appears at some level to bear out Wolterstorff's judgment. In "The Argument" of his Genesis commentary, Calvin writes that God "gives signs of his presence" everywhere in creation. For those who rightly wish to know God, he argues, "let the world become our school." In fact, to ignore the witness of God in creation is to be "deaf and insensible to testimonies so illustrious."<sup>6</sup> Even without a human tongue, the created realm functions as an eloquent herald of the glory of God.<sup>7</sup> The glory of God, then, not only shines in heaven and on earth, bearing witness to our eyes, it also "resounds" in them, testifying thereby to the ears. Creation fulfills this doxological role, for Calvin, by operating according to the good purposes of God, and it is in this sense, we might say, that the creation is *for* something, caught up in the work of the triune God *in* the world and *on behalf of* the world and the church.

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<sup>5</sup> Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace: The Kuyper Lectures for 1981 Delivered at the Free University of Amsterdam* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 160.

<sup>6</sup> *Comm. Gen.*, "The Argument."

<sup>7</sup> *Comm. Gen.*, "The Argument."

Working with a set of metaphors adapted from Diana Butler's categories, I argue that, for Calvin, creation performs five roles: epiphanic (revealing the invisible God), pedagogical ("schooling" the church), aesthetic (awakening desire through beauty), admonitory (rebuking ingratitude and pride) and doxological (enacting and summoning the praise of God).<sup>8</sup> I take each in turn, with the hope that the reader will be able to discern a kind of grammar in Calvin's theology: the work creation performs, the manner in which creation performs it, and the ends to which creation exists in relation to animate and inanimate creatures, on the one hand, and to God on the other. This will constitute a first pass in our investigation of Calvin's ktisiology, followed by a second pass in our examination of the role that Calvin believes the material creation performs in the external symbols that accompanied the church's public worship.

### ***2.2.1 Epiphanic: revealing the invisible God***

In a preface to his Genesis commentary, Calvin writes, "We know God, who is himself invisible, only through his works.... This is the reason why the Lord, that he may invite us to the knowledge of himself, places the fabric of heaven and earth before our eyes, rendering himself, in a certain manner, manifest in them."<sup>9</sup> Because God's eternal and infinite existence are inaccessible to human beings, and to seek to penetrate the essence of God would plunge the mind into a labyrinth from which it could not hope to escape, Calvin encourages the reader to accept the more "modest" task of learning about God

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Diana Butler, "God's Visible Glory: The Beauty of Nature in the Thought of John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards," *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990): 13-26.

<sup>9</sup> *Comm. Gen.*, "The Argument."



through “the guidance and instruction of his own works.”<sup>10</sup> God “clothes himself” with the image of the world. Before the fall, Calvin writes, “the state of the world was a most fair and delightful mirror of the divine favor and paternal indulgence towards man.”<sup>11</sup> And again: “God has exhibited this world as a mirror to men, that by beholding it they may acknowledge his majesty, so that it is a lively image of invisible things, as Paul explains at great length in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.”<sup>12</sup> In his comment on Isaiah 40:26, Calvin puts the matter incisively: “By nature men are formed in such a manner as to make it evident that they were born to contemplate the heavens, and thus to learn their Author.”<sup>13</sup> On Hebrews 11:3, he states:

Correctly then is this world called the mirror of divinity; not that there is sufficient clearness for man to gain a full knowledge of God, by looking at the world, but ... the faithful, to whom he has given eyes, see sparks of his glory, as it were, glittering in every created thing. The world was no doubt made, that it might be the theater of divine glory.<sup>14</sup>

Not only is the universe a mirror of God’s powers, then, it is also a “theater” or “spectacle” of God’s glory.<sup>15</sup> This theater serves as a “bare and simple testimony” to God, so that wherever the faithful cast their eyes, “all things they meet are works of God.”<sup>16</sup> On Psalm 104:31, Calvin observes, “It is no small honor that God for our sake has so

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 3:17.

<sup>12</sup> *Comm.* Isa. 40:21. He makes a similar comment in his first sermon on the song of Hezekiah (*CO* 35:535): human beings “have both high and low so many signs of his presence and paternal care for us that if we are not exceedingly stupid and totally lacking in sense and reason, we must see it. Because the entire world is like a lively image in which God displays his power and eminence....” Cited in Engel, *John Calvin’s Perspectival Anthropology*, 40.

<sup>13</sup> *Comm.* Isa. 40:26.

<sup>14</sup> *Comm.* Heb. 11:3.

<sup>15</sup> I.5.5.

<sup>16</sup> *Institutes* I.5.15; I.14.20.

magnificently adorned the world, in order that we may not only be spectators of this beautiful theater, but also enjoy the multiplied abundance and variety of good things which are presented to us in it.”<sup>17</sup> Added to the imagery of mirror and theater language is the language of painting. He writes in the *Institutes*:

We must therefore admit in God’s individual works—but especially in them as a whole—that God’s powers are actually represented as in a painting. Thereby the whole of mankind is invited and attracted to recognition of him, and from this to true and complete happiness. Now those powers appear most clearly in his works.<sup>18</sup>

What divine “powers” exactly are humans able to discern in creation?<sup>19</sup> Calvin consistently returns to five: wisdom, justice, majesty, order and goodness. In the heavens, Calvin writes, are displayed the “wisdom and power” of God.<sup>20</sup> God’s “inestimable wisdom, power, justice, goodness” are everywhere seen by all creatures.<sup>21</sup> As architect of the world, God “shows how admirable is His power, His wisdom, His goodness, and especially His tender solicitude for the human race.”<sup>22</sup> In the *Institutes*, Calvin adds, “We see that no long or toilsome proof is needed to elicit evidences that serve to illuminate and affirm the divine majesty; since from the few we have sampled at random, whithersoever you turn, it is clear that they are so very manifest and obvious that they can easily be observed with the eyes and point out with the finger.”<sup>23</sup> As Susan Schreiner has rightly pointed out, in *The Theater of His Glory*, the importance of “order” in the works

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<sup>17</sup> *Comm. Ps* 104:31.

<sup>18</sup> I.5.10.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. I.14.20. Also, *Comm. Ps.* 148:7, “wherever we turn our eyes we meet with evidences of the power of God.”

<sup>20</sup> *Comm. Ps.* 19:1; 8:1.

<sup>21</sup> I.14.21.

<sup>22</sup> *Comm. Gen.*, “The Argument.” See also, I.14.22; *Comm. Ps.* 8:1; *Comm. Ps.* 148:7; *Comm. Isa.* 40:12.

<sup>23</sup> I.5.9.

of God appears as a constant concern in Calvin's writings.<sup>24</sup> Calvin stresses, for example, that God the Artificer has "stationed, arranged, and fitted together the starry host of heaven in such wonderful order that nothing more beautiful in appearance can be imagined."<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps more than order, however, the idea of God's goodness governs Calvin's thinking on creation.<sup>26</sup> God's paternal solicitude, he writes, was discernable in the "very order of creation."<sup>27</sup> In the provision of a garden to Adam and Eve, God can be seen as "the Artificer, the Architect, the bountiful Father of a family, who has omitted nothing essential to the perfection of his edifice."<sup>28</sup> God brings forth "grass" (Gen. 1:9) before he creates sun and moon (i.e., the lights) in order "that we might learn to refer all things to him."<sup>29</sup> "Moses commemorates the unbounded goodness of God in causing the sun and moon not only to enlighten us, but to afford us various other advantages for the daily use of life."<sup>30</sup> About Genesis 3:17, Calvin writes, "Only, lest sadness and horror should overwhelm us, the Lord sprinkles everywhere the tokens of his goodness."<sup>31</sup> Even in judgment of Adam and Eve, God "acts rather as a physician than as a judge."<sup>32</sup> Calvin employs especially intimate language, when in a comment on Psalm 147:9, he notes that God shows himself to be a "nurse and a father" in his care for the animal kingdom, "the

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<sup>24</sup> Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory*, 22: the order of the cosmos and society "revealed to Calvin not a hierarchy but the stability, regularity, and continuity of creation."

<sup>25</sup> I.14.22; I.5.2.

<sup>26</sup> In *Comm.* Psalm 104:10, Calvin remarks that God's provision for the wilderness and for the arable fields "furnish manifest tokens of the Divine goodness."

<sup>27</sup> I.14.22.

<sup>28</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 2:2. The language of mirror appears again in the *Institutes* I.5.1.

<sup>29</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 1:9.

<sup>30</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 1:14.

<sup>31</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 3:17.

<sup>32</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 3:14.

brute creation.”<sup>33</sup> In short: God “has so wonderfully adorned heaven and earth with as unlimited abundance, variety, and beauty of all things as could possibly be, quite like a spacious and splendid house, provided and filled with the most exquisite and at the same time most abundant furnishings.”<sup>34</sup>

In sum, although God is invisible, for Calvin, God’s glory is “conspicuous enough” to the human creature. The invisibility of God, we might say, is not strictly a problem for Calvin, either ontologically or epistemologically. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who exists above the highest heavens, Calvin consistently seems to argue, can still be known through sensory means. The so-called transcendent otherness of God does not imply un-knowability.<sup>35</sup> Though the essence of God remains un-penetrable to contingent creatures, and while salvific knowledge of God comes only by way of the spectacles of Scripture (the other “Book”) and the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit, who together show us Christ, the perfect image of the Father,<sup>36</sup> Calvin maintains that “this does not prevent us from applying our senses to the consideration of heaven and earth, that we may thence seek confirmation in the true knowledge of God.”<sup>37</sup> As he explains:

in respect of his essence, God undoubtedly dwells in light that is inaccessible; but as he irradiates the whole world by his splendor, this is the garment in which He, who is hidden in himself, appears in a manner visible to us.... That we may enjoy the sight of him, he must come forth to view with his clothing; that is to say, we must cast our eyes upon the very beautiful fabric of the world in which he wishes

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<sup>33</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 147:9. See also his comments on Gen. 3:14, 19.

<sup>34</sup> I.14.20.

<sup>35</sup> *Contra Eire, War Against the Idols.*

<sup>36</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 19:7, “While the heavens bear witness concerning God, their testimony does not lead men so far as that thereby they learn truly to fear him, and acquire a well-grounded knowledge of him; it serves only to render them inexcusable.”

<sup>37</sup> *Comm.* Gen., “The Argument.”

to be seen by us, and not be too curious and rash in searching into his secret essence.”<sup>38</sup>

The proper aim of humans, then, is not to seek God “above the clouds” but “in the clouds,” not beyond creation but through creation. To seek God in this way yields a knowledge of God which, to the point, is mediated *by* creation, not despite creation, and it is to be regarded not simply as a knowledge about God but also as a communication of God himself to human creatures. As Calvin reasons in the first book of the *Institutes*, the right way to seek God “is not for us to attempt with bold curiosity to penetrate to the investigation of his essence, which we ought more to adore than meticulously to search out, but for us to contemplate him in his works whereby he renders himself near and familiar to us, and in some manner communicates himself [*quibus se propinquum nobis familiaremque reddit ac quodammodo communicat*].”<sup>39</sup> Anticipating our argument below, for Calvin such an epistemological experience cannot be grounded in the human creature itself but rather in Christ. “For Christ is that image,” he writes in his prologue to the Genesis commentary, “in which God presents to our view, not only his heart, but also his hands and his feet. I give the name of his heart to that secret love with which he embraces us in Christ: by his hands and feet I understand those works of his which are displayed before our eyes.”<sup>40</sup> Such an experience is possible for human creatures only because of the Holy Spirit who capacitates them to see and to love the work of God in creation.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 104:1.

<sup>39</sup> I.5.9.

<sup>40</sup> *Comm.* Gen., “The Argument.”

<sup>41</sup> Cf. I.5.13; I.7.4.

### ***2.2.2 Aesthetic: awakening desire through beauty***

Calvin repeatedly argues that human beings are not only to see the glory of God in creation but also to enjoy the creation. As he puts it, God would not have us be “mere witnesses” of creation “but to enjoy all the riches” which are there exhibited.<sup>42</sup> “For the Lord manifests himself by his powers, the force of which we feel within ourselves and the benefits of which we enjoy.”<sup>43</sup> And again, “let us not be ashamed to take pious delight in the works of God open and manifest in this most beautiful theater.”<sup>44</sup> Or, as elsewhere, “It is no small honor that God for our sake has so magnificently adorned the world, in order that we may not only be spectators of this beautiful theater, but also enjoy the multiplied abundance and variety of good things which are presented to us in it.”<sup>45</sup>

We take joy in creation, Calvin insists significantly, because God himself takes joy in creation. In his comment on Genesis 1:4, Calvin writes, “Here God is introduced by Moses as surveying his work, that he might take pleasure in it.”<sup>46</sup> Although creation is marred by sin, God continues to “take joy in his works.”<sup>47</sup> About Isaiah 44:24, Calvin states that God “has measured out at his pleasure the dimensions of heaven and earth.” More strongly even, “there is nothing in heaven or in earth [in their ordered condition]

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<sup>42</sup> *Comm. Gen.*, “The Argument.”

<sup>43</sup> I.5.9.

<sup>44</sup> I.14.20.

<sup>45</sup> *Comm. Ps.* 104:31.

<sup>46</sup> *Comm. Gen.* 1:4. On the possibilities for translation of Genesis 1:2, see in Robert L. Hubbard, “The Spirit and Creation,” 71-91, and Richard E. Averbeck, “Breath, wind, spirit and the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament,” 25-37, in *Presence, Power and Promise: The Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament*, eds. David G. Firth and Paul D. Wegner (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2011). See also R. E. Averbeck, “Holy Spirit in the Hebrew Bible and Its Connections to the New Testament,” in *Who’s Afraid of the Holy Spirit?*, eds. M. J. Sawyer and D. B. Wallace (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2005), 24-25: “there is no reason *ruakh* in Gen 1:2 cannot be a reflection of the power of God present and ready to work through ‘wind’ ... (cf. Gen. 8:1 and Exod 14:21-22 and 15:8-10) as well as the work of the ‘Spirit’ of God in shaping the creation through pronouncements (Gen 1:3ff), both at the same time...”

<sup>47</sup> *Comm. Ps.* 104:31.

that does not depend on his will and pleasure.”<sup>48</sup> Because our pleasure in creation is grounded in God’s own pleasure, it is not a passive but an active engagement of the sensory-creaturely riches which Calvin commends to the reader. Put negatively, “we have never been forbidden to laugh, or to be filled, or to join new possessions to old or ancestral ones, or to delight in musical harmony, or to drink wine.”<sup>49</sup> This is Christian freedom, Calvin argues. In an extended reflection on Psalm 104:15, he writes, “God not only provides for men’s necessity, and bestows upon them as much as is sufficient for the ordinary purposes of life, but ... in his goodness he deals still more bountifully with them by cheering their hearts with wine and oil.” Wine exists on earth, that is, on account of “God’s superabundant liberality.” The provision of bread commends to us “the goodness of God in his tenderly and abundantly nourishing men as a kind-hearted father does his children.” Consider what manner of God we have, Calvin reminds the reader, who provides his children not only with necessities and ordinary things but also with “delicacies” and “dainties.” Even more positively, “it is lawful to use wine not only in cases of necessity, but also thereby to make us merry.”<sup>50</sup>

For Calvin, as the above remarks make clear, this experience of creation is an intensively sensory one. “We *see*, indeed, the world with our eyes, we *tread* the earth with our feet, we *touch* innumerable kinds of God’s works with our hands, we *inhale* a sweet and pleasant fragrance from herbs and flowers, we enjoy boundless benefits; but in those very things of which we attain some knowledge, there dwells such an immensity of divine

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<sup>48</sup> *Comm.* Isa. 44:24.

<sup>49</sup> III.19.9.

<sup>50</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 104:15.

power, goodness, and wisdom, as absorbs all our senses.”<sup>51</sup> To rightly enjoy creation in this way, Calvin stresses, requires careful attention; to fail in this attentive work, conversely, is to fail to glorify the author of creation. The faithful ought never to run over the good things in creation “with a fleeting glance; but we should ponder them at length, turn them over in our minds seriously and faithfully, and recollect them repeatedly.”<sup>52</sup> What results from such reflection? A recognition that, when properly considered under the governorship of the Creator, creation is offered to humanity for both “useful” and “non-useful” purposes, or, as it were, for socio-biological needs *and* for aesthetic needs. As he summarizes a rightly ordered life in III.9.2 of the *Institutes*:

Has the Lord clothed the flowers with the great beauty that greets our eyes, the sweetness of smell that is wafted upon our nostrils, and yet will it be unlawful for our eyes to be affected by that beauty, or our sense of smell by the sweetness of that odor? What? Did he not so distinguish colors as to make some more lovely than others? What? Did he not endow gold and silver, ivory and marble, with a loveliness that renders them more precious than other metals or stones? Did he not, in short, render many things attractive to us, apart from their necessary use?

It is important here to stress what may become less obvious later on in the dissertation: Calvin does in fact believe that it is possible to be rightly related to the material creation, both to enjoy it as such (“in the raw,” as it were) and to enjoy what humans make of it (for example, bread, wine, oil, music). While he acknowledges the possibility for human perversion of creation, this does not diminish his consistent enthusiasm for the material-aesthetic delights with which God has endowed humanity. What else results from such a perspective? For Calvin, to enjoy the creation in this way generates “holy rejoicing” in

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<sup>51</sup> *Comm. Gen.*, “The Argument,” emphasis added.

<sup>52</sup> I.14.21.



this life, equipping the faithful on earth with true happiness,<sup>53</sup> while also enticing the faithful with a desire for heaven. As he writes in his comment on First Timothy 4:8, “For in this world God blesses us in such a way as to give us a mere foretaste of his kindness, and by that taste to entice us to desire heavenly blessings with which we may be satisfied.”<sup>54</sup>

What seems to hold all these ideas together in Calvin is a certain notion of beauty. Two characteristics of beauty recur in Calvin’s application of the term. One characteristic points to a sensuous and desirable quality in creation. For instance, in Calvin’s comment on Genesis 2:8, he writes, “God, then, had planted Paradise in a place which he had especially embellished with every variety of delights, with abounding fruits, and with all other most excellent gifts. For this reason it is called a garden, on account of the elegance of its situation, and the beauty of its form.”<sup>55</sup> Additionally, “not only was there an abundant supply of food, but with it was added sweetness for the gratification of the palate, and beauty to feast the eyes.” On God’s provision of earthly benefits, he writes, “If we ponder to what end God created food, we shall find that he meant not only to provide for necessity but also for delight and good cheer. Thus the purpose of clothing, apart from necessity, was comeliness and decency. In grasses, trees, and fruits, apart from their various uses, there is beauty of appearance and pleasantness of odor.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See *Comm.* Ps. 32:11.

<sup>54</sup> *Comm.* 1 Tim. 4:8.

<sup>55</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 2:8.

<sup>56</sup> III.9.2.

A more habitual use of the term is intended to draw attention to the harmonious arrangement of creation, as a whole, in all its parts, and between the parts. When God pronounces his final benediction on the original creation, this is done, Calvin explains, so “that we may know that there is in the symmetry of God’s works the highest perfection, to which nothing can be added.”<sup>57</sup> A “beautiful arrangement and wonderful variety” characterize the heavenly bodies and serve thereby as a sign of divine providence. This is true of their form and, as Calvin notes in his comment on Psalm 19:1, of their function as markers of time.<sup>58</sup> On Psalm 104, he notes how the sea is beautifully arranged by God, how the distinction between mountains and valleys “contributes to the beauty of the earth,” and how “there is nothing in the world confused—that, so far from this, the vast variety of things mixed together in it are arranged with the greatest wisdom, so as to render it impossible for any thing to be added, abstracted, or improved.”<sup>59</sup> Everything fits; everything has its place; and all things are rightly related to each other. About Isaiah 40:26, he writes:

all who shall observe, that amidst the vast number and variety of the stars, so regular an order and course is so well maintained, will be constrained to make this acknowledgement. For it is not by chance that each of the stars has had its place assigned to it, nor is it at random that they advance uniformly with so great rapidity, and amidst numerous windings move straight forwards, so that they do not deviate a hairbreadth from the path which God has marked out for them. Thus does their wonderful arrangement show that God is the Author and worker, so that men cannot open their eyes without being constrained to behold the majesty of God in his works.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 1:31.

<sup>58</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 19:1.

<sup>59</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 104:5.

<sup>60</sup> *Comm.* Isa. 40:26.

While creation, in some fashion, makes possible the knowledge of God, more importantly, for Calvin, creation also entails the worship of God, when it fulfills the purpose for which it has been made. “For does not the sun by his light, and heat, and other marvelous effects, praise his Maker?” Calvin asks, with respect to Psalm 148:3. He continues: “The stars when they run their course, and at once adorn the heavens and give light to the earth, do they not sound the praises of God?”<sup>61</sup> With respect to humanity, Calvin maintains that the “affluence, sweetness, variety and beauty” of creation can train men and women to choose the good and to reject the evil and thereby to honor the Creator. It is to this pedagogical role that we now turn.<sup>62</sup>

### ***2.2.3 Pedagogical: schooling the church***

A third work which creation performs is to “school” humanity. “The contemplation of heaven and earth,” Calvin writes, “is the very school of God’s children.”<sup>63</sup> And again: “let the world become our school if we desire rightly to know God.”<sup>64</sup> Calvin makes the most of this pedagogical language throughout his psalms commentaries. The heavens, he says, are “preaching the glory of God like a teacher in a seminary of learning.”<sup>65</sup> “Astronomy may justly be called the alphabet of theology,” he adds, to the extent that stars “contribute much towards exciting in the hearts of men a high reverence for God.”<sup>66</sup> “Even irrational creatures,” Calvin comments on Isaiah 1:3, “give instruction.” Under the tuition of

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<sup>61</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 148:3.

<sup>62</sup> See his comments on Gen. 2:8. Cf. his comments on the beauty of the Jerusalem temple in Ps. 96:9.

<sup>63</sup> I.14.20; cf I.5.1-12; *Sermon on Job* 9:7-15.

<sup>64</sup> *Comm.* Gen., “The Argument.”

<sup>65</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 19:4.

<sup>66</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 148:3.

creation, he adds, “a sufficient amount of knowledge” is gained.<sup>67</sup> “Under their tuition,” the heavens teach all people without distinction and all receive profit “at the mouth of the same teacher.”<sup>68</sup> All people may “read” about the glory of God in the heavens—“with the greatest ease,” even!<sup>69</sup> Yet while an immediate goal of creation’s instruction is to show how God has provided all things that they may be “useful and salutary” to humanity, the larger goal is to foster the twin virtues of obedience and love in the human creature.<sup>70</sup>

Explaining the purpose of Genesis, Calvin writes, “all things were ordained for the use of man, that he, being under deeper obligation, might devote and dedicate himself entirely to obedience towards God.”<sup>71</sup> More specifically, God places the sun and the moon in their respective places “to teach us that all creatures are subject to his will, and execute what he enjoins upon them.”<sup>72</sup> On Genesis 3:1, Calvin writes, “The true rule of obedience is, that we being content with a bare command, should persuade ourselves that whatever he enjoins is just and right.”<sup>73</sup> And again: “the principal point of wisdom is a well-regulated sobriety in obedience to God.”<sup>74</sup> But more than simple obedience, the invitation of the Creator to the creature is heartfelt trust in a benevolent Father. Calvin remarks, “invited by the great sweetness of his beneficence and goodness, let us study to love and serve him with all our heart.”<sup>75</sup> Such a love inspires not just our present life but our future one too. “Knowledge of this sort, then, ought not only to arouse us to the worship of God but

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<sup>67</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 19:2.

<sup>68</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 19:3.

<sup>69</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 19:4.

<sup>70</sup> I.14.22.

<sup>71</sup> *Comm.* Gen., “The Argument.”

<sup>72</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 1:14. The “lucid bodies,” he writes, obey the command of God.

<sup>73</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 3:1.

<sup>74</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 3:5.

<sup>75</sup> I.14.22.

also to awaken and encourage us to the hope of the future life.”<sup>76</sup> All of this, of course, can be seen as an inverse to the admonitory role of creation.

#### ***2.2.4 Admonitory: chiding ingratitude and pride***

Creation’s disciplinary work, for Calvin, is twofold: to expose our ingratitude to God and to unmask human pride before God. We ought not, he argues in the *Institutes*, “pass over in ungrateful thoughtlessness or forgetfulness those conspicuous powers which God shows forth in his creatures.”<sup>77</sup> More forcefully:

How great ingratitude would it be now to doubt whether this most gracious Father has us in his care, who we see was concerned for us even before we were born! How impious would it be to tremble for fear that his kindness might at any time fail us in our need, when we see that it was shown, with the greatest abundance of every good things, when we were yet unborn! Besides, from Moses we hear that, through His liberality, all things on earth are subject to us. It is certain that He did not do this to mock us with the empty title to a gift. Therefore nothing that is needful for our welfare will ever be lacking to us.<sup>78</sup>

In a comment on Genesis 2:9, he writes, “And certainly it was shameful ingratitude, that he could not rest in a state so happy and desirable.”<sup>79</sup> In a summary statement of sorts on the first chapter of Genesis, he says:

God certainly did not intend that man should be slenderly and sparingly sustained; but rather, by these words, he promises a liberal abundance, which should leave nothing wanting to a sweet and pleasant life. For Moses relates how beneficent

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<sup>76</sup> I.5.10.

<sup>77</sup> I.14.21.

<sup>78</sup> I.14.22. See also his comments in *Comm.* Ps. 19:1; *Comm.* 95:1; *Comm.* 100:3-5; *Comm.* 104; *Comm.* Gen. 1:28; 2:9; 1 *Comm.* Cor. 15:36; *Comm.* Rom. 8:22.

<sup>79</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 2:9.

the Lord had been to them, in bestowing on them all things which they could desire, that their ingratitude might have the less excuse.<sup>80</sup>

With regard to humanity's prideful proclivities, Calvin writes in his "Argument" for Genesis: "They who will not deign to behold him thus magnificently arrayed in the incomparable vesture of the heavens and the earth, afterwards suffer the just punishment of their proud contempt in their own ravings."<sup>81</sup> In a note on Isaiah 40:21, he adds, "And indeed men sin more through insolence and pride than through ignorance; for they despise God who manifests himself openly and speaks plainly, and their attention is occupied with creatures, and with the most trifling matters."<sup>82</sup> Human beings repeatedly substitute nature for God (I.5.4), defraud God of his right praise (I.5.5), succumb to the "evil imaginings of our flesh" (I.5.11), and fall into a mental labyrinth wherein all sorts of ignorant, foolish, and idolatrous fictions are spawned (I.5.12),<sup>83</sup> when a proper consideration of heaven and earth should have the very opposite effect. As Calvin remarks in a commentary on Psalm 8:7-9: "that by reflecting upon these our hearts may be inflamed with love to God, that we may be stirred up to the practice of godliness, and that we may not suffer ourselves to become slothful and remiss in celebrating his praises."<sup>84</sup>

Finally, in his exposition on providence in the *Institutes*, Calvin writes, "For at the same time as we have enjoyed a slight taste of the divine from contemplation of the universe, having neglected the true God, we raise up in his stead dreams and specters of our own

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<sup>80</sup> *Comm. Gen.* 1:28.

<sup>81</sup> *Comm. Gen.*, "The Argument."

<sup>82</sup> *Comm. Isa.* 40:21.

<sup>83</sup> See also I.6.1, 3; I.13.21; III.2.2-3; III.6.2; III.8.1; III.19.7. III.21.1; III.25.11; IV.7.22.

<sup>84</sup> *Comm. Ps.* 8:7-9.

brains, and attribute to anything else than the true source the praise of righteousness, wisdom, goodness, and power. Moreover, we so obscure or overturn his daily acts by wickedly judging them that we snatch away from them their glory and from their Author his due praise.”<sup>85</sup> While creation performs this admonitory function, over against the human creature who really should know better, for Calvin the more forceful inertia of creation is to arouse humanity to the worship of the Lord of heaven and earth.

### ***2.2.5 Doxological: enacting and summoning praise of God***

As we mentioned above, creation praises God, among other reasons, by fulfilling its divinely ordained purposes. More specifically, in Calvin, creation serves as a context for praise, creation enacts praise, creation summons praise, and creation subsists *to the extent that right praise is lifted up to the Creator*. In his summary of the book of Genesis, Calvin writes, “For this is the argument of the Book: After the world had been created, man was placed in it as in a theater, that he, beholding above him and beneath the wonderful works of God, might reverently adore their Author.”<sup>86</sup> The Sabbath day, in light of Genesis 2:3, is a particular day of creation wherein humanity is “to consider the infinite goodness, justice, power, and wisdom of God, in this magnificent theater of heaven and earth.”<sup>87</sup> Not only does creation at large and in the temporal framework of the Sabbath day serve as a context for the “pure and lawful worship of God,” creation also enacts its own peculiar praise. In a preface written for the French translation of the New Testament by his cousin, Pierre Robert Olivetan, in 1534, Calvin famously writes:

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<sup>85</sup> I.5.15.

<sup>86</sup> *Comm. Gen.*, “The Argument.”

<sup>87</sup> *Comm. Gen.* 2:3.

It is evident that all creatures, from those in the heavens to those under the earth, are able to act as witnesses and messengers of God's glory.... For the little birds that sing, sing of God; the beasts clamor for him; the elements dread him, the mountains echo him, the fountains and flowing waters cast their glances at him, and the grass and flowers laugh before him.<sup>88</sup>

On Psalm 7:17, Calvin says, "the waters which were suspended in the clouds yielded to God the honor to which he is entitled, the air, by the concussion of the thunder, having poured forth copious showers."<sup>89</sup> In a note on the meaning of the phrase, *the beasts of the field shall honor me*, in Isaiah 43:20, Calvin writes, "The meaning is, that the power of God will be so visible and manifest [when God does a 'new thing'], that the very beasts, impressed with the feeling of it, shall acknowledge and worship God.... [And] they will stand still, as if in astonishment, when they see the miracles."<sup>90</sup> Of the stars in Psalm 148:3, Calvin says that it is as if they sang God's "praises with an audible voice."<sup>91</sup> "Irrational" creatures of all sorts, in fact, praise God day and night: trees, seas, stars, fishes, beasts of the field, planets. Referring to king David's nineteenth psalm, Calvin adds, "And that declaration of David is most true, that the heavens, though without a tongue, are yet eloquent heralds of the glory of God, and that this most beautiful order of nature silently proclaims his admirable wisdom (Ps. 19. 1)."<sup>92</sup> On Psalm 97:6, Calvin notes how the psalmist "states that there would be such an illustrious display of the righteousness of God, that the heavens themselves would herald it."<sup>93</sup> The heavens, in short, "proclaim loudly and distinctly enough" the glory of God.

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<sup>88</sup> In *Calvin: Commentaries* (Westminster Press: 1958), 60.

<sup>89</sup> *Comm. Ps. 7:17*.

<sup>90</sup> *Comm. Isa. 43:20*.

<sup>91</sup> *Comm. Ps. 148:3*.

<sup>92</sup> *Comm. Gen.*, "The Argument."

<sup>93</sup> *Comm. Ps. 97:6*.



While creation resounds with the praises of God, it also invites humanity to join in that praise.<sup>94</sup> Moses' purpose in writing Genesis, Calvin explains, is to "transport us with admiration of God through the consideration of his works."<sup>95</sup> The demonstration of God's power in creation "should constrain us to wonder," he adds.<sup>96</sup> On Psalm 139:13, he says, "The true and proper view to take of the works of God ... is that which ends in wonder."<sup>97</sup> The stars "contribute much towards exciting in the hearts of men a high reverence for God."<sup>98</sup> All human beings, of course, "would hear this symphony, were they at all attent upon considering the works of God."<sup>99</sup> But they are not, and as such they remain blameworthy. If humans were not at present sinful creatures, Calvin remarks on Psalm 19:7, creation would in fact suffice to excite the pure worship of God.<sup>100</sup> Despite the theater of God's glory which surrounds us on every side, Calvin adds, yet "we are stone-blind, not because the manifestation is furnished obscurely, but because we are alienated in mind ... we lack not merely inclination, but ability."<sup>101</sup> So God chooses to "daunt us and tame us" in order to enable us to see this theater properly.<sup>102</sup>

And yet for Calvin it is not as grim as that. Creation's praise is not a whip upon the human conscience. Nor does the Creator harangue the human creature to fulfill its own doxological calling. God wishes to ravish humanity by his creation and so summon love

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<sup>94</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 95:3.

<sup>95</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 1:20.

<sup>96</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 150:1.

<sup>97</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 139:13.

<sup>98</sup> *Comm.* Jer. 10:1-2.

<sup>99</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 148:3.

<sup>100</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 19:7.

<sup>101</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 1:21; cf. I.5.15.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. *Sermon on Job* 4:20ff.

and a willing obedience from the human heart. “If one feather of a peacock is able to ravish us,” Calvin preaches in a sermon on Job 39:8—40:6, “if wild beasts are able to stop men’s minds...what will God’s infinite majesty do?”<sup>103</sup> Moreover, “If we compare a hawk with the residue of the whole world, it is nothing. And yet if so small a portion of God’s works ought to ravish us and amaze us, what ought *all* his works do when we come to the full numbering of them?”<sup>104</sup> On Psalm 19:1, he writes, “As soon as we acknowledge God to be the supreme architect, who has erected the beautiful fabric of the universe, our minds must necessarily be ravished with wonder at his infinite goodness, wisdom, and power.”<sup>105</sup> In a note on Psalm 104:3, Calvin adds, “it was the design of the prophet [i.e. David], from a thing incomprehensible to us, to ravish us with the greater admiration” for God, who lays the beams of his chambers in the waters.<sup>106</sup> Of Psalm 8:3-4, he says that the glory of the Creator “is surpassingly great as to ravish us with the highest admiration.”<sup>107</sup> And as a kind of summary of the whole subject matter, Calvin argues, in a note on Psalm 8:7-9, that our consideration of the bounty of creation ought to result in three things:

that by reflecting upon these our hearts may be inflamed with love to God, that we may be stirred up to the practice of godliness, and that we may not suffer ourselves to become slothful and remiss in celebrating his praises.<sup>108</sup>

So intimately does Calvin link the work of creation with the work of worship that the welfare of both is at stake if either is lost or neglected. In a comment on Psalm 104:31,

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 39:8—40:6.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 39:22-35.

<sup>105</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 19:1.

<sup>106</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 104:3.

<sup>107</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 8:3-4.

<sup>108</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 8:7-9.

Calvin writes, “The stability of the world depends on the rejoicing of God in his works.”<sup>109</sup> On Psalm 115:17, he adds, “If on earth such praise of God does not come to pass, if God does not preserve His church to this end, then the whole order of nature will be thrown into confusion and creation will be annihilated when there is no people to call upon God.”<sup>110</sup> While humanity is commanded to worship God in the beginning (in the Garden), so humanity is commanded to worship God right through to “the end of the world.”<sup>111</sup> With respect to the psalmist’s observation in Psalm 150:6, that a time would come when the praise of God will resound in all the earth, Calvin writes, “in this prediction we have been joined in the same symphony with the Jews, that we may worship God with constant sacrifices of praise, until being gathered into the kingdom of heaven, we sing with elect angels an eternal hallelujah.”<sup>112</sup>

### **2.2.6 Summary**

As we turn to part two of our exposition of Calvin, it might be helpful to make note of a few things. The first is that, whatever else we find in Calvin’s thinking, we do not find a meager regard for the cosmos. Here we have nothing less than a grand theater where humanity is invited to delight in the whole workmanship of the universe. As the “hands and feet” of God in Christ, upheld by the Spirit of God, creation is a place *for* something: for goodness, for pleasure, for beauty, for vitality and fruitfulness, for action, for the worship of God, and for the mediation of God’s presence to humanity. Though sin vitiates humanity’s capacity to enjoy God in and through creation, sin does not rob

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<sup>109</sup> *Comm. Ps.* 104:31.1

<sup>110</sup> *Comm. Ps.* 115:17; cf. III.20.43.

<sup>111</sup> *Comm. Gen.* 2:3.

<sup>112</sup> *Comm. Ps.* 150:6.

creation of its capacity to stage a spectacle of God's powers. And while it is only with the help of the Law, of faith in Christ through the preaching of the gospel, and of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit— each serving as spectacles to rectify a poor vision—that the faithful are able to see and to enjoy creation fully, for Calvin, the human eye is in its own way capable of discerning the glory of God in creation. When properly contemplated, the universe inspires the faithful to the pure worship of God.

A second observation is that Calvin's argument is a persistently patrological argument which Calvin advances, following, one could suppose, what we he believes to be a faithful "reading" of the Apostles Creed. Here, to the point, there is very little christological or pneumatological reasoning. A third observation is that Calvin does not use the language of symbol to describe the material creation. While he employs the vocabulary of image, mirror, painting, school, fabric and preacher to describe creation's functional relationship to the Creator, we find that the language of symbol appears only in his discussion of particular material phenomena, like the pillar of fire or the ark of the covenant, which God commands and which allow the invisible God to become visible in order that God may be known. How, then, do the media of the tabernacle and temple, with their respective kinaesthetic and ceremonial paraphernalia, function as symbols of God's presence in the world? How does Calvin understand the purpose of the material creation in these prescribed aids to worship? What continuities and discontinuities do we discover in relation to the grammar of creation which we have just examined? It is to these questions that we now turn.

## 2.3 EXPOSITION OF CALVIN (II)

### The “work” of the material creation in the material symbols of Israel and the church’s worship

Three comments, pulled together, offer a kind of précis for Calvin’s understanding of material symbols in God’s economy. In the 1539 *Institutes* (III.25), he observes:

God, indeed, from time to time showed the presence of his divine majesty by definite signs, so that he might be said to be looked upon face to face. But all the signs that he ever gave forth clearly told men of his incomprehensible essence. For clouds and smoke and flame [Deut. 4:11] restrained the minds of all, like a bridle placed on them, from attempting to penetrate too deeply.<sup>113</sup>

In a remark on the tree of life in Genesis 2:9, Calvin adds, “For we know it to be by no means unusual that God should give us the attestation of his grace by external symbols [*ut virtutem suam Deus externis symbolis testatam nobis reddat*].”<sup>114</sup> By them, in fact, God “stretches out his hand to us, because, without assistance, we cannot ascend to him.” And lastly, in a note on the cherubim of Genesis 3:23, he writes, “I call them vehicles and ladders, because symbols of this kind were by no means ordained that the faithful might shut up God in a tabernacle as in a prison, or might attach him to earthly elements, but that, being assisted by congruous and apt means, they might themselves rise to heaven.”<sup>115</sup>

In each of these statements we perceive a pattern that will be repeated throughout

Calvin’s commentary on material symbols. Positively, a material symbol raises us up *to*

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<sup>113</sup> The language of “face” is pervasive in Calvin’s thought, anchoring both his protology and eschatology, no less than his soteriology. To look on God’s face, he writes in I.1.2, is the beginning of true self-knowledge. In a comment on 2 Cor. 3:18, Calvin defends Paul’s use of the term “unveiled face” as a way to describe our present experience of God. See Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Can See*, 7.

<sup>114</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 2:9.

<sup>115</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 3:23.

God for the sake of a gracious encounter *with* God. It is also an aid given *by* God, both because of our inability to ascend through our own powers and because of the inadvisability of penetrating the essence of God.<sup>116</sup> Such creaturely symbols are fitting (“congruous and apt”) for the human creature. Negatively, a material symbol fails its divinely intended purpose if it imprisons God on earth or if it binds humanity to earth, preventing an ascent to heaven. It likewise fails if it is detached from the promise of God. As the case may be, for Calvin, material symbols are provided on account of human ignorance,<sup>117</sup> weakness,<sup>118</sup> infirmity,<sup>119</sup> sloth,<sup>120</sup> and “childishness.”<sup>121</sup> Consistently, then, there are things which are to be affirmed, things which are to be warned against, and a persistent anxiety over the material realm. In what follows, we will consider, first, what Calvin says about the material symbols of the tabernacle and temple, and, second, more briefly, what Calvin says about particular symbols of God’s presence in New Testament worship.

### ***2.3.1 Material symbols of God’s presence in Israel’s worship***

Echoing language he employs in his discourse on creation, Calvin argues in a comment on John 5:3 that the Jerusalem temple was “a most noble theater” of the goodness of God.<sup>122</sup> A splendid structure, marked by astonishing beauty (cf. Ps. 102:15), the temple was “an image of spiritual things.”<sup>123</sup> About Isaiah 66:1, he writes, “the Temple is called God’s rest, because he gave the sign of his presence in the temple; for he had chosen it as

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<sup>116</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 3:23.

<sup>117</sup> *Comm.* Acts 7:40.

<sup>118</sup> *Comm.* Acts 17:25.

<sup>119</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 42:2.

<sup>120</sup> IV.1.1.

<sup>121</sup> *Comm.* Jn. 4:23.

<sup>122</sup> *Comm.* Jn. 5:3.

<sup>123</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 27:4.

the place where men should call on him, and from which he would give a display of his strength and power.”<sup>124</sup> While the faithful should always guard against the temptation to become “wholly engrossed by the outward forms of worship,” the psalmist, to Calvin’s mind, “does not in the least degree detract from the holiness of the temple, which alone of all places of the earth God had chosen as the place where he was to be worshipped.”<sup>125</sup> More strongly even, the temple “was a sign and symbol of religion, where the face of God shown forth.”<sup>126</sup>

Extending this visual idiom further, Calvin argues that it is possible to speak of the ark of the covenant as a symbol which “everywhere denominated” God’s face.<sup>127</sup> Calvin adds, “it is called the Ark of his strength, not a mere idle shadow to look upon, but what certainly declared God’s nearness to his Church.”<sup>128</sup> Of the priestly garments, mentioned in Exodus 28:2, Calvin says, “But God would show by this symbol the more than angelic brightness of all the virtues which was to be exhibited in Christ.”<sup>129</sup> On the bells and pomegranates, Calvin notes, “In this allegory there is nothing too subtle or far-fetched: for the similitude of the smell and the sound naturally leads us to the honoring of grace, and to the preaching of the gospel.”<sup>130</sup> The elaborate garments which appear in Exodus 39:1, moreover, serve a specific typological purpose: “since Christ was vividly represented in the person of the high priest, this was a most important part of the legal service ... [for the] purpose of placing before men’s eyes all that faith ought to consider

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<sup>124</sup> *Comm.* Isa. 66:1.

<sup>125</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 99:5.

<sup>126</sup> *Comm.* Amos 4:2. Cf. IV.1.5.

<sup>127</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 27:8.

<sup>128</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 132:8.

<sup>129</sup> *Comm.* Exod. 28:2.

<sup>130</sup> *Comm.* Exod. 28:31

in Jesus Christ.”<sup>131</sup> Indeed, for Calvin, as he remarks in a note on Acts 6:14, “the great value of the temple and the usefulness of the ceremonies consists rather in their being ascribed to Christ as to their original pattern.”<sup>132</sup>

By maintaining this christological emphasis, Calvin is able to clarify the nature of continuity in the work of God through both old and new covenants, and to define the fundamental purpose of material symbols, namely to pull the faithful up into a lively participation in the life of Christ.<sup>133</sup> When, for instance, God promises Israel in Jeremiah 31:12 that they will once again enjoy wine, oil and wheat, Calvin explains that “something better and more excellent than food and sufficiency is promised; and that what is spiritual is conveyed under these figures, that the people might, by degrees [*per gradus*], ascend to the spiritual kingdom of Christ, which was yet involved in shadows and obscurity.”<sup>134</sup> When it is said in Psalm 84:2 that David longs for the courts of the Lord, Calvin believes that David “knew that the visible sanctuary served the purpose of a ladder, because, by it the minds of the godly were directed and conducted to the heavenly model.”<sup>135</sup> In Isaiah 66:1, the people are being “reminded by the outward sign of God’s presence [in the temple], they might raise their minds higher and rise to heaven.”<sup>136</sup> On Psalm 99:5, Calvin adds, “For God desired to dwell in the midst of his people in such a manner, as not only to direct their thoughts to the outward temple and to the ark of the

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<sup>131</sup> *Comm.* Exod. 39:1. The sacrificial animals mentioned in Ps. 57:11, he comments, were “outward symbols of thanksgiving.”

<sup>132</sup> *Comm.* Acts 6:14.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 238-242.

<sup>134</sup> *Comm.* Jer. 31:12.

<sup>135</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 84:2.

<sup>136</sup> *Comm.* Isa. 66:1.



covenant, but rather to elevate them to things above.”<sup>137</sup> Conscripting language typical of the prophets, Calvin remarks on Psalm 132:7, “While God dwells in heaven, and is above all heavens, we must avail ourselves of helps in rising to the knowledge of him; and in giving us symbols of his presence, he sets, as it were, his feet upon the earth, and suffers us to touch them.”<sup>138</sup>

While affirming the ostensible purposes of the material media in Israel’s public worship, Calvin warns against specific dangers. God descends to his people, Calvin reminds the reader, “not to occupy their minds with a gross superstition, but to raise them up by degrees to spiritual worship.”<sup>139</sup> In a note on Psalm 78, Calvin stresses that God was never to be “fixed to the outward and visible symbol” of the tabernacle.<sup>140</sup> When it is said that God dwells “in the midst of his people,” Calvin remarks on Acts 7:49, “he is neither fixed to the earth, nor contained in any place, seeing that they seek him spiritually in heaven.”<sup>141</sup> “Averse to seek God in a spiritual manner,” Calvin adds, the Gentiles “pull him down from his throne, and place him under inanimate things.”<sup>142</sup> Not only do the people of God indulge the habit of dragging “God off his heavenly throne” and thereby making “him part and parcel with the elements of the world,” Calvin worries that they themselves will cling to earth, refusing to ascend to God in heaven.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 99:5.

<sup>138</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 132:7.

<sup>139</sup> *Comm.* Exod. 16:32.

<sup>140</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 78:59.

<sup>141</sup> *Comm.* Acts 7:49.

<sup>142</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 115:8.

<sup>143</sup> *Comm.* Acts 17:24.

On Deuteronomy 4:12, Calvin notes that the visions of the patriarchs were testimonies of God's glory intended "rather to elevate men's minds to things above than to keep them entangled amongst earthly elements."<sup>144</sup> When Genesis 19:1 says that Christ appears as an Angel to the patriarchs, Calvin summarizes the meaning this way: "Whence we infer, that we act preposterously, if we allow the external symbols, by which God represents himself, to retard or hinder us from going directly to him."<sup>145</sup> In explaining the sense of the temple as God's eternal resting place, Calvin writes, "I reply that as he was not tied to one place, so the last thing he intended was to tie down his people to earthly symbols. On the contrary he comes down to them, in order to lift them up on high to himself."<sup>146</sup> And, finally, on Psalm 42:2, he affirms that "it behooved the faithful in seeking to approach God, to begin by those things. Not that they should continue attached to them, but that they should, by the help of these signs and outward means, seek to behold the glory of God, which of itself is hidden from sight."<sup>147</sup>

In summary, the function of external symbols in the Old Testament, for Calvin, was to present a sensory attestation of God's grace to his people. They made visible through material media what remained invisible to the un-aided eye, namely the spiritual blessings which inhere to the promises of God. These symbols could not enclose God, nor circumscribe his infinite essence, nor drag God down from "heaven." Nor could they remain effective if humans clung exclusively to the symbol's external signification. They

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<sup>144</sup> *Comm.* Deut. 4:12.

<sup>145</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 19:1.

<sup>146</sup> *Comm.* Acts 17:24.

<sup>147</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 42:2.

remained effective only if humans submitted to the divinely established dynamic to raise the faithful to heaven through earthly means.

### ***2.3.2 Preliminary Assessment***

Yet what exactly is the sensory realm “capable” of and for what purpose does God reveal his powers and promises through creaturely media? While more will be said below in response to the first question, two lines of argument predominate in Calvin’s thinking. On the one side, Calvin seeks to remain faithful to the *temporal* logic of salvation-history, which he discerns in the typological language exhibited throughout Holy Scripture. On the other side, Calvin attempts to make sense of the *spatial* logic of salvation-history, especially as it unfolds in the New Testament. To put it crudely, with the one, it is a question of *then vs. now*; with the other, it is a question of *above vs. below*.

Paradigmatic of the first line of argument is Calvin’s statement on Hebrews 7:12, “Moses kept the people under a veil: that since the reality was not yet shown forth he represented a foretaste of Christ in types and shadows: that he adapted himself to convince the ignorant people and did not rise above the childish elements.”<sup>148</sup> When it is said in Psalm 3:4 that David directs his prayers to the tabernacle, Calvin surmises, “By these words he intimates that he kept a middle way, inasmuch as he neither despised the visible sign, which the Lord had appointed on account of the rudeness of the times, nor by attaching a superstitious importance to a particular place, entertained carnal conceptions of the glory of God.”<sup>149</sup> Of Exodus 30:23, Calvin writes, “for we have already often seen that there

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<sup>148</sup> *Comm.* Heb. 7:12.

<sup>149</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 3:4.

had been set before this rude people a splendor in sacred symbols, which might affect their external senses, so as to uplift them as it were by steps to the knowledge of spiritual things.”<sup>150</sup> Furthermore, in an observation on Deuteronomy 12:5, Calvin notes that God sets before the people’s eyes a visible symbol of God’s presence “in deference to their ignorance.”<sup>151</sup> To Calvin’s thinking, the movement from a dense display of material symbols in an old covenantal liturgy to a more spare display in a new covenantal liturgy parallels a movement of maturation for the church: metaphorically, from infancy to adulthood. He explains in the *Institutes*:

Paul likens the Jews to children, Christians to young men [Gal. 4:1ff]. What was irregular about the fact that God confined them to rudimentary teaching commensurate with their age, but has trained us through a firmer and, so to speak, more manly discipline [*nos firmiore et quasi viriliore disciplina instituit*]? Thus, God’s constancy shines forth in the fact that he taught the same doctrine to all ages, and has continued to require the same worship of his name that he enjoined from the beginning. In the fact that he has changed the outward form and manner, he does not show himself subject to change. Rather, he has accommodated himself to men’s capacity, which is varied and changeable.<sup>152</sup>

While it is obvious that the ceremonial shape of public worship has fundamentally changed with the coming of Christ, it is less obvious how the material symbols of such worship ought to be regarded “in the clear light of day.” Are they symbols fit only for “slow men, as Calvin seems to suggest in a comment on Acts 17:24?<sup>153</sup> Are they helps which our “frail” earthly life uniquely require?<sup>154</sup> In what manner do the prophets “figure

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<sup>150</sup> *Comm.* Exod. 30:23.

<sup>151</sup> *Comm.* Deut. 12:5.

<sup>152</sup> II.11.13.

<sup>153</sup> *Comm.* Acts 17:25: God use symbols “as intermediaries with which to introduce himself in a familiar way to slow men, until, step by step, they ascend to heaven.”

<sup>154</sup> Cf. his comment on Jer. 11:5. See also Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 62-65.

spiritual things too high for human sense by corporeal and visible symbols”<sup>155</sup> Are they too high for the human intellect also or only too high for the human senses? Calvin puts the point sharply in the 1539 *Institutes*: in order effectively to nourish the Old Testament saints in the hope of eternal life, God “displayed it for them to see and, so to speak, taste, under earthly benefits. But now that the gospel has more plainly and clearly revealed the grace of the future life, the Lord leads our minds to meditate upon it directly, laying aside the lower mode of training that he used with the Israelites.”<sup>156</sup> Has the cognitive domain replaced the physical domain as the preferred locus for the mediation of knowledge and love of God? Calvin believes that the fathers and prophets “painted a portrait such as to lift up the minds of the people above the earth, above the elements of this world and the perishing age, and that would of necessity arouse them to ponder the happiness of the spiritual life to come.”<sup>157</sup> Was this portrait not also painted positively *in* and *through* the elements of the world?<sup>158</sup> In a comment on Hebrews 12:18, Calvin contrasts Mount Sinai which “can be touched with hands” with Mount Zion that “can only be known by the spirit.”<sup>159</sup> Does an encounter of Mount Zion not also involve tangible media? Were there not aspects of Mount Sinai that could only be known by the “spirit”? And is the issue here simply a rhetorical habit of Calvin’s, which does not impugn his basic theological convictions regarding the destiny of materiality “in Christ”?<sup>160</sup> These are the sorts of questions that Calvin’s exposition prompts and invites further investigation, as we turn to his commentary on New Testament worship.

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<sup>155</sup> Cf. his comment on the Spirit as a wind in Ezekiel in the “Psychopannychia,” in *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 3, 422-425; hereafter “Psychopannychia.”

<sup>156</sup> VII.25.

<sup>157</sup> *Institutes* 1539 VII.20.

<sup>158</sup> *Comm. Heb.* 9:1.

<sup>159</sup> *Comm. Heb.* 12:18.

<sup>160</sup> On this point generally, see Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 65, and Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 155.

### ***2.3.3 Material symbols of God's presence in New Testament worship***

While it is tempting to suppose that Calvin presumptively dismisses the importance of material symbols in a new covenantal liturgy, Randall Zachman, in his work *Image and Word in the Theology of John Calvin*, argues that this would involve a hasty judgment. As Zachman summarizes: "According to Calvin, the gestures, rites, and ceremonies of the godly serve two necessary purposes: they are exercises of piety, and they are also expressions of the worship of God in body as well as in soul, for 'it is right, that not the mind only, but the body also, should be employed in the service of God.'<sup>161</sup> Bracketing off, for now, the practice of the Lord's Supper, Calvin makes a number of significant remarks about the church's external aids to worship. In a note on Psalm 95:6, for example, Calvin emphatically argues that the worship of God demands "our whole strength.... mention is made not only of inward gratitude, but the necessity of an outward profession of godliness ... to discharge their duty properly, the Lord's people must present themselves a sacrifice to him publicly, with kneeling, and other marks of devotion."<sup>162</sup> In a comment on First Corinthians 13:12, he writes that God, who is otherwise invisible, has appointed the "whole of the service of the church" as a means for revealing the divine life.<sup>163</sup> While the church should not rest in outward ceremonies, it should nonetheless imitate David who took advantage of ceremonies "as a ladder by which he might ascend to God, finding he had not wings with which to fly thither."<sup>164</sup> In the 1536 *Institutes*, Calvin urges the church to the earnest praise of God: "This we must

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<sup>161</sup> Zachman, *Image and Word*, 359. Cf. *Comm.* Exod. 4:31.

<sup>162</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 95:6.

<sup>163</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 13:12.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. *Comm.* Ps. 42:2.

do not only to declare, by tongue and bodily gesture, and by every outward indication, that we have no other God; but also with our mind, our whole heart, and all our zeal, to show ourselves as such.”<sup>165</sup>

In addition to enabling one’s whole person to rise to God in right praise, ceremonies “train” the church. As Calvin remarks in a note on Psalm 52:10, “By these, and our common sacraments, the Lord, who is one God, and who designed that we should be one in him, is training us up together in the hope of eternal life, and in the united celebration of his holy name.”<sup>166</sup> More strongly, “It would therefore be better for us to be deprived of meat and drink, and to go naked, and to perish at last through want, than that the exercises of piety, by which the Lord holds us, as it were, in his own bosom, should be taken away from us.”<sup>167</sup> The body, perhaps surprisingly, is a key to right praise for Calvin: “As for the bodily gestures customarily observed in praying, such as kneeling and uncovering the head, they are exercises whereby we try to rise to a greater reverence for God.”<sup>168</sup> Kneeling as such expresses a “serious” disposition of the heart. Like musical instruments in the ancient economy, kneeling stimulates the soul since “the outward exercise of the body helps the weakness of the mind.”<sup>169</sup> Kneeling, in this way, both symbolizes and activates the interior domain. As Calvin says, “it reminds us of our inability to stand before God, unless with humility and reverence; then, our minds are better prepared for serious entreaty, and this symbol of worship is pleasing to God.”<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> *Institutio* 1536 I.9.

<sup>166</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 52:10.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. his comment on Hosea 9:5.

<sup>168</sup> *Institutio* 1539 IX.27. On this point, see Moltmann, *The Source of Life*, 128ff.

<sup>169</sup> *Comm.* Acts 9:40.

<sup>170</sup> *Comm.* Dan. 6:10.

While kneeling signifies a condition of humility, the raising of hands signifies the church's "confidence and longing" for God.<sup>171</sup> In a remark on Lamentations 2:19, Calvin writes, "except this ceremony were to raise up our minds (as we are inclined by nature to superstition), every one would seek God either at his feet or by his side."<sup>172</sup> Physically lifting the hands, for the faithful in all times, signifies the proper ascent of the creature to God in heaven.<sup>173</sup> The action, in fact, strengthens an ecstatic movement: in Calvin's words, "to go forth, as it were, out of ourselves whenever we call on God."<sup>174</sup> When the "inward feeling corresponds with the external gesture," then is that we arrive at "the right way of praying."<sup>175</sup> Though Calvin never commends hand-clapping in the church's worship, one wonders whether it is simply because the practice does not appear in the New Testament. One wonders also whether it may well be included, on Calvinian terms, by marrying his comments on joyous song (*vis-à-vis* the psalms) and uplifted hands. As he teaches on Psalm 47:1, the psalmist enjoins the nations, in light of their joy in God, "to clap their hands, or rather exhorts them to a more than ordinary joy, the vehemence of which breaks forth and manifests itself by external expressions."<sup>176</sup> While suffering the fall of David's kingdom, all sorts of calamities, the captivity, and a dispersion, Calvin notes that Israel as "the faithful" is still summoned by the Holy Spirit "to continue clapping their hands for joy, until the advent of the promised Redeemer."<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> *Comm.* Acts 20:36.

<sup>172</sup> *Comm.* Lam. 2:19.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. his comment on 1 Tim. 2:8.

<sup>174</sup> *Comm.* Lam. 2:19.

<sup>175</sup> *Comm.* Lam. 3:41.

<sup>176</sup> *Comm.* 47:1. Cf. *Comm.* Ps. 26:8.

<sup>177</sup> Noteworthy is this comment by Calvin in the *Institutio 1543* VIII.200: "But there is no doubt that meeting and weeping and fasting, and like activities, apply equally to our age whenever the condition of



As with Israel, moreover, there were dangers that the New Testament church should likewise avoid. One danger is the unnecessary multiplication of ceremonies. As Calvin remarks in the 1543 *Institutio*, “Accordingly, to keep that means [of pure worship], it is necessary to keep fewness in number, ease in observance, dignity in representation, which also includes clarity.” And again: “God has given us a few ceremonies, not at all irksome, to show Christ present.”<sup>178</sup> In a curious comment which could allow for the possibility of the increase of ceremonies, Calvin writes in the 1536 *Institutio*, “it may be a fitting thing to set aside as may be opportune in the circumstances, certain rites that in other circumstances are impious or indecorous.”<sup>179</sup> A second danger is hypocrisy. “If we do not begin with [worship in the heart], all that men profess by outward gestures and attitudes will be empty display.”<sup>180</sup> Idolatry constitutes a third danger: “For if any man shows any appearance or indication of idolatry at all or takes part in wicked and superstitious rites, even if in his soul he is perfectly upright—which is impossible—he will still be guilty of having defiled his body.”<sup>181</sup> And superstitious attachments to these material symbols is, for Calvin, a constant vocational hazard.

A final danger is the rupture of Word from symbol. Calvin writes, on Genesis 17:9, “Since the promise is the very soul of the sign, whenever it is torn away from the sign, nothing remains but a lifeless and vain phantom.” Again, on Exodus 12:24, he observes,

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our affairs so demands. For since this is a holy exercise both for the humbling of men and for their confession of humility, why should we use it less than the ancients did in similar need?”

<sup>178</sup> XIII.14. Against Romish practices, he writes in *Institutio 1543* XIII.29, “We see such an example in the theatrical props that the papists use in their sacred rites, where nothing appears but the mask of useless elegance and fruitless extravagance.”

<sup>179</sup> VI.34.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. *Comm.* Isa. 29:13.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. *Comm.* 1 Cor. 7:1. Echoes of the Nichodemite controversy can be heard here.

“For doctrine may justly be called the life of the sacraments, without which no vigor remains in them, so far are they from imparting to us any life.”<sup>182</sup> Bringing into intimate relationship the functions of eye and ear, Calvin comments on Numbers 9:18, “I do not doubt that the name of word, was given to the sign, inasmuch as God speaks as much to the eye by outward signs as he does to the ears by his voice. Still, from this mode of expression we may gather that the use of signs is perverted and nullified, unless they are taken to be visible doctrine, as Augustine writes.”<sup>183</sup> Zachman explains Calvin’s logic this way: “The word is the soul animating the visual representation, even as the visual representation gives force, clarity, and vividness to the word.”<sup>184</sup> Added to the language of word, promise and doctrine, which Calvin uses synonymously in this context, is specifically christological language. Calvin affirms, “there are no true religious symbols except those which conform to Christ. We must beware that in wishing to fit our own inventions to Christ we do not so change Him (as the papists do) that He becomes unlike Himself. It is not permissible for us to invent anything we like, but it belongs to God alone to show us according to the pattern that was showed thee.”<sup>185</sup> Not only must Word be joined to symbol, Word must also be joined to the ceremonies which comprise a new covenantal liturgy. “For God’s promise and Word is like the soul which gives life to ceremonies. Take away the Word, and all rites which men observe, although apparently belonging to the worship of the godly, are nothing but decaying or silly superstitious.”<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> *Comm.* Exod. 12:24; cf. *Comm.* Acts 7:44.

<sup>183</sup> *Comm.* Num. 9:18. In *Comm.* Gen. 17:9, Calvin states that circumcision is the “visible word, or sculpture and image” of the covenant with Abraham “which the word more fully illustrates.”

<sup>184</sup> Zachman, *Image and Word*, 163. On the visual register of Calvin’s language for creation, see Jerome Cottin, “‘Ce beau chef d’oeuvre du monde’: l’esthétique théologique de Calvin,” *Revue d’histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 89 (2009): 489-510.

<sup>185</sup> *Comm.* Heb. 8:5.

<sup>186</sup> *Comm.* Jn. 19:40.

To dislodge the material symbols from the Word, for Calvin, is to rob them of their upward, or Godward, inertia. Again, Zachman helpfully summarizes:

Calvin links the Word to the symbol not primarily to authorize the creation of the symbol, but because it is the Word in particular that gives to the symbol its upward dynamic, leading the godly from the contemplation of the symbol to God in heaven.... If maintaining the proper distinction between God and creation keeps us from affixing or confining God to the symbol of God's presence, then the Word of God conjoined to the symbol guides us step by step from the visible symbol to the invisible God in heaven, so that the symbol serves its proper purpose.<sup>187</sup>

Lastly, in a manner similar to his commentary on the symbols that accompanied Israel's worship, Calvin exhibits a proclivity to regard the materiality of liturgical symbols as *in itself* somehow troubling. He writes in a comment on Acts 17:25, "The faithful never based the worship of God strictly on ceremonies, but thought of them merely as aids, with which to discipline themselves on account of their weakness."<sup>188</sup> Ceremonies, he adds, "are exercises of piety which we cannot bear to want by reason of our infirmity."<sup>189</sup> In the opening salvo of book IV of the 1559 *Institutes*, Calvin explains the reason why God provides the faithful with external means by which they might partake of Christ. He writes, since "in our ignorance and sloth (to which I add fickleness of disposition) we need outward helps to beget and increase faith within us, and advance it to its goal, God has also added these aids that he may provide for our weakness [*infirmitati*]."<sup>190</sup> To Calvin's mind, there exists a kind of unhealthy dynamic between earthlings and earthly media; that is, the embodied condition of the faithful, for Calvin, somehow engenders an

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<sup>187</sup> Zachman, *Image and Word*, 227.

<sup>188</sup> *Comm.* Acts 17:25; cf. *Comm.* Ps. 9:11.

<sup>189</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 42:2.

<sup>190</sup> IV.1.1.

unfortunate dependency on physical aids. He remarks on John 17:1, “for men are indolent and slow by nature and tend downwards by their earthly spirit and need such arousing or rather vehicles to raise them to God.”<sup>191</sup> Because the redeemed have not yet “scaled the heights” of angels, they need “inferior aids” to nurture their relationship with God in Christ.<sup>192</sup> Finally, Calvin insists much like he did in his consideration of the tabernacle and temple that there “are indeed among us today certain outward exercises of godliness which our childishness needs. But they are moderate and sober enough not to obscure the naked truth of Christ.”<sup>193</sup>

To summarize, for Calvin, material symbols are divinely ordained media, inextricably joined to the Word, which both disclose the character of God and raise us to heavenly life. In their own way they communicate grace, thereby feeding and forming the faithful. The constant worry over material symbols, for Calvin, is their capacity to keep God or the human creature caged to earth. More precisely, it is the tendency of humans to pervert a material symbol that worries Calvin, though there is always a lingering sense that there might be something intrinsically problematic with the symbol’s materiality.

### ***2.3.4 Preliminary Assessment***

While Zachman, in his work *Image and Word*, rightly highlights the positive role that creation plays in Calvin’s theology of worship, there is tension in Calvin that Zachman fails to emphasize enough, which, in turn, problematizes Zachman’s enthusiastic apology for the Frenchman’s “living images.” This tension also highlights our two-part concern

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<sup>191</sup> *Comm. Jn.* 17:1.

<sup>192</sup> See *Comm.* 1 Cor. 13:12.

<sup>193</sup> *Comm. Jn* 4:23.

over continuity: on the one hand, continuity between old and new covenantal worship, particularly in its kinaesthetic dimension, and, on the other, continuity between the material creation at large and the material creation as it occurs in public worship.

Zachman writes: “One of the essential purposes of the public worship of the Church is that the worshipping community might give voice to the praises of God that silently sound forth from all creatures. Since the godly have been given the ability to see, feel, and enjoy the powers of God set forth in God’s works as in a painting, they ought to testify to these powers in their language of worship.”<sup>194</sup> While Calvin’s ktisiology does seem to bear out this synopsis, his liturgical theology does not. The following statement from Calvin’s 1539 *Institutes* is characteristic of a persistent cast of mind:

[To nourish the Old Testament saints better in the hope of eternal life, God] displayed it for them to see and, so to speak, taste, under earthly benefits. But now that the gospel has more plainly and clearly revealed the grace of the future life, *the Lord leads our minds to meditate upon it directly*, laying aside the lower mode of training that he used with the Israelites.<sup>195</sup>

Something about the coming of Christ has generated in Calvin’s thinking a theological disjunction between the work which Calvin perceives the material creation performing in Israel’s worship and the work of the material creation in a new covenantal setting—oriented around different *teloi*, in fact. And while in Calvin’s commentary on the universe, creation is *somehow* capable of bearing witness to God, which Israel affirms in its cultic practices and thereby exhibits a greater sense of continuity between its own sensory-rich worship and the sort of worship which the cosmos offers, Calvin’s

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<sup>194</sup> Zachman, *Image and Word*, 355, with respect to a comment on Ps. 145:10.

<sup>195</sup> VII.25, emphasis added.

commentary on the symbols of public worship leads one to believe that this is no longer true—that discontinuity is the chief hallmark between creation’s praise and Israel’s praise, on one side, and the church’s praise, on the other side. Moreover, while there is plenty of data to corroborate the principle, *finitum est capax infiniti*, in the former,<sup>196</sup> it seems that the opposite principle, *finitum non est capax infiniti*, governs the thinking on the latter.<sup>197</sup> (It goes without saying that the difference is significant whether we translate *capax* as “fit for” or “contain.”<sup>198</sup>)

While in the former Calvin affirms creation as the mirror of God, replete with “insignia” which sketch out a living likeness of God in the world, in the latter Calvin worries that the material creation will occlude or distort the knowledge of God.<sup>199</sup> While Calvin is bold enough to say, in qualified sense, that “nature is God,”<sup>200</sup> where in gazing upon the works of God we are “restored by his goodness,” in Calvin’s discussion of New Testament worship he repeatedly warns against the temptation to become overly distracted by material media.<sup>201</sup> And whereas creation at large becomes an occasion to be ravished by the variety and abundance of God’s graced “workmanship,” the material

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<sup>196</sup> Cf. *Comm.* Dan. 3:6-7.

<sup>197</sup> On the troubled history of this phrase and of its polemical appropriation, by both Lutheran and Reformed theologians, see Heiko A. Oberman, “The ‘Extra’ Dimension in the Theology of Calvin,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 21.1 (1970): 43-64; esp. 61-62. The crucial thing to note is that this phrase does not appear anywhere in Calvin. As Oberman explains, the phrase is taken up by subsequent Reformed historians and accorded a principle status in a genuinely Calvinistic theology.

<sup>198</sup> *Comm.* 2 Pet. 1:4, “we shall be partakers of divine and blessed immortality and glory, so as to be as it were one with God as far as our capacity will allow.” Zachman, *Word and Image*, 231, says this: “The insistence that God only manifests Godself to us by the Word we hear, not by any image we see, is impossible to reconcile with Calvin’s ubiquitous insistence that the self-manifestation of God takes place by means of the mutual relation between Word and image. . . . It is not at all clear how Calvin can make such categorical statements about the impossibility of the visual self-manifestation of God without realizing how threatening they are to his theological approach of always combining what we hear with what we see.”

<sup>199</sup> Cf. I.5.1; I.5.6.

<sup>200</sup> I.5.5.

<sup>201</sup> I.5.9.

quality of liturgical symbols appears to be an unfortunate necessity.<sup>202</sup> An occasion for “cataphatic” feasting, that is, albeit a temperate one, stands over against an insistence on “apophatic” restraint. And, lastly, although creation may function, for Calvin, as a context and stimulus for human praise, existing side by side with the praise of irrational creatures, such a function remains muted or missing altogether from public worship.

## **2.4 CONCLUSION**

In the first section of this chapter I observed how Calvin’s commentary on the material creation involves a fulsome acclamation of the world in which God daily discloses himself. Though sin vitiates humanity’s capacity to fully enjoy God’s creation, as Calvin maintained, human sin does not rob creation of its capacity to stage a spectacle of divine glory and to inspire the faithful to true worship. I noted how Calvin’s argument about the material creation was a decidedly patrological argument; very little christological or pneumatological reasoning could be detected there. We saw how, for Calvin, the material symbols of worship were divinely ordained media, inextricably joined to the Word, which both disclosed the character of God and raised the faithful to heavenly life. We also discovered in Calvin a constant worry over the human tendency to keep God or the human creature caged to earth in the use of material symbols, and an anxiety that something might be inherently problematic with materiality itself in these symbols.

Several questions arise at this point, all of them revolving around the pressing issue of continuity. How do we account for such different language patterns in Calvin’s writings

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<sup>202</sup> I.5.4.

on the material creation? What relationship exists between “shadowy” worship and the material shape of that worship? What fate does the material creation suffer in the so-called move from “childhood” to “adulthood” in Calvin’s eschatology? What precisely constitutes the human “weakness” which necessitates material symbols of worship? How does Calvin’s language cohere to the actual language of Holy Scripture? And what role might Calvin’s Christology and Pneumatology play in the outcome of these questions? It is to a consideration of these questions that we now turn in chapter three.



# CHAPTER THREE

## “Shadows: Part II”

“Some people read books in order to find God. But the very appearance of God’s creation is a great book. Look above you! Look below you! Take note! Read!” – **Augustine**<sup>1</sup>

“The Christian place of worship is the Body of Christ in its earthly manifestation and it is always localized; it sums up secretly, but always fully, the whole history of salvation; as a rule, and as far as possible, it calls for a place of lodging which will express the event which is celebrated there.” – **J. J. von Allmen**<sup>2</sup>

“It is a truth, which may serve as a most powerful stimulant, and may lead us most fervently to praise God, when we hear that Christ leads our songs, and is the chief composer of our hymns.” – **John Calvin**<sup>3</sup>

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In part two of this combined investigation of Calvin’s idea of “shadowy” worship, I offer a critical analysis of Calvin’s ideas about the material creation as it relates to public worship and advance a series of constructive proposals in light of this analysis. Critically, I argue that Calvin’s ideas about worship and the material creation are haunted by a metaphysical dualism, where the capacity of the material realm to mediate the presence and work of God to the church is regarded by the Frenchman with considerable suspicion. Constructively, I argue, first, that the language of “weakness” which Calvin uses to describe the material symbols of worship is not the preferred language of the New Testament, and that his habit of aligning external aids to worship with the language of

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Karlfried Froehlich, “‘Take up and Read’: Basics of Augustine’s Biblical Interpretation,” *Interpretation* 58 (2004): 5-16.

<sup>2</sup> Von Allmen, “A Short Theology of the Place of Worship,” 159.

<sup>3</sup> *Comm. Heb.* 12:2.

ignorance, frailty, and infirmity, among other terms, is largely foreign to the gospels and epistles. In this vein, I argue that a “temple theology” provides a more compelling way to read the worship-creation relationship. Second, working with elements of Calvin’s trinitarian theology, I argue that the material creation does not cease to be significant for public worship with the advent of Christ, but rather receives a new orientation under the constitutive work of the Spirit. To use Calvin’s own language, the church at worship exists in the “school of the beasts,” learning to see and to love God *in* and *through* the stuff of creation. In this light, I propose that the material condition of public worship is caught up in a double movement: the movement of creation’s praise at large and the movement of the Two Hands of God to enable creation to become the theater of God’s glory.<sup>4</sup>

The structure of this chapter falls into three parts. First, I offer an analysis of the material examined in chapter two, focusing on the apparent problem of materiality and mediation in Calvin. Second, I advance an argument for a “temple theology” in Scripture. And third, I propose two theological lines of thought for the material shape of public worship, arguing over against the sorts of discontinuities that I discover in Calvin in order to discover the possibility of continuities which Calvin himself may not have imagined.

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<sup>4</sup> The language “two hands” is peculiar to Irenaeus (see, e.g., *Against Heresies* 4.20.1) and is developed at length, along parallel lines, in Julie Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, e.g., 20, 187-195, 234-235.

## 3.2 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

### 3.2.1 Two non-overlapping trajectories haunted by a metaphysical dualism

As a way to address the overarching question of continuity, I propose in this chapter that Calvin's thinking involves two non-overlapping trajectories for the material creation. One on side stands the trajectory of creation at large which ends in its restoration. Here the material dimension of creation remains good, from beginning to end. On the other side stands the trajectory of the external aids to worship which ends in their abolition at the eschaton. Here the material dimension of liturgical symbols remains ambiguous or negative, depending on the context of Calvin's writing. While a material optimism consistently marks the former,<sup>5</sup> a material pessimism tends to mark the latter; and whereas the New Testament operates with an eschatological dualism vis-à-vis creation, Calvin's rhetoric about the material shape of public worship is haunted by a metaphysical dualism which is resisted only by a dogged commitment in Calvin to biblical language about the final destiny of the "new earth."

Following upon several critical observations, I shall argue that Calvin fails to hold together what the Scriptures preserve in dynamic unity. I shall also argue that Calvin fails to bring the two theaters of God's glory (creation and "temple") into a coordinated relationship to the two Hands of God (Christ and the Spirit), who make the faithful

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<sup>5</sup> Cornelis Van der Kooi, *As In A Mirror: John Calvin and Karl Barth on Knowing God: A Diptych*, trans. Donald Mader (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 75-84, goes so far as to say that, in Calvin, the "senses are in principle direct and trustworthy entries into reality itself, and lead to what one could call experiential knowledge of God's goodness and care" (77). "All our pores are open" to God, though not apart from the mediation of the Son and the Spirit (76). And again, "[Calvin's] high esteem for the Word does not permit us to shut our eyes to the extent to which Christian knowledge is fed by *all* the senses in his theology, and particularly the large role played by sight" (80, emphasis original).

partakers of the life of the Father, a life which can be characterized as both a presence of intimate fellowship and an order of shalom. When this is done, however, we discover the proper *telos* of the material creation: *for* something and *headed* somewhere. When this is done, we also discover a richer sense of continuity in God's work during old and new covenants *per* the material conditions of public worship.

A *first* critical observation is this: the conflicting rhetorical patterns which we detect in Calvin's discussion of creation may be provisionally accounted for by his theological methodology.<sup>6</sup> As arranged in the 1559 *Institutes*, the bulk of Calvin's exposition on creation occurs under the heading, "The Knowledge of God the Creator," mirroring, as the case may be, the outline of the Apostles Creed or Paul's Book of Romans.<sup>7</sup> Here the material creation is discussed in relation both to the "natural man" and the faithful. Here we find creation described as a work of God, yielding a limited knowledge of God, and affording the faithful enjoyment of both creation and the Creator, hedged only and always by the possibility of sin. The majority of Calvin's discussion of material symbols of worship, in contrast, falls under books 2, 3 and 4 of the *Institutes*, where knowledge of God the Redeemer, the ways in which we are made partakers of the divine life, and the external means by which we are sustained in that life predominate. Here the material creation is discussed chiefly in relation to the redeemed. Here we find material symbols described as a command of God, yielding discrete knowledge of the Savior by the Spirit

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<sup>6</sup> While the individual passages of Calvin's commentaries may mitigate this following point, the fact that Calvin regarded the *Institutes* as an interpretive guide ("the sum of all religion") to his biblical commentary leads us to believe that the methodology observed in the *Institutes* is representative of his thought generally.

<sup>7</sup> On this point, see Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 35-36, 121. In the preface to his commentary on Romans, Calvin writes, "if we have gained a true understanding of this Epistle, we have an open door to all the most profound treasures of Scripture."

and affording the faithful ascent into fellowship with God and, in light of that, with one another too. Here, moreover, the materiality of these symbols generates a near-constant temptation to sin. Its material quality is not to be enjoyed in itself but regarded only as an instrument which delivers the church on to so-called heavenly life. Calvin says as much in his résumé of public worship:

Believers have no greater help than public worship, for by it God raises his own folk upward step by step.... As if it were not in God's power somehow to come down to us, in order to be near us, yet without changing place or confining us to earthly means; but rather by these to bear us up as if in chariots to his heavenly glory, a glory that fills all things with its immeasurableness and even surpasses the heavens in height!<sup>8</sup>

What precisely Calvin means by his use of “heaven” language will be addressed below. For now, if we are right in saying that the *Institutes* follows the logic of the Creed or of St. Paul's epistle, then his theological method will bring with it similar strengths and weaknesses: for example, rightly beginning with the work of God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth, but separating it too sharply from the work of Son and Spirit who are equally though distinctly at play in the creation of the world, and who together, in loving fellowship with the Father, constitute the *telos* of creation and therefore define the sorts of things we may, and indeed *must*, say about creation in any given context, liturgical or otherwise.

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<sup>8</sup> IV.1.5.

A *second* and perhaps obvious, but still necessary, observation is that the New Testament itself remains silent on the use of musical instruments in corporate worship.<sup>9</sup> While this silence may imply their definitive proscription, as some “liturgical biblicists” would argue,<sup>10</sup> Calvin feels it necessary to offer an explication in order to infer the “mind” of the early church and to justify Genevan practices over against “Romish” ones. For this reason, as we have already seen, he appeals to the category of “shadows.”

*Third*, his appeal to the language of Colossians (2:17) and Hebrews (8:5; 10:1) involves for Calvin two distinct lines of thought: shadowy as “childishness” (so Gal. 4:3) and shadowy as “weakness” (so Gal. 4:9).<sup>11</sup> The first term is a biblical shorthand to describe the changes which the church’s worship incurs with the revelation of Christ and the descent of the Spirit.<sup>12</sup> At an obvious level for Calvin, this includes no Jerusalem temple, no purity laws, no Aaronic priesthood, no animal sacrifices, no circumcision, no corresponding calendar of annual festivals. More specifically, Calvin argues that while the symbols of Israel’s worship contain the same “spiritual” meaning as New Testament

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<sup>9</sup> Calvin regards the mention of trumpets in 1 Cor. 15:52 and 1 Thess. 4:16 as metaphorical. No comment is made on the trumpets that appear in the book of Revelation. T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 119, hazards a guess at why Calvin refused to write a commentary on the book of Revelation: “apocalyptic, involving the use of allegory, was part of the Old Testament method of teaching; and he treated, even though more from a sense of duty than with pleasure, the apocalyptic parts of Ezekiel and Daniel, as witness his lectures on those books. But he may have considered that apocalyptic is foreign to the New Testament as if it involved a re-veiling of the clear and unambiguous Gospel.” While the New Testament remains silent on the use of musical instruments in public worship, Calvin feels no hesitation to commend them in the public sphere, with or without the explicit permission of Scripture.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, R. Scott Clark, *Recovering the Reformed Confession: Our Theology, Piety, and Practice* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008) and Michael Bushell, *The Songs of Zion* (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown and Covenant Publications, 1980).

<sup>11</sup> It is important to point out that Paul uses the term “weak,” ἀσθενῆ (Gal. 4:9), to describe the “elemental things,” i.e., practices of the old covenant, to which the Galatian Christians wrongly returned, such as the celebration of days, months, seasons and years, rather than remaining “true sons” of God (Gal. 4:1-10). Cf. *Comm.* Gal. 4:9. in the economy of God, synonymous to “childishness.”

<sup>12</sup> Cf. his comments on Jn. 4:23; Heb. 7:12; Gal. 4:1; Col. 2: 8-23; II.11.13.

worship,<sup>13</sup> there is something qualitatively greater that marks the latter, which, among other things, is the fact that, *fourth*, less material media are needed or desirable. His comment on Hebrews 12:18 is representative:

Mount Sinai can be touched with hands, but Mount Zion can only be known by the spirit. The things which we read about in the nineteenth chapter of Exodus were visible figures; but what we have in the kingdom of Christ is hidden from fleshly experience. If anyone objects that there was a spiritual meaning in all the former things, and that today there are external exercises of holiness by which we are carried up to heaven, I reply that the apostle is speaking comparatively about the greater and the lesser. There is no doubt that when the Law and the Gospel are contrasted, what is *spiritual* predominates in the latter while *earthly* symbols are more prominent in the former.<sup>14</sup>

As the faithful move from childhood to adolescence, then, they require not only less ceremonies, they also require less material helps in their worship of God. On what grounds? Calvin appears to argue both a biblical and theological line of thought, though it may be more accurate to say that he argues according to the economy of salvation—that is, what the Scriptures require of the church during the present age (its adolescence) and what eschatology imagines for the church in the age to come (its adulthood). Biblically, the New Testament commands few external aids, which, for Calvin, implies a negative regard for materiality. Theologically, the end of this age imagines a “face to face” encounter with God, devoid of material symbols, which, for Calvin again, implies a negative judgment on their present use.

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example, *Comm. Heb.* 8:5; *Comm. Exod.* 15:20; *Comm. 2 Sam.* 6:14; *Comm. Ps.* 150:3. *Institutes* 1536 IV.8; VII.20; *Comm. 1 Cor.* 10:3; *Comm. Heb.* 10:1; *Comm. Col.* 2:17.

<sup>14</sup> *Comm. Heb.* 12:18. See also *Comm. 2 Cor.* 3:7. Cf. David C. Steinmetz observes, in “The Reformation and the Ten Commandments,” *Interpretation* 43 (1989), 263, on John Eck’s uniting of “spiritual worship” and the work of religious images.

Calvin repeatedly describes the movement from childhood to adulthood in terms of an ascent, where the faithful by degrees [*per gradus*] rise “to the spiritual kingdom of Christ.”<sup>15</sup> Or as he writes on John 8:54, “faith has its degrees [*gradus*] of seeing Christ.”<sup>16</sup> The apogee of this ascent is an immediate experience of God: “face to face.” While it is clear, in Calvin, that glorification, or the movement to “adulthood,” involves the cessation of liturgical ceremonies, it is less clear whether this experience of immediacy is, in Calvin again, best captured *in terms of intimacy* or, said crudely, *in terms of the most minimal material mediation possible*. A case can of course be made that Calvin favors the former. “But now that we rely on Christ the Mediator,” he remarks on Hebrews 7:25, “we enter by faith right into heaven, because there is no longer any veil to obstruct us. God appears to us openly, and invites us lovingly to meet him face to face.”<sup>17</sup> And again, the author of Hebrews “maintains that it was for our highest good that this was destroyed because by its destruction there was given to us a more intimate access to God” by way of the “spiritual sanctuary of Christ.”<sup>18</sup> Still, there remains a lingering sense that the “weakness” which characterizes the church’s “shadowy” worship points not just to a reduction of material symbols, nor just, in technical terms, a shift in the economy of God’s dealings with the church, but to a problem intrinsic to materiality itself—that is, the *desideratum* in the immediate experience of God may in fact be the absence of

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<sup>15</sup> *Comm.* Jer. 31:12. Cf. *Comm.* Gen. 32:29, “the Lord manifested himself to [the OT prophets] by degrees.”

<sup>16</sup> *Comm.* Jn. 8:54.

<sup>17</sup> *Comm.* Heb. 7:25.

<sup>18</sup> *Comm.* Heb. 9:6. Cf. *Comm.* John 1:18. See also *Comm.* 1 Pet. 1:21, “In Christ God so to speak makes himself little, in order to lower himself to our capacity [*ut se ad captum nostrum submittat*]; and Christ alone calms our consciences that they may dare intimately [*familiariter*] approach God.” Translated and quoted in F. L. Battles, “God Was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacities,” in *Readings in Calvin’s Theology*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 42). This is a point emphasized by J. Todd Billings in *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 71-73. A Johannine reading of ascent may offer another way of relating the movement “above” to God to “intimacy” with God.



material mediation and, more crucially, that the absence of physical media in glory implies an antipathetic view of the present use of such media.

As enthusiastic as Julie Canlis is that Calvin's doctrine of ascension, governed by the idea of *koinoinia*, denotes a positive outcome for creation, where creation "is the ground and grammar of an ascent that is not away from materiality but a deepened experience of communion within it," she still admits that Calvin's rhetoric "can leave a lingering taste of Platonism in the mouth."<sup>19</sup> She writes, "Perhaps Calvin's primary weakness is that his language of earth and heaven is usually cast in terms of mutual exclusivity, giving a sense that the 'upward call' is not so much that their 'eyes are turned to the power of the resurrection' in the here and now (III.9.6), but rather the abandonment of the here and now."<sup>20</sup> Canlis wonders whether in Calvin the "carnal" is to be left behind eschatologically.<sup>21</sup> There is sufficient evidence, I suggest, to believe that the latter may in fact be true. This is initially detectable in his comments on angels, human bodies, the humanity of Christ, and astronomical-heaven-over-against-earth, all of which, *fifth*, draw sharp attention to the mediating purposes of the material realm.

In book two of the *Institutes*, arguing against Osiander's doctrine of the *imago Dei*, Calvin notes that angels enjoy "the direct vision of God."<sup>22</sup> He adds, "if we believe in Christ, we shall take on the form of angels [Matt. 22:30] when we are received into

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<sup>19</sup> Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, 54, 120. On the question of platonic influence or affinity in Calvin, see material in chapter four.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 120. She notes that despite Calvin's rhetoric, Lucien Richard argues that Calvin's ascent does not involve a "contempt for the world." See Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1974).

<sup>21</sup> Billings, *Union With Christ*, 80, wonders whether the issue is human finitude or human sin.

<sup>22</sup> II.12.6.

heaven, and this will be our final happiness.”<sup>23</sup> What exactly will constitute the human resemblance to angels?<sup>24</sup> Calvin answers variously. For one, we gain angel-like existence when we achieve an un-aided vision of God, a point he stresses in his comment on First Corinthians 13:12. We cite it at length because of the connections to themes investigated in the previous chapter:

the mode of knowledge which we now have is appropriate to our imperfect state, and what you might call our childhood; because we do not yet have a clear insight into the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven, and we do not yet enjoy *the unclouded vision*. . . . For God, who is otherwise invisible, has appointed these [i.e. the ministry of the Word] as means for revealing Himself to us. Of course this can also be made to embrace the whole structure of the universe, in which the glory of God shines out for us to see, as we find expressed in Rom. 1:20 and Heb. 11:3. The apostle describes the created things as mirrors in which God’s invisible majesty is to be seen, but since Paul is dealing particularly here with spiritual gifts, which are of assistance to the ministry exercised by the Church, and go along with it, we shall not digress further. I say that the ministry of the word is like a mirror. *For the angels do not need preaching, or other inferior aids, or sacraments*. They have the advantage of another way of seeing God, for God does not show them His face merely in a mirror [*in speculo*], but He presents Himself openly before them [*palam se illis praesentem exhibit*]. But we, who have not yet scaled such heights, look upon the likeness of God [*imaginem Dei speculamur*] in the Word, in the sacraments, and, in short, in the whole ministry of the Church.<sup>25</sup>

In some manner, which only the angels now know, our vision of God in the eschaton (“at close quarters”), will involve an immediate sight of God, seeing him as he sees us. While this appears to contradict Calvin’s comment in book 1 of the *Institutes* that angels are

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<sup>23</sup> II.12.6.

<sup>24</sup> On Calvin’s view of the nature and function of angels, and of the particular danger devotion to angels posed to Christians, see Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory*, 39-53.

<sup>25</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 13:12, emphasis added. Van der Kooi, *As In A Mirror*, 57-63, argues that the metaphor of the mirror opens up a central way to understand Calvin’s concept of the knowledge of God.

famous for their reluctance to gaze directly at God,<sup>26</sup> the redeemed will in some fashion experience “a mutual seeing” with God, akin to the angelic experience.<sup>27</sup>

Arguing with this end in mind, Calvin asks what purpose is to be served

by a restoration of the world, since the children of God will not be in need of any of this great and incomparable plenty but will be like the angels [Matt. 22:30], whose abstinence from food is *the symbol of eternal blessedness*. But I reply that in the very sight of it there will be such pleasantness, such sweetness in the knowledge of it alone, without the use of it, that this happiness will far surpass all the amenities that we now enjoy.<sup>28</sup>

Like angels, then, humans will have no need of physical food. To require it, conversely, is a kind of weakness. He makes a similar point in his remark on First Corinthians 15:44:

to make it quite clear, let the present quality of the body be called ‘animation’; and its future quality, ‘inspiration’. For as far as the soul’s giving of life to the body now is concerned, that involves the intervention of many aids; for we need drink, food, clothing, sleep and other things like them. That proves to us beyond the shadow of a doubt how *frail* a thing ‘animation’ is. But the power of the Spirit for giving life will be much fuller, and for that reason independent of necessities of that sort.<sup>29</sup>

This angelic quality rests not only on the power of the Holy Spirit, it is also exhibited prototypically in the resurrected Christ. Christ indulges the weakness of the disciples,

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<sup>26</sup> In I.11.3 Calvin states that it is absurd to drag the cherubim from a “childish age” to our present day. Cf. Torrance, *The Triune Creator*, 169ff.

<sup>27</sup> CO 26:156. Curiously, Calvin feels that that human eyes should take their cue, to some degree, from cherubim and seraphim. “Through this covering of the Ark they stopped the human eye from contemplating God...If the Papists say that there were images of cherubs in the Ark, this really refers to...the necessity of closing our eyes when the need comes to have recourse to God and of not approaching him except through the mediation of his voice.” Cf. Michalski, *The Reformation and the Visual Arts*, 63.

<sup>28</sup> III.25.11, emphasis added.

<sup>29</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:44, emphasis added.

Calvin argues, by eating fish, though not because he had need of it. “As He had won newness of life in heaven, He had no more need than the angels of food and drink, but He freely condescends to join in mortals’ common usage.”<sup>30</sup> More than this, it seems that humans might be better off if, like angels, they possessed no bodies, as Calvin wonders out loud in his explication of our need of sacraments. “For if we were incorporeal (as Chrysostom says), he would give us these very things naked and incorporeal. Now, because we have souls engrafted in bodies, he imparts spiritual things under visible ones.”<sup>31</sup> The good news, Calvin believes, is that at death our souls “will then be set free from our bodies, and will have no further need of either the external ministry or other inferior aids.”<sup>32</sup> Qualifying this statement, Calvin affirms that the faithful will resemble angels, though not in all respects, “only so far as they shall be rid of every *weakness* of this present life, no longer liable to the necessities of an existence of *infirmity* and *corruption*.”<sup>33</sup> Lastly, like angels, humans will be immortal, freed from “the prison of the body,” and therefore have no need “to increase their race, as on earth.”

### **3.2.2 The problem of materiality**

While we could make the case that Calvin’s primary concern is the sinless, incorruptible life that the faithful will share with the “elect angels,” there is still a sense that human embodied life, which while blessed “in the beginning,” is now something which must be patiently endured until we reach the age to come. Food, drink, clothing, sleep, procreation (all original “goods”), along with liturgical media (all biblical “goods”) are here

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<sup>30</sup> *Comm.* Lk. 24:42. Over against this interpretation, see Joel. B. Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 167-168.

<sup>31</sup> IV.14.3.

<sup>32</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 13:12.

<sup>33</sup> *Comm.* Matt. 22:30, emphasis added.

classified as weaknesses, alongside the infirmities and corruptions which accompany the fallen condition of humans. And while we treat at length in chapter four Calvin's language of "prison" to describe the physical body,<sup>34</sup> it is noteworthy that he also uses it to describe Christ's own body. He writes, "when Christ commended his spirit to the Father and Stephen his to Christ they meant only that when the soul is freed from the prison house of the body, God is its perpetual guardian."<sup>35</sup> More worryingly, at first glance at least, are Calvin's comments on First Corinthians 15:27. When Christ returns the Kingdom back to the Father, Calvin writes:

[this] does not mean that He will abdicate from the Kingdom in this way, but will transfer it in some way or other [*quodammodo*] from His humanity to His glorious divinity, because then there will open up for us a way of approach, from which we are now kept back by our weakness. In this way, therefore, Christ will be subjected to the Father, because, when the veil has been removed, we will see God plainly, reigning in His majesty, and the humanity of Christ will not longer be in between us to hold us back from a nearer vision of God.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. III.25.1; III.6.5, n. 9; III.9.4; III.25.3.

<sup>35</sup> I.15.2.

<sup>36</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:27. Richard A. Muller addresses the charge of Nestorianism against Calvin's Christology in "Christ in the Eschaton: Calvin and Moltmann on the Duration of the *Munus Regium*," *The Harvard Theological Review* 74.1 (1981): 31-59. He writes, "It is not that Christ's humanity 'recedes' but that ours advances according to the economy of salvation and attains, in Christ, a clearer vision of God.... If the delivery of the kingdom to the Father is not an abdication, not a termination of the *regnum Christi*, what is it? Calvin is vague, purposely so, in his explanation, as emphasized by his use of *quodammodo*; but the implication of his argument here, as in the most specific statement given in the *Institutes*, is a change from 'mediate' to 'immediate' rule, a change made possible not by an alteration of Christ's person but by the removal of human *infirmity*" (44, 47); it is also the cessation of Christ's personal or donative rule, which lies under the *regnum Patris* and is necessary under the economy of sin and salvation, even as his universal rule continues eternally (43). Heinrich Quistorp's mistake, in *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), Muller argues, is to have confused epistemological and economical changes in the divine-human relation for ontological changes in Christ himself. "The 'veil' [as representative of economic and epistemological "distance"] to which Calvin refers is not so much Christ's humanity as our infirmity." See also Robert C. Doyle, "The Content of Moral Decision Making in the Writings of John Calvin" (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1981), 317-322; and Billings, "Encountering a Mystery in Union with Christ: On Communion with the Incomprehensible God," in *Union with Christ*, ch. 3. Quistorp's judgment of Calvin's eschatology is key because it is picked up nearly wholesale by theologians like Jürgen Moltmann and A. A. van Ruler. For a summary discussion, see Charles A. M. Hall, *With the Spirit's Sword: The Drama of Spiritual Warfare in the Theology of John Calvin* (Zurich: EVZ Verlag; Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1968), 86-90, 207-29. See also Colin Gunton, "Aspects of

What sort of “immediate” encounter should the faithful yearn for in their encounter with the Father? Should they desire to “leave the earth” in their prayers as Christ did in his intercourse with the Father?<sup>37</sup> What does Calvin mean that, following Christ’s resurrection, “everything carnal which belonged to Christ should be consigned to oblivion and discarded, in order that we may make it our whole study and endeavor to seek and possess him in spirit”?<sup>38</sup> Do the “organs of the body” play no positive role in the external means which sustain Christian faith, yielding instead to the ostensibly superior operations of the so-called organs of the soul (mind, heart, will, spirit)? The sense that the physical creation plays a largely peripheral, if not negative, role in Calvin’s liturgical thinking is reinforced, incidentally but still significantly, by the apparently worthier nature of the *astronomical* heavens over against the earth.

Calvin writes that “the nearer we approach to God, the more conspicuous becomes his image. For truly God there exercises his own power and wisdom much more clearly than on earth.”<sup>39</sup> The contemplation of the physical heavens, in fact, constitutes “the last step of our ascent to God.”<sup>40</sup> Calvin’s comment on Jeremiah 51:15-16, echoing Plato in the *Timaeus*, is equally representative: “The wisdom of God is visible throughout the whole world, but especially in the heavens.”<sup>41</sup> And again, “as a more distinct image of [God] is

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Salvation: Some Unscholastic Themes from Calvin’s *Institutes*,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 1.3 (1999): 253-265.

<sup>37</sup> *Comm.* Jn. 17:1.

<sup>38</sup> In “An Inventory of Relics,” in *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 1, 290.

<sup>39</sup> *Comm.* Ezek. 1:22.

<sup>40</sup> Zachman, *Image and Word*, 43.

<sup>41</sup> *Comm.* Jer. 51:15-16.

engraven on the heavens, David has particularly selected them for contemplation, that their splendor might lead us to contemplate all parts of the world.”<sup>42</sup>

While the ladder of ascent, we might say, involves a profitable look-about of the earth below, the evidence suggests that what we may have, in Calvin, is an escalator of ascent, moving one way upward. The purpose of physical symbols of God’s presence involves the near exclusive purpose of inducing the faithful to raise their souls “higher and rise to heaven.”<sup>43</sup> The fear that humans will get stuck on earth, on the one hand, and that God will be “shut up within bars of wood or iron,”<sup>44</sup> on the other, is so strong for Calvin that he interprets these symbols in rhetorically, if not also theologically, single-minded fashion: as aids to raise the mind “up to heaven” and the eyes “above this world,” without any sense that the material realm is left with any theologically positive work to do here.<sup>45</sup> Lastly, while the explicit focus for many of the passages cited above is anthropological, Calvin’s eschatological commentary informs and implicates what he regards as the appropriate present liturgical practices of the church.

### **3.2.3 The problem of mediation**

One may certainly argue, as Canlis does, that Calvin rightly understood “heaven” as the fulfillment of communion with God.<sup>46</sup> As she sums up Calvin: “Heaven represents God’s

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<sup>42</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 19:1.

<sup>43</sup> *Comm.* Isa. 66:1.

<sup>44</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 78:41.

<sup>45</sup> *Comm.* Isa. 40.

<sup>46</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 118-121. She writes, “Calvin is acutely aware that this is not a ‘dwelling among the spheres ... nor is it literally a place beyond the world, but we cannot speak of the kingdom of God without using ordinary language.’ Heaven is a qualitative place, made so by God’s otherness. ‘I am rather inclined to refer it to heaven, conceiving the meaning to be, that the ways of God rise high above the world, so that if we are truly desirous to know them, we must ascend above all heavens’. Paul’s injunction to the

freedom *from* human manipulation and *for* communion,” and thus by implication “heaven” involves good news for both “the heavens and the earth.”<sup>47</sup> One may also argue that, his rhetorical habits notwithstanding, Calvin operates with an eschatological rather than a metaphysical dualism in light of his principled christological vision for the created realm.<sup>48</sup> One may further argue that the church’s material symbols are justifiably “inferior,” functionally rather than ontologically, economically rather than essentially, compared to a “face to face” knowledge of God. With Richard Muller, one may argue that when the blessed saints are fully united to the person of Christ and “cleave completely to God,”<sup>49</sup> they will attain an immediate vision of God, not because Christ’s humanity has receded but because theirs has “advanced according to the economy of salvation.”<sup>50</sup> And with Todd Billings, one may finally argue that the beatific vision in Calvin is simply ambiguous,<sup>51</sup> where certain affirmations of the eternal mediation of the incarnate Christ must be kept in tension with the sense “that the incarnate Christ’s ‘standing in the middle’ is only a temporary phenomenon.”<sup>52</sup> Yet at a certain point Calvin’s rhetorical patterns acquire an inertia which signifies a state of mind regarding

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Colossians to ‘seek those things that are above’ (Col. 3:1) directly informs this understanding of ascent as an epistemic act of obedience in which our notions of God are informed by God’s own presence.” Cf. Calvin’s “Catechism of the Church of Geneva,” *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 2, 76, where he describes heaven as synonymous with “exalted, might, incomprehensible.”

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 119, emphasis original.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Schreiner’s observation, *The Theater of His Glory*, 22-30, that for Calvin creation existed in a constant state of instability.

<sup>49</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:27. Cf. Heiko Oberman, “The ‘Extra’ Dimension in the Theology of Calvin,” *JEH* 21 (1970): 43-64.

<sup>50</sup> Muller, “Christ in the Eschaton,” 44, 48.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Calvin’s comments on 1 Pet. 1:21; John 1:18; 2 Pet. 1:4.

<sup>52</sup> Billings, *Union With Christ*, 83. He adds, “Absent from Calvin’s account of this final vision of God is the normal vocabulary of accommodation, of God’s condescension in Christ to limited human capacity in order to make knowledge of God possible.... Calvin seems to think that the union with God that occurs in redemption could be so proper to redeemed humans that not even the mediation (or ‘middle-ness’) of the incarnation is necessary as an accommodating revelation in order for the eyes of humans to gaze upon God” (83-84). For a similar critique of a Calvinian mindset in T. F. Torrance, see Hart, “Between the Image and the Word,” in *Between the Image and the Word*, 13-42.



the material conditions of worship. It is not simply what Calvin says, it is what he fails to say. He fails to see how throughout Scripture creation provides the mediating context for all enactments of public worship, now and in the age to come. He likewise fails to press to its logical conclusion the mediating work of Christ and the Spirit in all activities proper to the human creature.

If we wish to speak of an immediate (i.e. “face to face”) encounter with God by the glorified elect, this can only be done in a carefully qualified sense—qualified in two ways, specifically. If the faithful are promised a “face to face” encounter with God, it will be a hypostatic one,<sup>53</sup> where the person of the Spirit mediates the creature’s encounter with the person of the Father through the person of the Son,<sup>54</sup> rather than a mingling of essences or, as it were, a direct “plug-in” of humanity to the divine essence.<sup>55</sup> And if the blessed saints can look forward to an immediate vision of God, in an optical sense, it will not be a straightforwardly empirical one, where the simple act of opening glorified eyeballs will yield the “unclouded vision” of God. Nor will it be a “spiritual” one, by virtue of something which inheres in the human spirit. Instead it will be a *Spirit*-mediated sight of God, as it always has been, except now un-distorted by a sinful state.<sup>56</sup> The blessed will behold the face of God in Christ precisely because of the Spirit’s work to

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<sup>53</sup> Hart, “Unseemly Representations,” in *Between the Image and the Word*, 181-185, makes a similar point but in relation to the icon in Orthodox perspective.

<sup>54</sup> On this point, Calvin notes, in *Comm. Heb. 1:3*, “God is revealed to us in no other way than in Christ. The radiance in the substance of God is so mighty that it hurts our eyes, until it shines on us in Christ...while God is incomprehensible to us in Himself, yet His form appears to us in the Son.” See also *Comm. Jn. 6:47*.

<sup>55</sup> On this point, see Thomas G. Weinandy, *The Father’s Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995).

<sup>56</sup> *Comm. Jn. 6:46*, “For these two things must be joined: there can be no knowledge of Christ until the Father enlightens by His Spirit those who are blind by nature; and yet it is useless to seek God unless Christ leads the way, for the majesty of God is higher than men’s senses can reach.”

capacitate the redeemed to see God in a manner commensurate to the way in which God sees them. To see God, for glorified humanity, will be to enjoy the intimate presence of God, which the Spirit shall make possible.<sup>57</sup> Not only, then, is it appropriate to speak of Spirit's eternal mediation of our knowledge of God in Christ as such, it is also necessary to speak of the mediation which will occur *in and through the resurrected body*,<sup>58</sup> of the continual mediation which will take place through the *new creation*, and of the *material symbols of worship* which the blessed saints employ in glory (trumpets, songs, and God only knows what else), all of which will be accounted to the work of Christ and the Spirit.<sup>59</sup> It is ever and always a Two Hands work which occurs through, and not despite, creaturely realities.

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<sup>57</sup> Sight as presence is something Fee explores in *God's Empowering Presence*, 5-9. See also Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit—In Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries, and Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 13. Calvin says this in his *Sermons on Job 21:13*, "Forasmuch then as God is present with us by means of the word ... we must desire always to be in His presence.... Not only therefore should we have God before our eyes but we should desire Him to look upon us and guide us." He adds on Job 14:13, that though the present disfigured *imago* creates a blindness in the human creature, "God enlightens us by His Spirit and in such a way that we are able to behold Him, as far as we need for the transforming of us into His glory and for the reforming of us by His Holy Spirit."

<sup>58</sup> David M. Moffitt, in "Unveiling Jesus' Flesh: A Fresh Assessment of the Relationship Between the Veil and Jesus' Flesh in Hebrews 10:20," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 37 (2010): 71-84, stresses the importance of Jesus' corporeal life in his mediatorial work in heaven.

<sup>59</sup> Suzanne McDonald, "Beholding the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ: John Owen and the 'Reforming' of the Beatific Vision," in Mark Jones and Kelly Kapci, eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2012), 141-158, advances a similar argument on behalf of John Owen over against Thomas Aquinas and Francis Turretin, who echo Calvin's thinking at different points. She writes that, for Owen, "We do not have unmediated access to Christ's person in his ascended glory; we behold the glory of Christ, in his divinity and humanity, through the mirror of the scriptures.... The same pattern that [saint] Paul has set forth for us now will be the pattern that endures for all eternity" (149). For Owen, more significantly, "the beatific vision will involve glorified physical sight as well as the most purified intellectual apprehension" (154). The knowledge of God by the blessed elect will differ from the sort of knowledge that angels enjoy specifically on account of the resurrected body. "To Owen," McDonald adds, "to deny a place to our glorified bodily senses is scripturally and theologically wrong-headed. So, he insists that with regard to the beatific vision, 'The body as glorified, with its senses, shall have its use and place herein. After we are clothed again with our flesh, we shall see our Redeemer with our eyes' .... 'Unto whom is it not a matter of rejoicing that with the same eyes wherewith they see tokens and signs of [Christ] in the sacrament of the supper, they shall behold himself immediately in his own person?'" (157).

### 3.2.4 Summary

One of the distinctive characteristics of Calvin's language about the material form of public worship is the way in which it is marked by a vertical (upwards-to-heaven) and uni-directional (earth-to-heaven) orientation. Calvin repeatedly stresses the need for the faithful to ground their worship in both a heavenly originating and ending point. Earth, conversely, plays a largely negative role, serving chiefly as a one-way launching point, *away* from earth, *up* to heaven. For Calvin, God descends through the material symbols of worship so that the human creature might in turn ascend to him, but without any notion of creation's ongoing *material* participation in that ascent. Nor is there a sense in which the faithful "return" to created reality with a heavenly "operating system," where the ascent to heaven grounds, orients and inspires the church's worship on earth, the proper domain of earthlings. Earthy matter in this context is largely left behind. Concomitantly, creation's fundamental dynamism is transferred to the domain of heaven, where the "real" action is perceived to take place, while the center of liturgical gravity is relocated from the whole of humanity to the internal regions of human life. While individual exceptions exist to the following judgment of Calvin's liturgical theology, it is generally true that in Calvin the material symbols of worship become, at best, an unfortunate necessity and, at worst, inert powers whose chief function is to activate other faculties of the soul.

We have also seen how Calvin's thinking is generally marked by a radical discontinuity as it relates to the material character of public worship: 1) discontinuity between old to new covenantal liturgy vis-à-vis material symbols, and 2) discontinuity between the

material creation at large and the material creation in the church's worship. Might it be possible to conceive a stronger sense of continuity between these respective spheres? I believe it is. When the Scriptures are read through what might be called a temple theology, I contend that it is possible to perceive a more richly dynamic relationship between the "heavenly" and "earthly" orientations of public worship as well as between the "work" of worship and the "work" of creation. As I will seek to demonstrate in the following section, faithful worship according to the prophets and apostles is oriented simultaneously backward historically, to the original creation, and forward eschatologically, to the new creation, while always linked (figuratively) upward to the kingdom of heaven, the domain of God's perfect rule. In light of this, the created realm will be seen to play an important role in the church's worship, precisely because it is God's unswerving pleasure through his Two Hands to establish worship on earth as it is in heaven. In light of this, we will also discover a way in which the material condition of public worship is caught up in a double movement: in the movement of creation's praise at large and in the movement of Christ and the Spirit to enable creation to become a dynamic theater of God's glory.

### **3.3 CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSALS (I)**

In part one of my constructive proposals, I contend that a temple theology offers a better account of the relationship between creation and cult. While I make no attempt to insist on a particular ecclesial form of liturgy, I endeavor to re-conceptualize the role that Calvin perceived for materiality in public worship. I propose that Calvin's original instincts about creation were the right ones, even if he failed to carry them far enough. I

seek to demonstrate that the epiphanic, aesthetic, pedagogical, admonitory, doxological activity of the created realm exists in continuous relationship, though refracted in symbolic fashion, to the liturgical context of the church. And I offer the beginning of a christological and pneumatological line of argument for the kinaesthetic character of the church's liturgical life.

### 3.3.1 The temple theology of Scripture

In his work *The Ideology of Ritual*, F. H. Gorman suggests that, for Israel, “cosmos provides the necessary context for correct enactment of ritual; ritual only has meaning with a specific cosmos.”<sup>60</sup> John Walton advances a similar idea, when he writes that, “Temple and cosmos [in Scripture] are largely synonymous (homological), each representing an image of the other.”<sup>61</sup> Three lines of imagery—cosmological, horticultural and architectural—are repeatedly brought together by the biblical authors in theologically constitutive ways to describe the *locus* of the temple, the place which betokens both the presence and the order of God in fullness, “on earth as it is in heaven.”<sup>62</sup> And while it can be said that *temple imagery* permeates the New Testament writings, I propose that a *temple theology* frames the mind of the apostolic church and as such reinforces the intimate relation between creation and worship.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> F. H. Gorman, Jr., *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology* (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1990), 47; 39.

<sup>61</sup> John H. Walton, “Creation in Genesis 1:1-2:3 and the Ancient Near East: Order out of Disorder after *Chaoskampf*,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 43 (2008): 48-63.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Nicholas Perrin, *Jesus the Temple* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 67.

<sup>63</sup> In addition to the material cited below, see also T. Desmond Alexander and Simon Gathercole, eds., *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology* (Carlisle, Eng.: Paternoster Press, 2004); Philip P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World* (JSOTSup 106; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992); Vern Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Press, 1991; online: <http://www.frame-poythress.org/ebooks/the-shadow-of-christ-in-the-law-of-moses/>); James B. Jordan, *Through New Eyes: Developing a Biblical View of the World* (Brentwood, TN:

We begin with the Garden. Gordon Wenham represents the general consensus in biblical scholarship, when he writes: “The garden of Eden is not viewed by the author of Genesis simply as a piece of Mesopotamian farmland, but as an archetypal sanctuary, that is a place where God dwells and where man should worship him.”<sup>64</sup> The linguistic parallels between Genesis and the ceremonial system of Israel are significant. God’s command to Adam “to till and keep” the garden, for example, is the same language used in Exodus 3:12 and Numbers 28:2 to describe sacrificial offerings (cf. Num. 3:7-8; 8:26). If Eden is functioning as a sanctuary, Wenham argues, “then perhaps Adam should be described as an archetypal Levite.”<sup>65</sup> The verb *hithallek*, in Genesis 3:8, “to walk to and fro,” is the same term used to describe the divine presence in the later tent sanctuaries of Leviticus 26:12, Deuteronomy 23:15 and 2 Samuel 7:6-7. The cherubim which guard the east entrance to the garden evoke the cherubim of Solomon’s temple, who guard the entrance to the inner sanctuary (1 Kgs. 6:23-28), the two cherubim who form the throne of God in the inner sanctuary (Exod. 25:18-25), and pictures of cherubim which decorate the curtains of the walls of the temple (1 Kgs. 6:29). The tree of life adumbrates the menorah candelabrum, while God clothes Adam and Eve in a manner similar to the way that

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Wolgemuth and Hyatt, 1988; online: [http://www.entrewave.com/freebooks/docs/a\\_pdfs/jjne.pdf](http://www.entrewave.com/freebooks/docs/a_pdfs/jjne.pdf)); Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). I owe Michael Farley a considerable thanks for letting me look at his lecture notes on this topic.

<sup>64</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” in *Proceedings of the 9<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Jewish Studies* 9 (1986), 399. Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 86-87, adds: “Like temples, [gardens] are walled off from quotidian reality, with all its instability and irregularity and the threats these pose, and thus they readily convey an intimation of immortality.”

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 401.

Moses clothes the priests (Exod. 28:41; 29:8; 40:14; Lev. 8:13).<sup>66</sup> The water in the garden brings to mind the great river that flows out of the New Jerusalem temple to sweeten the Dead Sea, and the seventh day of rest, in an Ancient Near Eastern context, symbolized the day when the gods, by entering the temple place, took control of the cosmos. Walton explains, “when Genesis indicates that God rested on the seventh day, it tells us that in this account of the functional origins of the cosmos, the cosmos is being portrayed as a temple.”<sup>67</sup> The garden, as a microcosm of “the heavens and the earth,” represents thus the house of God, a place of ordered flourishing under the personal rule of Yahweh.<sup>68</sup>

With the advent of the tabernacle (along with all the little tabernacles that marked the time of the patriarchs), the presence of God occupies a specific cultic place, rather than the entire universe. “The presence of God,” Jon Levenson rightly notes, “is not diminished but concentrated.”<sup>69</sup> Whereas the world in its fullness represented the dwelling of God, now, after the distortion of creation which resulted from sin, a “divine contraction” points to the temple as the “holy space” of God. Yet with both major and minor prophets there is always a persistent hope that the earth would once again “be

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<sup>66</sup> Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say about Human Beings* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2012), 73, argues that that Israel's temple informs its narrative of the creation story, not the other way around.

<sup>67</sup> Walton, “Creation in Genesis 1:1-2:3,” 61: “Genesis 1 is composed along the lines of a temple dedication ceremony in which over a seven-day period, the functions of the cosmic temple are initiated and the functionaries installed. The functions center on the royal and priestly roles of people, but the imagery is defined by the presence of God who has taken up his rest in the center of this cosmic temple. Through him, order is maintained, and nonfunctional disorder is held at bay—through him all things cohere.”

<sup>68</sup> While God was the God of the heavens (Dan. 2:18-19), dwelling in the heavens (Ps. 115:3), where his throne resided (Ps. 11:4), with the earth as his footstool (Isa. 66:1-2), nonetheless there is a basic sense that God occupies all space in heaven and on earth (1 Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 139:7). The parallels between Genesis 1 and Exodus 25-40 are also seen by many scholars to reinforce the intimate relationship between *cosmos* and *cultus*. Work in both domains is *completed*; the *Spirit of God* hovers over both labors; the architects of both projects (God, Moses) *see* the work unfolding; and then *bless* the *finished* work. See Enns, *The Evolution of Adam*, 71; P. J. Kearney, “Creation and Liturgy: The P Redaction of Ex 25-40,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 89 (1977): 375-378.

<sup>69</sup> Levenson, “The Temple and the World,” *The Journal of Religion* 64.3 (1984), 297.

filled with the knowledge of the glory of God” (Hab. 2:14). The Jerusalem temple as such functions both protologically and eschatologically, looking backwards and forwards.<sup>70</sup> It serves here “as a survival of the primal paradise lost to the ‘profane’ world, the world outside the sanctuary (Latin, *fanum*) and as a prototype of the redeemed world envisioned by some [e.g., Isa. 44:28; Jer. 33:10-11; Ezek. 40-48] to lie ahead.”<sup>71</sup> Israel’s chief sanctuary, in short, represents a liturgical nexus of the primal and the final, where each of its constituent parts engenders a decisive cosmology. The three spaces (outer courts, inner courts, holy of holies), the “molten sea,” the altar of incense, the twelve bronze bulls, the lampstands, the lilies, gourds, palm trees and pomegranates, the woodwork decorated with inlaid gold, the ark of the covenant, the priestly garments, the curtains, the precious stones—together all of this symbolized a miniature cosmos, ordered according to God’s rule, and thus also an eschatological hope.<sup>72</sup> As Gregory Beale explains, “The temple was a small-scale model and symbolic reminder to Israel that God’s glorious presence would eventually fill the whole cosmos and that the cosmos would be the container for God’s glory and not a mere small architectural container.”<sup>73</sup>

With Ezekiel 33-48, as Daniel Block comments, we discover a theological *via media* between Israel’s temple and the vision of St. John in the Apocalypse. In both narratives we find a visionary transport of the prophet to a high mountain, the sight of a new world

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<sup>70</sup> Ps. 78:69, “He built his sanctuary [the Jerusalem temple] like the high heavens; like the earth, which he has founded forever.”

<sup>71</sup> Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel*, 90.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), parts 2-4; G. K. Beale, “Cosmic Symbolism of temples in the Old Testament,” in *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 29-80; Craig G. Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell: A Christian View of Place for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), ch. 4; T. D. Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002).

<sup>73</sup> Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 19.



with Jerusalem at the center, the dwelling of God in the midst of his people, which produces a state of perfect well-being, the presence of the glory of God in the city, a heavenly interpreter with a measuring rod with which he measures the city, and the presence of the river of life.<sup>74</sup> Looking back to Eden, Susan Niditch discerns the same cosmogonic emphases in Ezekiel that one finds in Genesis 1-11. Looking forward to the New Eden,<sup>75</sup> Block notes the way in which the prophet's vision anticipates the renewal of both spiritual and physical realms, of both interior and exterior life.<sup>76</sup> Robin Routledge contends that this renewal, in each of these paradigmatic texts, is owed to the Spirit of God: with the outpouring of the Spirit comes the redemption and re-creation of the whole earth, a "holy space," like the space of the temple, saturated with the glory of God.<sup>77</sup> While certain prophecies saw the temple extending over all of Jerusalem (Isa. 4:5-6; Jer. 3:16-17; Zech. 1:16—2:13), Beale shows how other prophecies envisioned the temple spreading over all of the land of Israel (Ezek. 37:26-28; similarly Lev. 26:10-13), and even over the entire earth (Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45), while the book of Revelation insists that the entire cosmos has become the temple (21:1—22:5).<sup>78</sup> In this sense, Beale argues, the intended design of Israel's temple will have been completed: the divine presence "will again fill the whole earth and heaven and become co-extensive with it. Then the

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<sup>74</sup> Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 502-503. Discrepancies of course exist, but the parallels are sufficiently strong to warrant a legitimate comparison. Cf. Joel 4:17-18; Zech. 14:5b-11; John 7:38; Rev. 22:1-2.

<sup>75</sup> Susan Niditch, "Ezekiel 40-48 in a Visionary Context," *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 48.2 (1986): 208-224.

<sup>76</sup> Block, *Ezekiel*, 701-702.

<sup>77</sup> Robin Routledge, "The Spirit and the Future in the Old Testament: Restoration and Renewal," in *Presence, Power and Promise: The Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament*, eds. David G. Firth and Paul D. Wegner (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2011), 362-366. Cf. Cf. Izak Cornelius, "Paradise Motifs in the 'Eschatology' of the Minor Prophets," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 14 (1988): 41-83. Rodrigo J. Morales, *The Spirit and the Restoration of Israel: New Exodus and New Creation Motifs in Galatians* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010). John F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000).

<sup>78</sup> Beale, "Eden, The Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," *JETS* 48.1 (2005), 28.

eschatological goal of the temple of the Garden of Eden dominating the entire creation will be finally fulfilled.”<sup>79</sup> Richard Bauckham summarizes:

Like his presence in the temple (e.g. Ezek. 43), this eschatological presence of God entails holiness and glory. As his eschatological presence, it is also the source of the new life of the new creation.... God’s presence ... means life in the fullest sense: life beyond the reach of all that now threatens and contradicts life, life which is eternal because it is immediately joined to its eternal source in God.<sup>80</sup>

With the New Testament, the idea of the temple is substantially reconfigured.<sup>81</sup> In John’s gospel, Jesus is presented as the new temple, the one who personifies the presence of God *par excellence* (John 2:19, 21). Evoking a memory of the Genesis account (Gen. 3:8), God in Christ becomes ambulatory again, tabernacling “among us” (John 1:14). Gordon Lathrop employs the familiar language of Israel to describe this event:

For the Fourth Gospel, Jesus is himself Bethel. In him is the cosmological key, the gate of heaven, the awesome place, the holy exchanges, the very presence of God beside the poor and wretched. He is the one at the bottom of the ladder, overwhelming yet accessible to needy humanity. What humanity has longed for in shrines and temples is found in an utterly new way in him. From this new Bethel, new lines run out toward the structure of things.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 25. Cf. Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, 111, 161-163. William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21-22 and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1985), 38, notes how the New Jerusalem will be the “place from which the glory of God radiates throughout the new universe.”

<sup>80</sup> R. J. Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 140-141.

<sup>81</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 131, puts the point incisively: “Given the respect assigned earlier to the Jerusalem temple and particularly to its sanctuary as the *axis mundi*—the meeting place between the heavenly and the earthly, the divine and the human—this appearance of divine glory is remarkable. God’s glory, normally associated with the temple, is now manifest on a farm! At the birth of his son, God has compromised (in a proleptic way) the socio-religious importance of the temple as the culture center of the world of Israel.”

<sup>82</sup> Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Ground: A Liturgical Cosmology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 47.

More simply perhaps, as W. D. Davies writes, holy space has now been “Christified.”<sup>83</sup> He is the singular and supreme “place” of God on earth, which re-defines all other places. Though as Peter Enns observes, it might be necessary also to say that holy time has been Christified,<sup>84</sup> inasmuch as a new creation bursts forth under a new age.

Along with this connotation of temple, Nicholas Perrin points to the second shift in meaning which the temple undergoes in the New Testament:

the body of the crucified and risen Lord was the portal through which true worshippers gained access to the heavenly temple (of which Israel’s temples heretofore were only a copy); Christ’s body, soon identified with the Church itself, was also the ingress through which the heavenly temple would take shape in creation. God’s breaking into earthly reality, which amounted to God’s establishing the heavenly temple on earth, was signaled by the Spirit’s presence. By virtue of their possession of the Spirit, believers deemed themselves to be the true temple of God, but only in an anticipatory sense.<sup>85</sup>

While Jesus is recognized as the true temple only as the risen, ascended Lord, it is with the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost that the church discovers *itself* as the temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:21; Rev. 3:12; cf. 1 Pet. 2:9).<sup>86</sup> And though the temple’s center of gravity, as it were, remains in the “heavenly realm,” where Christ is seated at the right hand of the

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<sup>83</sup> W. D. Davies, *Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 368.

<sup>84</sup> Enns, *The Evolution of Adam*, 75: “Jesus as sanctuary is an instantiation of primordial time.”

<sup>85</sup> Perrin, *Jesus the Temple*, 49.

<sup>86</sup> On the inter-textual as well as socio-religious tension that opens up between the Jerusalem temple and the new *naos* oriented around Jesus, as it is played out in the book of Acts, Perrin, *Jesus the Temple*, 64-64, comments: “it is reductionistic to deem Stephen’s sermon as either undifferentiatedly ‘pro-temple’ or flatly ‘anti-temple’. The speech reflects eschatological nuance, implying an important role for the Jerusalem temple in its day but asserting the necessity of a new temple order,” which marches out to the ends of the earth under the Spirit’s superintendence.

Father, temple life irrupts on earth through the Spirit-possessed church.<sup>87</sup> As Beale writes, “This is why the book of Revelation usually portrays the ‘temple’ (*naos*) in heaven (11 of 15 times), though related to believers on earth (e.g. 1:13; 11:1-4) through their identification with the Spirit existentially (cf. Rev. 1:4 and 4:5 with 1:13; 2:2; 11:4) and with Christ (cf. 3:12 with 21:22) and their representative angels positionally (cf. 1:13 and 1:16; 2:1).”<sup>88</sup> As with Jesus, so with the church: “Sacred space is wherever Jesus is present with his followers.”<sup>89</sup> It might be more accurate, however, to say that Jesus’ followers exhibit “templeness” *only because* the Spirit inhabits them.<sup>90</sup>

Rather wondrously, finally, the faithful discover that their individual bodies are also a kind of temple. In a comment on 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, N. T. Wright remarks, “It is, for Paul, a matter of transferring the holy worship of Israel from the Jerusalem Temple to the bodies of individual members of the church, even in Corinth—especially in Corinth! Once more, the Spirit has taken the place of the Shekinah.”<sup>91</sup> Where the glory of the Lord is, the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit becomes concrete,<sup>92</sup> and because the promise remains certain, that whole earth shall be filled with the glory of God (Num. 14:21; Ps. 72:19; Isa. 6:3), the whole earth can thereby be regarded as a temple. The restoration of the cosmos begins, then, *en Christo*, in his resurrected humanity, and extends outwards

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<sup>87</sup> See G. K. Beale, “The Descent of the Eschatological Temple in the Form of the Spirit at Pentecost,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 56 (2005): 73–102.

<sup>88</sup> Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 388-389.

<sup>89</sup> J. K. Riches, *Conflicting Mythologies: Identity Formation in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 293.

<sup>90</sup> N. T. Wright, “Worship and the Spirit in the New Testament,” in *The Spirit in Worship—Worship in the Spirit*, eds. Teresa Berger and Bryan D. Spinks (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical press, 2009), 11.

<sup>91</sup> Wright, “Worship and the Spirit in the New Testament,” 13-14.

<sup>92</sup> Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 258: “The Spirit himself is the beginning evidence of the new creation, wherein is resurrection existence and the abode of the cosmic temple.... The Spirit is not merely an anticipation or promise of these realities but is the beginning form of them.”

by the Spirit through the church, to encompass, as St. John envisions it, a new heaven and a new earth. The presence and good order of God, symbolized in the language of temple, now extends, one could say, to infinity and beyond.

### **3.3.2 The many senses of temple**

Before we propose two lines of continuity that derive from our exposition of a temple theology, it might be helpful to take a brief account of the data. *First*, while the notion of temple perdures in Scripture, it is identified in a wide variety of ways: with the Garden, the mini-temples of the patriarchal era (e.g., Bethel, Ai, Hebron, Moriah), the movable tabernacle of the Mosaic and juridical era, Solomon's temple, Ezekiel's temple, Herod's temple, and, in the New Testament, with Jesus, the church, human bodies, and the new cosmos.<sup>93</sup>

*Second*, and in light of this, it is important that we distinguish clearly three categories of temple: 1) *person as temple* (Yahweh/Christ/church), 2) *environment as temple* (Garden/Jerusalem/human bodies/new creation) and 3) *cultic system as temple* (the form, content and activities of public worship). When these categories are not clearly differentiated, problems of interpretation ensue. For example, when Beale argues that Jesus fulfills the "substantial essence" (an infelicitous term) of the Jerusalem temple and that the new creation fulfills the "intended design" of Israel's temple, namely that the universe be entirely filled with the presence of God,<sup>94</sup> two very different notions of temple are at work: temple as personal locus for God's presence and temple as

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<sup>93</sup> Cf. Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 45-49.

<sup>94</sup> Beale, "Eden, The Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," 28, 26.

cosmological witness to God's good order. The former points to a hypostatic reality (the tri-personal God), while the latter points to an environmental quality (the cosmos in a state of shalom). The means by which the former accomplishes the latter includes, for Israel, the instruments of the cult, and it is over this point that disagreements in church history become most pronounced.<sup>95</sup>

*Third*, while in Beale's reading the Jerusalem temple performs hefty theological work, re-ordering Israel's relationship to the world *by way of* materially and symbolically oriented liturgical activities, his tentative remarks about New Testament worship seem to find these material-symbolical aids as perhaps accidental rather than integral to the church's formation.<sup>96</sup> While some contemporary theologians may regard the relationship of Israel's liturgy to the church's liturgy as "merely" analogous (whatever that means), others have perceived a stronger sense of continuity. Peter Leithart, for instance, argues that key biblical passages (1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 4:12; 13:15; Matt. 26:28; 1 Cor. 10:18-22, among them) "demonstrate that Paul not merely employs the 'imagery' of the temple, but applies the whole theology of holy space and sacrilege to the new temple of the church. Paul's teaching here should be called a 'temple ecclesiology' rather than simply a literary employment of temple imagery."<sup>97</sup> What Leithart calls a

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<sup>95</sup> On this point, see Michael Farley's examination, in "What is 'biblical' worship?", of three traditions of interpretation (praxis-oriented regulative principle model, patristic-ecumenical model, biblical-typological model).

<sup>96</sup> Chapters 12 and 13 in Beale *The Temple and the Church's Mission* are particularly disappointing on this account.

<sup>97</sup> Leithart, "Synagogue or Temple?", 131. On the question of whether the synagogue or temple provides the primary model for apostolic worship, Leithart writes, "the Jews understood synagogue worship as temple worship *in a different form*. . . . early Christians, following Jewish precedent in this regard, almost invariably described their own assemblies and worship according to the categories of the temple" (123, italics original). So also Vernon H. Kooy, "The Apocalypse and Worship: Some Preliminary Observations," *Reformed Review* 30.3 (1977), 201. Leithart and Kooy would stand over against the

temple ecclesiology, I prefer to call a temple theology in order to take account of the polysemic idea of temple in Scripture.<sup>98</sup> While the argument of this chapter does not hinge on the need to secure any given liturgical form (low vs. high, “classic” v. “free”), I would argue that a temple theology offers an especially cogent way to read the co-inherent relation of creation and worship.

Fourth, while the New Testament employs the category of temple in largely typological rather than literalistic manner, these various temples (Jesus, church, human bodies, new cosmos) remain thoroughly material instantiations.<sup>99</sup> Whatever contrasts are at play in the New Testament, the material shape of public worship is never regarded as problematic *per se*. And whatever “shadowy” may indicate for a new covenantal liturgy, it signifies neither a theological nor an existential problem with materiality as such, nor necessarily a prescription for moderation. What the New Testament *does* find problematic for public worship is corrupt minds, false imaginations, idolatrous hearts, forgetful memories and warped passions.<sup>100</sup>

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judgment of Floyd V. Filson, “The Significance of the Temple in the Ancient Near East. Part IV: Temple, Synagogue, and Church,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 7 (1944): 77-88. See also Donald D. Binder, *Into the Temple Courts The Place of the Synagogue in the Second Temple Period* (SBLDS 169; Atlanta Society of Biblical Literature, 1997); Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman, eds., *The Making of Jewish and Christian Worship* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991).

<sup>98</sup> Similarly, N. T. Wright, “Worship and the Spirit in the New Testament,” 6.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); and Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life*.

<sup>100</sup> For detailed commentary on this issue, see, for example, David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992); Edith M. Humphrey, *Grand Entrance: Worship on Earth as in Heaven* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011), esp. “‘That Your Prayers Not Be Hindered’: Avoiding Pitfalls in Corporate Worship”; John Witvliet, “Calvin’s Theology of Liturgical Sin,” in *Worship Seeking Understanding*, 129-133.

### **3.3.3 The way of “shadowy” worship?**

How then ought we to think of “shadowy” worship? How do we regard the continuity and discontinuity which obtains between Israel’s worship and the church’s worship? For starters, where, with Israel, God is worshiped as Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he is now worshiped as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom the Spirit makes real to the disciples—still the God of the patriarchs and prophets but whose name is disclosed as triune.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, the Jerusalem temple, as the one near-exclusive place where God meets his people, now becomes many places across the face of the earth where God may be acceptably worshiped. What was once singularly fixed now becomes ambulatory, as the church scatters to the four corners of the earth, dispersed to every tongue, tribe and nation. Additionally, the particular activities of the temple, which rehearse the redemptive history of God to Israel, now become the particular activities of the church, oriented around Word and Table. Put differently, where the Jerusalem temple rendered Israel’s salvation history, the church’s liturgy now renders salvation history centered on the decisive revelation of Christ. And the temple, which served as the place of the people’s encounter with the Shekinah of God, now becomes the “temple of the Spirit,” the people in whom the presence of God in Christ is made manifest.

### **3.4 CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSALS (II)**

With this reading of Scripture in mind, two lines of continuity can be proposed. With the respect to the material symbols of worship, whether in an old or a new covenantal liturgy,

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<sup>101</sup> Cf. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, 122-129.



I submit that creation is the necessary context of public worship and that the church's worship subsists in creation's ongoing worship. And I maintain that the kinaesthetic shape of public worship is ever and always caught up in the work of the Two Hands of God. I argue these lines of continuity over against Calvin as well as with and beyond Calvin.

### **3.4.1 Contra Calvin**

Over against Calvin, I argue that the radical separation which he perceives between public worship and the material creation is unpersuasive, that the language of "weakness" to describe the material symbols of worship is not the preferred language of the New Testament, and that his habit of aligning material aids to worship with the language of slow, indolence, sloth, fickleness of human disposition, ignorance, frailty, lower, inferior, infirmity, and their capacity to keep humans bound to earth is largely foreign to the gospels and epistles.<sup>102</sup> Calvin unnecessarily pits material over against spirit, mind and heart (the alleged operations of the soul), and to imply, as he does, that the operations of the body are less important to public worship than the operations of the soul is just as inapt as to say that the soul was less important to Israel's worship than the body.<sup>103</sup> The proper biblical contrast is not between mind and body but between, say, one object of contemplation (Yahweh) along one set of liturgical activities (the Mosaic tabernacle), and another object of contemplation (the triune God) along another set of activities (Word and Table).

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. Harwood, *Denuded Devotion to Christ*, 73-74.

<sup>103</sup> I owe Michael Farley thanks for bringing up this point in personal correspondence.

Moreover, the primary theological language (as opposed to astronomical language) of the New Testament is of *heaven on earth*, not *heaven over against earth*, just as the language of ascent describes an existential movement from self to God, not a spatial movement away from earth to heaven. *Apropos* the epistle to the Hebrews, which figures largely in Calvin's thinking on "shadowy" worship, an ethical-eschatological dualism governs the epistle's treatment of heaven and earth, not a metaphysical one.<sup>104</sup> And the promised inheritance of the saints is not "heaven," as in popular Christian imagination, but a renewed creation, under the perfect rule of Christ: *on earth as in heaven*.<sup>105</sup> Put in liturgical terms, as the Swiss Reformed theologian Jean-Jacques von Allmen once remarked, there is no place on earth "which cannot be a witness of the presence of Christ and a prelude to the restoration of the Cosmos."<sup>106</sup>

Finally, Calvin confuses a temporary provision of material symbols during the present age with a concession to an unfortunate necessity in humans. The fact that few material symbols are explicitly commanded in the New Testament does not need to imply a pessimistic judgment on their material aspect, nor does the fact that the New Jerusalem is marked by the absence of certain material symbols entail a negative regard on their

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<sup>104</sup> David Moffitt, in *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 301, argues that the "dualism of Hebrews is not a dualism of flesh-and-blood body vs. spirit. Rather, it is the kind of dualism that blood sacrifice, at least as depicted in the Pentateuch, appears designed to address—a dualism that assumes the incommensurability of the sinful and impure human being (both at the level of the spirit and of mortal flesh) and the holy, pure realm of God's glorious presence. The latter realm is ultimately the highest heaven; the former is the earth." More critically to our thesis, "The 'coming world' of Heb 2:5 and the 'coming age' of 6:5 refer to the same eschatological reality—a new time *and* space" (81, n. 83, emphasis original).

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Wright, "Worship and the Spirit in the New Testament," 21.

<sup>106</sup> Von Allmen, "A Short Theology of the Place of Worship," 156. Adds Frank Senn, *New Creation: A Liturgical World View* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 62: "This is precisely the eschatological dimension of the Christian liturgy that its celebrants exercise the priestly vocation of the redeemed world and thereby enact life in the new creation."

present use. This only indicates that certain symbols of worship will be appropriate to a given era of the church. If Calvin's first error is to separate what the Scriptures hold together, namely a positive regard for material symbols of worship in both new and old covenantal worship, his second error is one of omission whereby he fails to identify the christological and pneumatological connections between creation at large and creation in the context of public worship.

### **3.4.2 With and beyond Calvin: the movement of creation's praise**

*With and beyond Calvin, I contend, first, that the church's praises subsists in creation's praise.* This is the first movement in which the church is caught up. The work which Calvin perceives creation performing—as a mirror, chock-full of the insignia of God, capable of refreshing the faithful and inviting them to revel in the abundance of God's workmanship as well as an occasion for cataphatic feasting and a stimulus to human praise in concord with the ongoing praise of irrational creatures—is the work that creation continues to perform in the life of the church *inasmuch as creation is the proper context for any creaturely praise.* Worship occurs in and through creation because it is God's continual pleasure to call forth praise in all his works, at all times and in all places. Calvin seems to believe as much, when he comments on Genesis 1:11, “God acts through the creatures, not as if he needed external help, but because it was his pleasure.”<sup>107</sup> It is God's pleasure, that is, as Calvin himself argues, to be found “in the clouds,” not “above the clouds,” in “the very beautiful fabric of the world,” not “in his secret essence.”<sup>108</sup> God

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<sup>107</sup> *Comm. Gen.* 1:11.

<sup>108</sup> I.5.9. Cf. *Comm. Gen.* 3:8. Not only does creation function as a “living image,” so, for Calvin, does the human creature, the Holy Scripture and, supremely so, Christ Jesus. It is for this reason that we have need of no other images, certainly none made by human hands or of human imagination, certainly none which

does so “for our sake”: not as an unfortunate requirement but as a way to honor human creatureliness.<sup>109</sup>

If it is true, as Calvin maintains, that human beings “cannot open their eyes without being compelled to see” God in creation, then this must also, in some sense, be true of the faithful who gather in spaces built out of the material of creation.<sup>110</sup> If it is right to say that both the sophisticated and the “untutored” are able to detect sparks of God’s glory in creation,<sup>111</sup> then it is theologically implausible to argue that the stone, metal, glass, wood and light that comprise a space of worship might not also participate in the sparkling evocation of God’s glory—to ravish the faithful, even. In his comment on Hosea 6:6-7, Calvin writes, “Some ornaments consistent with divine worship are not useless in church if they incline the faithful to practice holy things with humility, devotion and worship.”<sup>112</sup> While we readily concur with Calvin, must it be said only in restrained terms? Might it also be said in capacious terms? Might the material and aesthetic ornaments of public worship induce the faithful to rapturous delight because they find themselves, here too, in the “beauteous theater” of creation?<sup>113</sup>

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have not been ordained by God, which Calvin calls “false images.” In a similar vein, Calvin explains the phrase, “I am the bread of life,” in *Comm. John* 6:48-51, this way: “And thus [God] provides for our weakness, for He does not call us above the clouds to enjoy life, but exhibits it on earth just as if He were exalting us to the mysteries of His Kingdom.”

<sup>109</sup> *Comm. Ps.* 104:1.

<sup>110</sup> *Comm. Rom.* 1:19; I.5.1; I.5.14-15; *Comm. 1 Cor.* 10:1, “Throughout the Scriptures the cloud is called the sign of his presence.” Cf. Lukas Vischer, “Reich, bevor wir geboren wurden: zu Calvins Verständnis der Schöpfung,” *Evangelische Theologie* 69 (2009): 142-160.

<sup>111</sup> I.5.2.

<sup>112</sup> *Comm. Hos.* 6:6-7. Cf. *Comm. Ps.* 9:11 and *Jer.* 7:21.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. *Comm. Ps.* 104:31.

*A second sense in which the church's praise subsists in creation's praise is by bringing side by side, in non-competitive fashion, the praise of "rational" and "irrational" creation.*<sup>114</sup> Calvin notes in his comment on Isaiah 1:3 that "irrational creatures" give instruction to human beings.<sup>115</sup> Under the tuition of creation, all people without distinction receive profit "at the mouth of the same teacher."<sup>116</sup> Even if creatures of earth and heaven do not possess a human tongue, they nonetheless act as "eloquent heralds of the glory of God." Both old and new covenants bear witness to this fact, no less poignantly than in Job 38:7, which tells of a time "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (ESV). Job 12:7-10, adds, "But now ask the beasts, and let them teach you; and the birds of the heavens, and let them tell you. Or speak to the earth, and let it teach you; and let the fish of the sea declare to you" (NASB). Jesus says much the same, when, in his exchange with the Pharisees, in Luke 19:40, he harkens to the admonitory role of creation: "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out." Much better, of course, one might suppose, is the willing acclamation of both human and non-human creation.

While we concede that the biblical authors here describe non-human creation in anthropomorphic terms, there is still a sense, in Scripture and in Calvin, that creation intelligibly communicates *in its own way* to God and to the human creature. If the church's praise can be said to be ontologically inseparable from creation's praise, then

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<sup>114</sup> Richard Bauckham, "Joining Creation's Praise of God," *Ecotheology* 7 (2002), 47-49, claims "that all creatures bring glory to God simply by being themselves and fulfilling their God-given roles in God's creation.... Here all creatures, including ourselves, are simply fellow-creatures expressing the theocentricity of the created world, each in our own created way, differently but in complementarity. In the worship of God there can be no hierarchy among the creatures."

<sup>115</sup> *Comm.* Isa. 1:3.

<sup>116</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 19:3.

the praise of the faithful will be complemented and enriched by what we might call the supra-rational language of creation. The purpose of the kinaesthetic shape of worship, on this thinking, will not be to “get out of the way” but rather to serve the multiple purposes of the liturgy in its own sensory, metaphorical and symbolical ways.<sup>117</sup> The work that artists perform will be to offer “articulate” voice to creation’s praise, while never seeking to replace creation’s own praise.<sup>118</sup> And the work of the church will be to welcome the familiar and strange voice of creation, whose purpose is to train the faithful to taste and see that the Lord is good but without any sense that they will have comprehensively tasted the mystery of the triune life, neither presently nor in the age to come.

### **3.4.3 With and beyond Calvin: the movement of the Two Hands of God**

Along with my first contention that the church’s praise is caught up in the movement of creation’s praise, my second contention is that the church’s praise is caught up in the movement of the Two Hands of God. The kinaesthetic condition of worship is to be thought of as a christologically oriented and pneumatologically ordered space, caught up in the work of Christ and the Spirit to command, sustain, judge, redeem, empower, complete and present creation’s praise as a gift to the Father. Because the place of public worship involves the worship of creatures, it will always be a Christ-centered, Spirit-enabled place fit for creatures. Eight assertions are to be drawn from this.

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<sup>117</sup> More on this point in chapter 6.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Jeremy S. Begbie, *Voicing Creation’s Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), “Christ, Creation, and Creativity,” 169-185; also Begbie, “Faithful Feelings: Music and Emotion in Worship,” in *Resonant Witness: Conversations between Music and Theology*, eds. Jeremy S. Begbie and Steven R. Guthrie (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 323-354.

*First, we can only know what the material creation is on about “in Christ.”* No generic affirmation will suffice. In Christ, the firstborn of creation, we learn where creation is headed: “the complete restoration of a sound and well-constituted nature.”<sup>119</sup> In Christ, the beloved Son of the Father, we learn what creation is for: for fellowship with the triune God. And it is only because of the Holy Spirit that we have epistemological and ontological access to this work of Christ. Calvin writes, “For Christ is that image in which God presents to our view, not only his heart, but also his hands and his feet. I give the name of his *heart* to that secret love with which he embraces us in Christ: by his *hands* and *feet* I understand those works of his which are displayed before our eyes.”<sup>120</sup> The biblical cosmology bears witness to the fact that, in Christ, the earth and heaven are discovered as “good and beloved by God; that this life is the theater of sin and grace, death and life; that history matters and moves in a direction; that the structures of things, including the stars, had a beginning and may have an end; and that all creatures—animate and inanimate—stand before God.”<sup>121</sup> Because Christ stands at the center of the cosmic order, the created realm can be properly regarded as the beloved world of God.<sup>122</sup>

This is something that Calvin could eagerly affirm. From the beginning of creation, he argued, Christ “already truly was mediator, for he always was the head of the Church,

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<sup>119</sup> *Comm. Gen.* 3:14. *Comm. Jn.* 16:11, “But when Christ despoils [Satan] of his tyranny the world is restored and a well-tempered order appears.”

<sup>120</sup> *Comm. Gen.*, “The Argument.”

<sup>121</sup> Lathrop, *Holy Ground*, 45.

<sup>122</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III.1, trans. J. W. Edwards, O. Bussey, and Harold Knight (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), 346 writes: “It is our duty . . . to love and praise the created order,” Barth exclaims, “because, as is made manifest in Jesus Christ, it is so mysteriously well-pleasing to God.” Or as St. Thomas Aquinas beautifully says it: “In [God’s] hand were all the ends of the world . . . when his hand was opened by the key of love, the creatures came forth.” Cited in Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology, vol. II: The Works of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 14.

had primacy over the angels, and was the firstborn of every creature.”<sup>123</sup> As the firstborn of creation, it is in him that all creatures are created, so that Christ might be “the substance or foundation of all things.”<sup>124</sup> And again, “What comparison is there between creature and the Creator, without the interposition of a Mediator?”<sup>125</sup> Because Christ is the mediator of “the whole world,”<sup>126</sup> the author of creatures both visible and invisible,<sup>127</sup> “the lawful heir of heaven and earth, by whom the faithful recover what they had lost in Adam,”<sup>128</sup> and the one who cares and keeps “all of creation in its proper state,”<sup>129</sup> creation discovers itself in motion: from the Father who has caught up the cosmos in the beloved life of his Son by the power of his Spirit.<sup>130</sup> However else we think of the kinaesthetic shape of public worship, in short, it is *in Christ*.

*Second, in public worship, we join the praise of the Firstborn of all creation, who, by virtue of his Spirit-enabled resurrection and ascent to the right hand of the Father is able to announce and enact the praise of the age to come.* In public worship, we join the praise of the chief *Leitourgos*, as Calvin says. Commenting on Hebrews 12:2, Calvin writes, “it is a truth, which may serve as a most powerful stimulant, and may lead us most fervently to praise God, when we hear that Christ leads our songs, and is the chief

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<sup>123</sup> In Joseph Tylanda, “Christ the Mediator: Calvin Versus Stancarò,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 8 (1973), 12. This is a translation of Calvin’s *Responsum ad fratres Polonos, quomodo mediator sit Christus, ad refutandum Stancarò errorem* (1560); CO 9.333-42. Cf. Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 55-57; II.6.4.

<sup>124</sup> *Comm.* Col. 1:15.

<sup>125</sup> *Comm.* Eph. 1:10.

<sup>126</sup> *Comm.* Col. 1:17.

<sup>127</sup> *Comm.* Col. 1:16, 18.

<sup>128</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 8:6.

<sup>129</sup> *Comm.* Heb. 1:3. Christ is the one “who upholds the whole world by His will alone.”

<sup>130</sup> On the question of Calvin’s views of immediate and mediate creation, see John Murray, “Calvin’s Doctrine of Creation” *Westminster Theological Journal* 17 (1954): 21-43.



composer of our hymns.”<sup>131</sup> Creation’s praise therefore *means* something in Christ. As the incarnate temple of God, Christ grounds, orients, and gathers up all of creation’s praise in a gift of love to the Father. Christ’s praise, transposed in the church’s praise, under this light, becomes an actual and symbolic prelude to the restoration of creation’s perfect praise. The church functions therefore as a *partner* of Christ’s praise and a *poet* to creation’s praise: on the one hand, joining Christ’s praise for all of the Father’s marvelous works as well as offering praise *of* and *through* Christ, while, on the other, joining the praise of the cosmos but also translating that praise through the language of its liturgical life, whether enacted in its cultic activities or solidified in its material forms.

*Third, by the power of the Holy Spirit the material creation obtains its life and order.*

“For it is the Spirit,” Calvin writes, “who, everywhere diffused, sustains all things, causes them to grow, and quickens them in heaven and in earth.”<sup>132</sup> The Spirit’s work to animate creation is what Calvin called the Spirit’s “universal grace”<sup>133</sup> or “universal action.”<sup>134</sup> The Spirit is the one who gives and the one who takes life.<sup>135</sup> The prerogative of creaturely life, then, whether earthly or heavenly, belongs properly to the “secret efficacy of the Spirit.”<sup>136</sup> It is also the Spirit who maintains creation’s order. “Unless the Spirit of the Lord upholds everything,” Calvin comments, “it all lapses back into nothingness” or chaos.<sup>137</sup> It is the “secret inspiration,” “hidden support,” “hidden instinct,” “secret virtue,” which constitutes the Spirit’s work to counter the “subversion of all equity and well-

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<sup>131</sup> *Comm.* Heb. 12:2.

<sup>132</sup> I.13.14.

<sup>133</sup> *Comm.* Isa. 44:3.

<sup>134</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 8:14.

<sup>135</sup> *Comm.* Isa. 40:7.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. his comment on Gen. 1:2; see also III.1.2; II.2.13.

<sup>137</sup> *Comm.* Isa. 40:7; *Institutes* I.13.14. See also his comments on Nahum 1:5 and Deut. 5:9-14

constituted order,” which Adam’s rebellion incurred for creation.<sup>138</sup> But if the Spirit is responsible for creation’s order, as Calvin rightly contends, it is important not to think of this order like that of a military or factory assembly line. It is instead a creative order, capable of surprising and enthralling.<sup>139</sup> It is an irrepressibly dynamic order, yielding new configurations of life and prompting praise to a God whose goodness is revealed through such beautiful fecundity.<sup>140</sup>

*Fourth, it is the Spirit’s office to enable the human creature to take “pious pleasure” in creation as well as to make something of it.* Three basic conditions, according to Calvin, are essential for the creature to enjoy creation rightly: humility, the lens of Scripture, and faith.<sup>141</sup> The Spirit is responsible for all of these. The Spirit governs not only our pleasure in creation in general but also our pleasure in the gifts of science and art in particular. As Calvin remarks on Genesis 4:22:

Now, although the invention of the harp, and of similar instruments of music, may minister to our pleasure, rather than to our necessity, still it is not to be thought altogether superfluous; much less does it deserve, in itself, to be condemned. Pleasure is indeed to be condemned, unless it be combined with the fear of God, and with the common benefit of human society. But such is the nature of music, that it can be adapted to the offices of religion, and made profitable to men; if only it be free from vicious attractions, and from that foolish delight, by which it seduces men from better employments, and occupies them in vanity.... Finally, Moses, in my opinion, intends to teach that that race flourished in various and pre-

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<sup>138</sup> Cf. *Comm.* Gen. 2:2; 3:1; Rom. 8:20; Ezek. 10:8; Isa. 40:22; Ps. 104:29. See also Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory*, 22, 30, 34.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, 8.

<sup>140</sup> The world’s beauty, for Calvin, owes its strength and preservation to the power of the Spirit (I.13.14). He adds, in *Comm.* Gen. 1:14, “let us admire this wonderful Artificer, who has so beautifully arranged all things above and beneath, that they may respond to each other in most harmonious concert.”

<sup>141</sup> As Calvin maintains in his “Argument” of Genesis: If profit is to be had in the meditation of God’s works of creation, a person must bring with them “a sober, docile, mild, and humble spirit.” See also *Comm.* John 14:19 and 20:23; III.1.4; IV.14.8.

eminent endowments, which would both render it inexcusable, and would prove most evident testimonies of the divine goodness.<sup>142</sup>

Calvin believes that God “has destined all the riches, both of heaven and earth” for the use of the human creature.<sup>143</sup> But our pleasure in this abundance, he cautions, must be governed by the virtue of temperance. “As God bountifully provides for us, so he has appointed a law of temperance, that each may voluntarily restrain himself in his abundance.”<sup>144</sup> It is the Spirit, Calvin explains, who daily corrects “the inordinate desires of the flesh” so that the faithful might ordinally enjoy the manifold gifts of God.<sup>145</sup> And it with just such a confidence in the effective work of Christ’s Spirit, we might argue, that the faithful become freed both *from* undue anxiety over creation’s “excesses” and *for* righteous pleasure in this theater of abundance.<sup>146</sup> Because the Spirit, then, is poured out upon creation, upon Christ, and upon the faithful, creation can become a sphere of delight and work, of rest and celebration.

While these latter two points can be confidently said to describe Calvin’s thinking of the Spirit’s relation to creation, the following point must be said as suggestive only.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 4:22.

<sup>143</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 8:6.

<sup>144</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 104:15.

<sup>145</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 8:2ff.

<sup>146</sup> Calvin takes a christological turn in his argument on *Comm.* 1 Tim. 4:5, “Commonsense does indeed hold that the riches of the earth are naturally intended for our use, but, since our dominion over the world was taken from us in Adam, every gift of God that we touch is defiled by our stains and it on its side is unclean to us, till God graciously helps us and, by incorporating us into the Body of His Son, makes us anew lords of the earth, so that we may legitimately enjoy as our own all the wealth He supplies.”

<sup>147</sup> Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, 150, 152, “Although [Calvin] affirms the doctrine of creation out of nothing in his commentary on Genesis, there is surprisingly little interest in it in the *Institutes*.... In some contrast to the rest of his theology, there is in Calvin’s account of the relation of God and the world little substantive part played by Christ and the Holy Spirit.”

*Fifth, the Spirit is the Go-Between who, through the Son, takes the gifts of the Father and offers them to creation, while at the same time taking the gifts of creation and, through the Son, offering them back to Father.*<sup>148</sup> Calvin says simply: “what was his own he makes to be ours.”<sup>149</sup> He adds, in book three of the *Institutes*, that without the Spirit “no one can taste either the fatherly favor of God or the beneficence of Christ.”<sup>150</sup> Indeed, every action of the Holy Spirit “ends up to our blessedness.”<sup>151</sup> Or more boldly: “Nothing but good comes from the Holy Spirit.”<sup>152</sup> This good, for creation, is not only to be made a partaker of the life of God in Christ, it is also to be given a “space to be itself,” to borrow Karl Barth’s language.<sup>153</sup> Calvin remarks that God “fills, moves, and quickens all things by the power of the same Spirit, and does so according to the character that he bestowed upon each kind by the law of creation.”<sup>154</sup> And again, God “by the power of his Word and Spirit created heaven and earth” and “distinguished an innumerable variety of things [and has] endowed each kind with its own nature, assigned functions, appointed places and stations.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> The language of “Go-Between” is taken from John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973). Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, 21, 402, ch. 24, calls the Spirit “the Beyond Who Is Within.” Cf. Vladimir N. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1988), 100-101; Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 3-5.

<sup>149</sup> *Comm.* 104:29.

<sup>150</sup> III.1.2.

<sup>151</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 8:26.

<sup>152</sup> *Comm.* Gal. 5:22. He expresses a similar thought in I.13.14, where he contends that “all good gifts proceed” from the Spirit alone.

<sup>153</sup> Barth develops the idea in *Church Dogmatics* III.3, trans. G. W. Bromily and R. J. Ehrlich (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), §49. Noteworthy is this observation: “[Against all degenerative movement towards homogeneity, the work of God] has nothing whatever to do with a leveling down and flattening out of individuals and individual groupings.... To each of them He gives its own glory, its lasting worth, its definite value” (168).

<sup>154</sup> II.2.16; this is said with particular reference to Bezalel and Oholiab.

<sup>155</sup> I.14.20.

What particular qualities or “goods” does creation uniquely exhibit? We recall here the work which Calvin believes the created realm is on about: epiphanic, by revealing the invisible God through sensory media; pedagogical, by schooling the church in the “school of the beasts”; aesthetic, by awakening desire in the human creature through the beautiful forms and functions of the cosmos; admonitory, by rebuking humanity of its ingratitude and pride in light of such divine munificence; and doxological, by enacting and summoning the faithful to the praise of God. If creation is able to perform this work at all, it is only because the Holy Spirit enables it to. Or, to press the matter towards theological precision, it is not so much that creation possesses an inherent capacity to perform these functions, whether to represent God or to nourish and form the human creature, *full stop*. It is instead, as Daniel Hardy rightly argues, “that God makes the material capable of representing God.”<sup>156</sup> It is *God the Spirit* who makes this possible. And if Calvin is right to say that, in Genesis, the Spirit “opens a common school for all,” where the faithful are able to discover this manifold activity of creation, then it is plausible that the faithful will also discover this kind of activity in the kinaesthetic condition of public worship.

*Sixth, then, the material condition of public worship bears witness to creation’s particularity.*<sup>157</sup> In our care and delight of our places of worship, we join God in his own affirmation of creation’s “endlessly remarkable quiddity.” We take pleasure, as Richard

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<sup>156</sup> Hardy, “Calvinism and the Visual Arts,” 5.

<sup>157</sup> The language of creation’s particularity features prominently in Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*. In “Ruach, the Primordial Chaos, and the Breath of Life: Emergence Theory and the Creation Narratives in Pneumatological Perspective,” in M. Welker, ed., *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 183-204), Amos Yong appeals to “the dynamic, particularizing, relational, and life-giving presence and activity of the Spirit of God” (198-199) to ground his assertion.

Bauckham offers, in that “strangeness, intricacy and difference” which God has entrusted to his creatures.<sup>158</sup> One of the purposes of the liturgical arts in this view would be to accent the particularity of our respective places of worship. It is not that art and architecture take creation’s “own praise onto some higher plane,” as Bauckham rightly insists, but rather that they give creation’s praise “a place within our own praise in addition to its entirely adequate place apart from us.”<sup>159</sup> Our places of worship might thereby bear witness to the goodness of this space, this geography, this culture, along with the privileges and responsibilities that God has entrusted to this people, whom he has “implaced” here and now.<sup>160</sup> Our places of worship might also bear witness to a culturally contextual aesthetic excellence (to that which is well-crafted and beautifully formed), where this people, like the Israelites in anticipation of the construction of the tabernacle, take advantage of an opportunity to bring forward their particular artistic gifts—whether ornate or simple, extravagant or humble—on behalf of this particular place of God’s meeting with his people. This is something with which Calvin might even agree.<sup>161</sup>

*Seventh, going beyond anything Calvin ever imagined, the place of worship serves to symbolize salvation history.* While creation bears witness to its own distinctive characteristics, creation will take on a second, especially crucial task within a liturgical context, which is to bear witness to the salvific work of God. In this way, creation makes

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<sup>158</sup> Bauckham, “Joining Creation’s Praise of God,” 52. On this question, see also Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, 197-198.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>160</sup> On this point, see Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, Studies in Continental Thought (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

<sup>161</sup> See, e.g., *Comm.* Ps. 24:7.

salvation history dynamically sensible. The place of public worship will be seen, then, not as a static place, a neutral placeholder for the operation of verbal and intellectual activities, but rather as a symbolically charged place *headed* somewhere: toward the fulfillment of the new creation. Nor will this place simply “be” (as if that were even possible). It will be *for* something: for the Spirit’s work of sanctification, shaping the way in which the faithful perceive their identity and vocation, their comings and goings, their resting and working, their kneeling and standing, their sense of God’s presence with *them* in the descent of Christ by the Spirit and of their presence with *God* in their ascent with Christ through his Spirit. The place of worship will also be a contextualized place of memory and anticipation, where a settled community bears witness to their unsettled status as citizens of God’s kingdom, awaiting and even enacting the final consummation of God’s good future for all creation.<sup>162</sup>

*This is perhaps another way of saying that, eighth, the place of worship bears witness not apophatically to the essential nature of God but rather cataphatically to the economy of God.*<sup>163</sup> The purpose of a place of worship is not fundamentally to capture an invisible reality but a visible one, namely the history of the work of God in Christ by his Spirit. The aim is not to get beyond the story of God’s salvific work in history in order to

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<sup>162</sup> Hélène Guicharnaud, “An Introduction to the Architecture of Protestant Temples Constructed in France before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes,” in *Seeing Beyond the Word*, 134, n. 1, notes the curious habit of French Protestants in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries labeled their houses of worship as “temples.” She writes, “the designation was an unambiguous way for Calvinists to distinguish their buildings from those of Catholic rivals.” See also Matthew Koch, “Calvinism and the Visual Arts in Southern France, 1561 to 1685,” in *ibid.*, 180-181.

<sup>163</sup> Calvin’s remark in *Comm.* 2 Cor. 3:18 is especially noteworthy: “Our present knowledge of God is indeed obscure and feeble in comparison with the glorious vision we shall have at Christ’s last appearing. At the same time [God] does offer Himself to us now, to be seen and openly beheld to the extent *that our salvation requires and our capacity allows*. Thus the apostle speaks of progress which will be perfection only when Christ appears” (emphasis added).

penetrate the “holy otherness” of the Godhead. Put otherwise, in Scripture, the invisibility of God is never a problem *as such*, which must be protected, nor is it the distinctive trait which Israel was to stress in its construction of tabernacle and temple. The chief issue is that God cannot not be manipulated by human beings and that he cannot be contained under creaturely lock and key. An aesthetically minimalist place of worship, which begrudges materiality or seeks to “neutralize” it, as a way to accent the apparently preferable “invisible” world over against the so-called visible world, is no more faithful to the revelation of God than an aesthetically maximalist place which invites its people to escape the material world into an allegedly more exciting immaterial world. A place of worship is faithful instead when it enables the faithful to learn how to live as both settlers and strangers in the world, while they await a home which is yet to come, and to “read” the meaning of the world in light of the redemptive and re-creative activity of the triune God, played out in the drama of the liturgy.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

In part two of this combined investigation of Calvin’s ideas about “shadows” in relation to musical instruments in public worship, I engaged a critical analysis of Calvin’s theology and suggested a series of constructive proposals. According to Calvin’s liturgical theology, God descends through the material symbols of worship so that the human creature might in turn ascend to him, but his theology, I suggested, lacked any sense that the material creation might participate in that ascent. Nor was there a sense in which the ascent to heaven oriented the church’s worship on earth, the proper domain of earthlings. Creation’s fundamental dynamism was transferred to the domain of “heaven,”



upwards and away from earth, while the center of liturgical gravity was relocated from the whole of humanity to the internal regions of the soul. While I noted that exceptions existed, it remained generally true that the material symbols of worship were perceived, at best, as an unfortunate necessity and, at worst, as inert powers whose chief function was to activate the faculties of the soul.

Constructively, I argued that a temple theology offered a more cogent account of the relationship between creation and cult than Calvin's scheme appeared to allow. I suggested that while certain instincts in Calvin theology of creation were the right ones, he failed to develop their implications for the church's worship. With respect to the material symbols of worship, I maintained that creation served as the necessary context of public worship, that the church's worship subsisted in creation's ongoing worship, and that the kinaesthetic shape of public worship, as Calvin hinted at in his christology and pneumatology, was caught up in the work of the Two Hands of God, obtaining thereby both a proper orientation and a positive theological purpose in the liturgical life of the church. While I leave the implications of our findings for the liturgical arts to the conclusion of the dissertation, I raise here the question of the relation between the material creation and the human body as it concerns corporate worship. In what sense does the human body, as a material thing, participate in the purposes and activities of the material creation? In what sense does the body perform a distinctive work in public worship? And how might Calvin's idea of "spiritual" worship both open up and close down possibilities for the human body in the *leitourgia*? It is to a consideration of the

intersection of Calvin's anthropology and his trinitarian rendering of "spiritual" that I  
now turn.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## “Spiritual”

“The flesh [*caro*] is the very hinge [*cardo*] on which salvation turns.”– **Tertullian**<sup>1</sup>

“Since God created our bodies as well as our souls, and nourishes and maintains them, this is good enough reason why he should be served and honored with our bodies. And furthermore, we know that the Lord honors us by calling not only our souls his temples, but also our bodies.”– **John Calvin**<sup>2</sup>

“One of their poets, Coleridge, has recorded that he did not pray ‘with moving lips and bended knees’ but merely ‘composed his spirit to love’ and indulged ‘a sense of supplication’. That is exactly the sort of prayer we want... At the very least, they can be persuaded that the bodily position makes no difference to their prayers; for they constantly forget, what you must always remember, that they are animals and that whatever their bodies do affects their souls.” – **Screwtape, to Wormwood**<sup>3</sup>

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Having investigated Calvin’s understanding of “shadowy” worship, I now turn to his treatment of “spiritual” worship. As I noted in chapter one, Calvin’s argument for “spiritual” worship hinges on certain theological emphases: the non-material nature of God, the priority of the interior activities of the soul over against the exterior activities of the body, and the requirements of a new ecclesial era.<sup>4</sup> For Calvin, to re-introduce

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<sup>1</sup> *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 8; ANF 2.551.

<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, writing against the Nicodemites, cited in Engel, *John Calvin’s Perspectival Anthropology*, 164.

<sup>3</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (Glasgow: Collins, 1942), 25.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Comm. Heb.* 12:8; I.13.1. In I.2.2, Calvin seems to think that a “great ostentation in ceremonies” makes the “sincerity of heart” in worship “rare indeed.”

musical instruments into a new covenantal liturgy encouraged the faithful to cling to “earthly” things, to become engrossed by external aids, and to be drawn down by the gravity of a weak and infirm physical body rather than be drawn up into the “spiritual” worship of God in heaven. Together these emphases, I suggested, set the agenda for the sort of public worship that the church was to enact. I also raised the question whether a complex of meanings might be discovered in Scripture and in Calvin himself, which could open up a more integral role for the physical body in worship.

It is a truism amongst scholars that the frail and corruptible condition of physical life provoked in Calvin a tendency to lurid rhetoric.<sup>5</sup> Calvin describes human bodies as “dust and a shadow,”<sup>6</sup> “dung,”<sup>7</sup> a “reformatory” (*ergastulum*),<sup>8</sup> a “putrid carcass” (*charongue*), a frail lodging (*loge caduque*), a house of mud (*maison de fange*), and a poor hut (*tabernaculum*).<sup>9</sup> The faithful, Calvin frequently lamented, were condemned to live in “this unstable, defective, corruptible, fleeting, wasting, rotting tabernacle of our body,”<sup>10</sup> waiting (often miserably) for the redemption of the human body as we know it. The “sparks of glory” notwithstanding,<sup>11</sup> the human body was all too often experienced, Calvin felt, as a “prison” (*carcer*)<sup>12</sup> and an “abyss of infection.”<sup>13</sup> With such a view of the human body, it is not surprising that Calvin failed to imagine a prominent role for corporeality in public worship, believing at some level that it posed a threat to the

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<sup>5</sup> On this point, see esp. Charles L. Cooke, “Calvin’s Illnesses and Their Relation to Christian Vocation,” in *Calvin Studies IV*, ed. John H. Leith and W. Stacy Johnson (Richmond, VA: n.p., 1988), 41-52. Cf. I.17.10.

<sup>6</sup> *Comm.* 1 John 3:2.

<sup>7</sup> *CO* 49:333.

<sup>8</sup> I.15.2.

<sup>9</sup> Cited in Engel, *John Calvin’s Perspectival Anthropology*, 169.

<sup>10</sup> III.9.5.

<sup>11</sup> III.20.31.

<sup>12</sup> III.9.4.

<sup>13</sup> *Sermon on Job 34*, *CO* 35:202.

integrity of the church's worship. In a manner similar to the material symbols of worship, which were examined in chapters two and three, the embodied condition of the faithful, for Calvin, presented an acute temptation to confuse the object of worship with the material forms themselves, so that the binding of the "organs of the body" rather than the re-ordering of the body became the dominant priority in his prescriptions for "spiritual" worship.<sup>14</sup> Yet as tempting as it is to label Calvin as hopelessly pessimistic towards the body, this judgment would fail to reckon with a more complex story.

In this chapter, I show how Calvin interprets the meaning of the human body in light of Christ's resurrected body, for it is here that the body's goodness in Calvin's thought becomes most conspicuous. Likewise, when Calvin renders the meaning of the body in light of the Spirit's work, we discover a sense that the physical body is *for* something: a Spirit-ual renewal. And when faced with what he regarded as the hypocritical conduct of the "Nicodemite" believers, I show how Calvin brings body and soul into a mutually determinative relation. Constructively, I argue with Calvin, that Jesus' Spirit-constituted body shows the faithful what bodies are for, while the Spirit makes the faithful partakers now of the sort of physical life that the ascended Christ enjoys, thereby enabling all other human bodies to discover their proper *telos*. With a view to public worship, I argue that human bodies, as bearers of a distinct glory, are to be seen not as sources of exceptional provocation to sin, as Calvin seemed to hold, but rather as domains of the Spirit's

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<sup>14</sup> "In the preaching of the word, the external minister holds forth the vocal word and it is received by the ears. The internal minister the Holy Spirit truly communicates the thing proclaimed through the word that is Christ to the souls of all who will, so that it is not necessary that Christ or for that matter his word be received *through the organs of the body*, but the Holy Spirit effects this union by his secret virtue, by creating faith in us by which he makes us living members of Christ." In "Summary of Doctrine concerning the Ministry of the Word and the Sacraments," in *Theological Treatises*, 173. See also Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, 169.

habitation, re-ordered to Christ's bodily order, through which the faithful engage in re-formative corporeal activities in the context of worship. With Calvin's trinitarian reading of the body in mind, I shall argue for a similar reading with a view to a liturgical context.

The task of this chapter falls into two parts. In part one, I consider the human body as Calvin understood it: first, in its creaturely condition, second, in its christological perspective, and third, in its pneumatological aspect.<sup>15</sup> I conclude this part with a critical analysis of Calvin's understanding of physical bodies. In part two, drawing on our exposition and analysis, I offer a series of proposals that outline the *telos* of human bodies as it relates to the sphere of public worship.

## **4.2 EXPOSITION OF CALVIN**

### **4.2.1 The Human Body Ktisiologically Considered**

In his comment on Genesis 1:26, Calvin writes, "if you rightly weigh all circumstances, man is, among other creatures, a certain pre-eminent specimen of Divine wisdom, justice, and goodness, so that he is deservedly called by the ancients *mikrokosmoj*, 'a world in miniature'." Upon this human creature, the "exquisite workshop" of divine labor, "God

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<sup>15</sup> This chapter does not attempt an extensive treatment of Calvin's understanding of the "image of God" as such. While I offer a brief counter-proposal to Calvin's reading of Genesis 1, my thesis does not stand or fall on this question. On the historical backdrop for Calvin's ideas about the physical body, see James C. Goodloe IV, "The Body in Calvin's Theology," in *Calvin Studies V*, edited by John H. Leith (Davidson, NC: The Colloquium on Calvin Studies, 1990), 103-117; John H. Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989); Margaret R. Miles, "Theology, Anthropology, and the Human Body in Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*," *Harvard Theological Review* 74 (1981): 303-323; William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); T. F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957); J. Faber, *Essays in Reformed Doctrine* (Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada: Inheritance Publications, 1990), esp. chs. 15-16; and Engel's *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology*.

looks upon himself, so to speak, and beholds himself in man as in a mirror.”<sup>16</sup> While God beholds himself chiefly in the human soul, it is not improper to say that the human body bears certain “sparks” of God’s glory.<sup>17</sup> As it were, Calvin reasons, the human body is “an image of God,” perhaps no less so than the cosmos itself.<sup>18</sup> In this section we look at Calvin’s comments on the physical body from a ktisiological perspective: the body’s distinctive glory, its relation to the soul, and its frail and fallen condition.

### *The glory of the human body*

Calvin eloquently details the glory of the human body in his exposition of Psalm 139:15:

When we examine [the body], even to the nails on our fingers, there is nothing which could be altered, without felt inconveniency, as at something disjointed or put out of place; and what, then, if we should make the individual parts the subject of enumeration? Where is the embroiderer who—with all his industry and ingenuity—could execute the hundredth part of this complicate and diversified structure? We need not then wonder if God, who formed man so perfectly in the womb, should have an exact knowledge of him after he is ushered into the world.

What is to be admired is not simply the detail with which God constructs the human body—from “tip” of our fingers to the “human skin”—but that God gives “shape and beauty to a confused mass.”<sup>19</sup> In the very structure of the body, “one must have the greatest keenness in order to weigh, with Galen’s skill, its articulation, symmetry, beauty, and use. But yet, as all acknowledge, the human body shows itself to be a composition so

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<sup>16</sup> *Sermon on Job 10:7.*

<sup>17</sup> I.15.3.

<sup>18</sup> II.12.7; I.15.3. See also Engel, *John Calvin’s Perspectival Anthropology*, 45.

<sup>19</sup> *C.R.* 61:481-488; *Sermon on Job 10:7-15.*

ingenious that its Artificer is rightly judged a wonder-worker.”<sup>20</sup> Like the universe itself, then, all the body’s parts are rightly ordered: nothing is missing, nothing is out of place, neither in itself, nor in relation to the soul.<sup>21</sup> The body at the original creation is a purposeful, beautiful work of God, dynamically related to its Maker.<sup>22</sup>

Through this body, “fresh and lively,”<sup>23</sup> Calvin states that the human creature is to employ itself in pleasant, fulfilling and fruitful work, “and not to lie down in inactivity and idleness.”<sup>24</sup> To each man or woman God has entrusted goods, indeed the very “riches of heaven and earth,”<sup>25</sup> that he or she is to steward well, leaving to subsequent generations the fruits of their labors in better condition than they had found them. While God has endowed humanity with physical abundance, this is no license to abuse or to hoard it. As Calvin comments on Psalm 104:15, “in lavishing upon us a more abundant supply of good things than our necessities require, [God] puts our moderation to the test. The proper rule with respect to the use of bodily sustenance, is to partake of it that it may sustain, but not oppress us,” to enjoy but not to be mastered by “the multiplied bounties of God,” to use them with gratitude and not in greed, and to engage in artistic and scientific ventures for the common good. In the structure of the physical body and in the work performed through it—both “right” work (honorable, humble, temperate, generous) and work for the sake of righteousness—God was glorified.

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<sup>20</sup> I.5.2.

<sup>21</sup> I.15.3.

<sup>22</sup> On Calvin’s interpretation of the *imago* in dynamic terms, see Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Man*, 61-72.

<sup>23</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 2:9.

<sup>24</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 2:15.

<sup>25</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 8:6.



### *The body and the soul*

While the body bears its own peculiar glory, however, it is nothing without the soul.

“Add the soul to the body,” Calvin writes, “and you have a living man endowed with understanding and perception and fitted for all the activities of life, but remove the soul from the body and there will remain a useless corpse devoid of all perception.”<sup>26</sup> As an immortal yet created essence, the soul is humanity’s “nobler” or “principal” part.<sup>27</sup> It is that gift in which “the divine especially shines.”<sup>28</sup> More strongly even, “our souls are more precious to [God] than our bodies.”<sup>29</sup> Calvin further explains, “For although God’s glory shines forth in the outer man, yet there is no doubt that the proper seat of his image is in the soul.”<sup>30</sup> The *imago*, in this sense, is primarily an internal and spiritual reality.

Inasmuch as it is an *internal* or non-material reality, Calvin sees here the distinctive quality of humans over against the rest of creation.<sup>31</sup> The soul is immortal, the body is mortal; the soul experiences fear of divine judgment, while the body does not;<sup>32</sup> and the soul is able to search out heaven and earth, past and future, things hidden to sensory perception, which “clearly shows that there lies hidden in man something separate from the body.”<sup>33</sup> This emphasis on the non-material nature of the *imago*, for Calvin, is

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<sup>26</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 3:17.

<sup>27</sup> I.15.2.

<sup>28</sup> III.25.6.

<sup>29</sup> *Sermons on Job* 37; *CO* 35:320.

<sup>30</sup> I.15.3.

<sup>31</sup> I.15.3. “From this we may gather that when [God’s] image is placed in man a tacit antithesis is introduced which raises man above all other creatures and, as it were, separates him from the common mass.”

<sup>32</sup> I.15.2.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

something that humans share with the angels.<sup>34</sup> Inasmuch as the soul is “set in the body,” dwelling there “as in a house” [*quasi in domicilio habitare*], it animates the whole body, rendering its organs “fit and useful for their actions,” while also holding “the first place in ruling man’s life, not alone with respect to the duties of his earthly life, but at the same time to arouse him to honor God.”<sup>35</sup> For all these reasons, “God’s image is properly to be sought within him, not outside him, indeed, it is an inner good of the soul.”<sup>36</sup> Or as he puts it in a sermon on Psalm 119: “L’ame, voyla, l’image vive de Dieu.”<sup>37</sup>

Insofar as it is a *spiritual* reality, the soul is regarded as the seat of both spiritual corruption and spiritual restoration.<sup>38</sup> This spiritual dimension of the soul is thus seen most clearly from a soteriological perspective. “Since the ‘animal nature’, which we have first of all, is the image of Adam, so we will conform to Christ in His heavenly nature; and when that happens our restoration will be complete. For we now begin to bear the image of Christ, and we are daily being transformed into it more and more; but that image depends upon spiritual regeneration.”<sup>39</sup> The soul, for Calvin, is spiritual in a second sense. Since humanity reflects something of God, that resemblance cannot be found in the physical body, which God does not possess. As Calvin argues in his *Psychopannychia*, “These expressions [after his image and likeness] cannot possibly be

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<sup>34</sup> II.12.6, “When we hear the angels called ‘children of God’ it would be inappropriate to deny that they were endowed with some quality resembling their Father.” I.15.3, “we ought not to deny that angels were created according to God’s likeness, inasmuch as our highest perfect, as Christ testifies, will be to become like them.”

<sup>35</sup> I.15.6.

<sup>36</sup> I.15.4. In his “Psychopannychia,” 422-423, he uses strong language: “nothing constitutes this image in the flesh of man”; “it [the body] does not represent any image of God”; “the image of God is outside the flesh”; “the soul of man is not of the earth.”

<sup>37</sup> C.R. 60:620; sermon on Ps. 119:89-96.

<sup>38</sup> I.15.4, “whatever has to do with spiritual and eternal life is included under ‘image’ . . .” See also *Comm.* 2 Cor. 5:17; I.15.1, 4; *Comm.* Jn. 1:4.

<sup>39</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:49. He makes a similar in *Comm.* 1 John 3.

understood of [Adam's] body, in which, though the wonderful work of God appears more than in all other creatures, his image nowhere shines forth. God Himself, who is a Spirit ... cannot be represented by any bodily shape."<sup>40</sup>

While Calvin repeatedly places the body in subordinate relationship to the soul, he also goes to great lengths to emphasize the *integrity* of the human creature.<sup>41</sup> Adam bore the true image of God when he “was endued with a right judgment, had affections in harmony with reason, had all his senses sound and well-regulated, and truly excelled in everything good.”<sup>42</sup> Similarly, the human creature is whole when mind, heart, will and the “soundness of all the parts” or the “senses” are rightly ordered.<sup>43</sup> This again is more plainly perceived on the other side of Pentecost. “For how is the whole man entire, except when his thoughts are pure and holy, his affections all honorable and well-arranged, and when too his body itself devotes its energies and service to good works alone?”<sup>44</sup> And again: “Only if a man harbors no fancy in his mind, has no ambition in his heart, and does nothing with his body that is not approved by God, is he pure and entire.”<sup>45</sup> The whole person is healed and holy, then, when soul and body are consecrated to God.<sup>46</sup> Conversely, the whole person is vitiated by sin, corrupt and diseased, “from head to foot,” in both body and soul.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> In “Psychopannychia,” *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 3, 422-425.

<sup>41</sup> II.14.1; “Brief Confession of Faith,” *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 2, 131.

<sup>42</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 1:26.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Richard A. Muller, “Fides and Cognition in Relation to the Problem of Intellect and Will in the Theology of John Calvin,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 25 (1990): 207-224.

<sup>44</sup> This viewpoint figures largely in his *Sermons on Job*, e.g., Job 14:6; 35:8.

<sup>45</sup> *Comm.* 1 Thess. 5:23. Cf. his comment on II.14.1.

<sup>46</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 6:13; 6:6; cf. *C.R.* 60:81.

<sup>47</sup> II.1.9; II.3.1; III.19.4; III.14.1.

### *The body frail and fallen*

Mary Potter Engel, in *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology*, argues that, for Calvin, human infirmity is registered as both fragility and corruption.<sup>48</sup> Human life is inconstant, requiring the providence of God to keep it from reverting to chaos, and subject to perverse forces, requiring the salvific intervention of God.<sup>49</sup> Yet while the body suffers the consequences of sin as much as the soul,<sup>50</sup> there is a way in which, in Calvin, the body signifies an extra frail and fallen quality.<sup>51</sup> Even prior to the Fall, Calvin believes that “dusty” constitution of humans seems to imply an inferior quality: “Let foolish men now go and boast of the excellency of their nature!”<sup>52</sup> Calvin notes that the body of Adam is formed of clay “to the end that no one should exult beyond measure in his flesh. He must be excessively stupid who does not hence learn humility.”<sup>53</sup> He adds, “If [God] had a mind to exercise his liberality towards any, he was under no necessity of choosing men who are but dust and clay, in order to prefer them above all other creatures, seeing he had a sufficient number in heaven towards whom to show himself liberal.”<sup>54</sup> The dusty, earthy quality of humans does not, then, express a commendable connection to the rest of creation; it is rather a defect of sorts. Though Adam possessed an immortal soul and in this way, “crowned with glory,” he nonetheless “smacked of the earth.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Engel, *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology*, 17.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. his comment on Gen. 2:7.

<sup>50</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 8:10, “the word *body* signifies the more stolid mass as yet unpurified by the Spirit of God from earthly defilements, which delight only in what is gross. It would be absurd otherwise to ascribe to the body the blame for sin. Again, the soul is so far from being life, that it does not even of itself have life.”

<sup>51</sup> I.17.10, “Innumerable are the evils that beset human life; innumerable, too, the deaths that threaten it.”

<sup>52</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 2:7. This equation of lowliness with dustiness is not the same sense which Paul speaks of a “lowly body” in Phil. 3:21. There the proper contrast is eschatological: between the present condition of the body and the “glorious body” which awaits the faithful in the age to come.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Comm.* Psalm 8:3.

<sup>55</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:47.

In the Fall the human creature experiences a “mournful and wretched overthrow” of all that was good.<sup>56</sup> Here the *imago* becomes thoroughly marred. Here the creature becomes “confused, mutilated, and disease-ridden.”<sup>57</sup> Here humanity becomes alienated from God, from itself and its own body.<sup>58</sup> In the primordial rebellion against God, depravity is thus diffused through all parts of the soul as well as the body.<sup>59</sup> The whole self is maimed: “the mind is smitten with blindness, and infected with innumerable errors; that all the affections of the heart are full of stubbornness and wickedness; that vile lusts, or other diseases equally fatal, reign there; and that all the senses burst forth with many vices.”<sup>60</sup> The physical body, however, has its own way of bearing sin or being “consumed with rottenness.”<sup>61</sup> Borrowing Saint Paul’s language, Calvin puts it this way:

But the groaning of believers arises from their knowledge that here they are exiles from their native land and are shut up in the body as in a work-house [*ergastulo*], and so they count this life a burden because in it they cannot obtain true and perfect happiness because they cannot escape the slavery of sin except by death and so they wish to be elsewhere.<sup>62</sup>

This “body of sin” or “body of death,” however, is not to be equated with physicality as such. Calvin, ever the careful exegete, describes these phrases as instances of synecdoche by which the New Testament writers denote the physical body under the condition of sin. Explaining Romans 7:24, he writes, “By *the body of death* he means the mass of sin, or the constituent parts from which the whole man is formed, except that in his case alone

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<sup>56</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 8:7-9.

<sup>57</sup> I.15.4; *Comm.* Gen. 1:26.

<sup>58</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 2:16; 3:1.

<sup>59</sup> *Comm.* Gen. 3:6.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. his comments on John 3:6; 6:63; Ps. 97:7; Rom. 8:7; and Isa. 40:6, 22; *C.R.* 61:486.

<sup>61</sup> III.25.3.

<sup>62</sup> *Comm.* 2 Cor. 5:4.

the remnants of sin were left, which held him captive.”<sup>63</sup> And again, on Romans 6:6, “The *body of sin*, which he mentions a little later, does not mean flesh and bones, but the whole mass of sin, for man, when left to his own nature, is a mass of sin.”<sup>64</sup> To describe the feeling of being trapped in this sin-ridden body, Calvin uses the graphic language of “prison.” As he preaches in a sermon on Job 13, “We see that we are held here as in a prison, as long as this body envelops us we are slaves to sin.”<sup>65</sup> He develops this line of thought in his comment on 2 Corinthians 5:4:

[Paul] explains the metaphor [of “tent”] further by saying, *that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life*. Since flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, what is corruptible in our nature must die so that we may be thoroughly renewed and restored to a state of perfection. That is why our body is called a prison [*carcer*] in which we are held captive.<sup>66</sup>

This image of prison recurs in Calvin’s sermons, commentaries, tracts and *Institutes*, and seems to capture something definitive about the physical body of this age. It signals physical weakness: “But no one in this earthly prison of the body has sufficient strength to press on with due eagerness, and weakness so weighs down the greater number that, with wavering and limping and even creeping along the ground, they move at a feeble rate.”<sup>67</sup> It confirms the idea of the immortal soul: “Besides, unless souls survive when freed from the prison houses of their bodies, it would be absurd for Christ to induce the soul of Lazarus as enjoying bliss in Abraham’s bosom, and again, the soul of the rich

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<sup>63</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 7:24, emphasis original.

<sup>64</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 6:6, emphasis original. *Comm.* Romans 6:12, “The word *body*, as I have already maintained, is not to be taken in the sense of flesh, skin, and bones, but for the whole body of man’s existence.”

<sup>65</sup> *CO* 33:627-628.

<sup>66</sup> *Comm.* 2 Cor. 5:4, emphasis original.

<sup>67</sup> III.6.5. Cf. *Comm.* Matt. 22:30.

man sentences to terrible torments.”<sup>68</sup> It illumines the nature of faith: “Since we hope for what we do not see, and, as is elsewhere stated, ‘faith is the indication of things unseen’, so long as we are confined in the prison house of the flesh, ‘we are away from the Lord’.”<sup>69</sup> It explicates the nature of Christ’s incarnation and his experience at the cross: “In this manner, he is said to have descended to that place according to his divinity, not because divinity left heaven to hide itself in the prison house of the body, but because even though it filled all things, still in Christ’s very humanity it dwelt bodily, that is, by nature, and in a certain ineffable way.”<sup>70</sup> It describes the right way to perceive death: “If departure from the world is entry into life, what else is the world but a sepulcher? And what is it for us to remain in life but to be immersed in death? If to be freed from the body is to be released into perfect freedom, what else is the body but a prison?”<sup>71</sup> And, lastly, the image of prison highlights the basic differences between body and soul:

Both in the body and out of the body we labor to please the Lord; and that we shall perceive the presence of God when we shall be separated from this body—that we will no longer walk by faith but by sight, since the load of clay by which we are pressed down acts as a kind of wall of partition, keeping us away from God.... The body, which decays, weighs down the soul, and confining it within an earthly habitation, greatly limits its perceptions. If the body is the prison of the soul, if the earthly habitation is a kind of fetters, what is the state of the soul when set free from this prison, when loosed from these fetters? Is it not restored to

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<sup>68</sup> I.15.2. The language of “prison” appears explicitly in 1 Pet. 3:19 (cf. Rev. 2:10; 20:7), from which Calvin infers that Christ appears to the spirits of the dead. On this account he makes an appeal to 4 Esdras 3-4. In “Psychopannychia,” 429, 449.

<sup>69</sup> III.25.1. In his tract, *Des Libertins*, CO 7:204, Calvin writes, “He signifies by this that there is no better way to move toward perfection and to withdraw from the servitude of sin than to leave his body where he is held captive as if in a prison.”

<sup>70</sup> IV.17.31. I.15.2, “when Christ commended his spirit to the Father and Stephen his to Christ they meant only that when the soul is freed from the prison house of the body, God is its perpetual guardian.”

<sup>71</sup> III.9.4. In *Comm.* John 11:26, he describes death as “a sort of liberating from the bondage of death.” Cf. Engel, *John Calvin’s Perspectival Anthropology*, 171.

itself, and as it were made complete, so that we may truly say, that all which it gains is so much lost to the body?<sup>72</sup>

Such strong language begs the question: Is there nothing more positive to be said about human bodies? Is there no sense that, while Christ will surely “make our vile body conformable to his glorious body,” rescuing them from slavery to “the prison of our flesh,” the physical body is invested *today* with resurrection life because of the Spirit’s work?<sup>73</sup> If more is to be discovered about Calvin’s anthropology, it will be, I propose, by examining his understanding of the relation of Christ’s body to the human bodies of the faithful.

#### **4.2.2 The Human Body Christologically Considered**

What is it that Christ’s body tells us about human bodies? What benefits are transmitted to the faithful through Christ’s body? And how exactly does the Christian receive these benefits, “such that whatever is [Christ’s] may be called ours”?<sup>74</sup> For Calvin the phrase that captures this experience for the faithful is the *mirifica commutatio*.<sup>75</sup> This is the idea that everything that humanity has lost in Adam may be restored in Christ.<sup>76</sup> This restoration is a gift, Calvin argues, not a possession, a grace imputed to those who receive it in faith by the Spirit’s power, not an endowment, like sin which all obtain

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<sup>72</sup> “Psychopannychia,” 405-406.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *Comm.* 1 John 3:2, “Except then we be stripped of all the corruption of the flesh, we shall not be able to behold God face to face.”

<sup>74</sup> IV.17.2.

<sup>75</sup> See his comments on John 13:31; 16:14; Heb. 11:1; and II.12.2. Cf. Zachman, *Image and Word*, 108.

<sup>76</sup> See his comments on Gen. 3:6, 14; Ps. 8:5-6; 1 Cor. 15:21, 27. *Comm.* Heb. 1:2, “The name ‘heir’ is attributed to Christ as manifested in the flesh; for in being made man and putting on the same nature as us, He took on Himself this heirship, in order to restore to us what we had lost in Adam.



automatically.<sup>77</sup> In Christ, he writes, the faithful “enjoy so much of the fragments of the good things which they lost in Adam, as may furnish them with abundant matter of wonder at the singularly gracious manner in which God deals with them.”<sup>78</sup> Calvin eloquently articulates the “wonderful exchange” this way:

This is the wonderful exchange which, out of his measureless benevolence, he has made with us; that, becoming Son of man with us, he has made us sons of God with him; that, by his descent to earth, he has prepared an ascent to heaven for us; that, by taking on our mortality, he has conferred his immortality upon us; that, accepting our weakness, he has strengthened us by his power; that, receiving our poverty unto himself, he has transferred his wealth to us; that, taking the weight of our iniquity upon himself (which oppressed us), he has clothed us with his righteousness.<sup>79</sup>

By taking on a mortal body in “the likeness of sinful flesh,” Christ bestows an immortal, incorruptible body upon the faithful in the resurrection of the dead. It is noteworthy that this statement in the *Institutes* appears in his commentary on the Lord’s Supper, for it is here that Christ’s “flesh” plays a crucial role in the believer’s sanctification. Expressing a similar idea of “exchange” in a note on John 6:55, Calvin writes, “For by His emptying Himself, we were enriched with the abundance of all blessings; His humiliation and descent raised us up to heaven; by bearing the curse of the cross He set up a noble banner of righteousness. Consequently, they are false interpreters who lead souls away from

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<sup>77</sup> Cf. II.1.7; II.1.8; *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:45; *Comm.* Rom. 5:17. Adam’s relationship to the rest of humankind, for Calvin, is to be seen as a radical one rather than a representative one. On this point, see Aaron Denlinger, “Calvin’s Understanding of Adam’s Relationship to His Posterity: Recent Assertions of the Reformer’s ‘Federalism’ Evaluated,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 44 (2009): 226-250.

<sup>78</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 8:7-9.

<sup>79</sup> IV.17.2.

Christ's flesh."<sup>80</sup> Christ's incarnate, resurrected and ascended flesh is key to God's salvific work.

Commenting on Colossians 1:18, Calvin remarks, "For in the resurrection there is the restoration of all things, and thus it is the beginning of the second and new creation, for the former had fallen in the ruin of the first man."<sup>81</sup> Christ's resurrection "is the foundation [*hypostasis*] and pledge of ours,"<sup>82</sup> and it is his resurrected body that constitutes "the reward of the spiritual life."<sup>83</sup> To know what the human body is destined for, then, we must first look at Jesus' body.

For we know that the body of Christ was subject to death, and that it was delivered from corruption, not by some inherent property of its own ... but by the providence of God and nothing else. Therefore not only, as regards the substance of His body, was He earthy, but for a time He also shared in our earthy condition. For before the power of Christ could show itself by conferring the life of heaven on us, it was necessary for Him to die in the weakness of the flesh. But it was in the resurrection that this heavenly life first appeared, that He might give life to us also.<sup>84</sup>

Significantly, the language of "body" (*corpus*), "earth" (*terrenus*), "flesh" (*carnis*) is used synonymously here to describe Christ's physical self. Christ takes on a common body in order to transform it into an uncommon body: a resurrected body.<sup>85</sup> As such, Christ's resurrected body functions as a proleptic sign of all rightly ordered bodies. As Calvin

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<sup>80</sup> *Comm.* Jn. 6:55.

<sup>81</sup> The idea of restoration is key in Calvin's thinking: see, e.g., *Comm.* Gen. 3:14; III.9.5; *Comm.* Isa. 65:25; *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:46; Acts 3:21.

<sup>82</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:21.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:47.

<sup>85</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:35, 53. Shed of its present corruption, the body will be made whole, "in a far better nature."

explains in the *Institutes*, “God’s natural Son fashioned for himself a body from our body, flesh from our flesh, bones from our bones, that he might be one with us. Ungrudgingly, he took our nature upon himself to impart to us what was his, and to become both Son of God and Son of man in common with us.”<sup>86</sup> Christ takes upon himself the “very flesh” of weak humanity not only to confer a “quicken’d” body, but also to sympathize with the “weakness” characteristic of embodied humanity.<sup>87</sup>

Beyond this, the hope of a resurrected body is intimately related to Christ’s body in the sacraments. Christ’s baptism prefigures the union of the faithful to Christ’s bodily life: “For [Christ] consecrated and sanctified baptism in his own body, that he might have it in common with us as the firmest bond of union and fellowship which he deigned to form with us.”<sup>88</sup> Similarly, in view of the Lord’s Supper, Calvin asserts: “if you want to have anything in common with Christ you must especially take care not to despise His flesh.”<sup>89</sup> Only through Christ’s “humbled flesh,” and through partaking of Christ’s flesh, therefore, do the faithful have access to life immortal for the sake of fellowship with the Father.<sup>90</sup>

How exactly do the faithful partake of Christ’s resurrected body? By the Spirit of Christ.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, for Calvin, it is the Holy Spirit who not only continually urges “us to

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<sup>86</sup> II.12.2. II.12.3, “For we make Christ free of all stain not just because he was begotten of his mother without copulation with man, but because he was sanctified by the Spirit that the generation might be pure and undefiled as would have been true before Adam’s fall.”

<sup>87</sup> See esp. *Comm. Jn.* 11:33-35, where he discusses godly emotion (which Christ exhibits) and disordered emotion (which humans regularly exhibit). When Jesus weeps publicly at Lazarus’ tomb, Calvin writes, “He proved Himself to be our brother, so that we might know that we have a Mediator who willingly excuses and is ready to help those infirmities which He has experienced Himself.”

<sup>88</sup> IV.15.6.

<sup>89</sup> *Comm. John* 6:56.

<sup>90</sup> *Comm. John* 14:28.

<sup>91</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:50.

hope for the resurrection of our flesh,”<sup>92</sup> the Spirit is also the one who engrafts the faithful into Christ’s own flesh. As Calvin vividly describes it: “In spiritual ingrafting . . . we not only derive the strength and sap of the life which flows from Christ, but we also pass from our own nature into His. The apostle desired to point quite simply to the efficacy of the death of Christ, which manifested itself in putting to death our flesh, and also the efficacy of His resurrection in renewing within us the better nature of the Spirit.”<sup>93</sup> It is to this pneumatological understanding of the human body that we now turn more fully.

#### **4.2.3 The Human Body Pneumatologically Considered**

For Calvin, union with Christ is not merely a matter of imitation or example,<sup>94</sup> nor is it simply a future reality; it is a matter of a mystic union (*mystica unio*) with Christ by his Spirit.<sup>95</sup> As he explicates Romans 6:5, “our ingrafting signifies not only our conformity to the example of Christ, but also the secret union [*arcanam coniunctionem*] by which we grow together with Him, in such a way that He revives us by His Spirit, and transfers His power to us.” The result of this union is a new creation. As the first fruits of that new creation, Christ makes it possible for the faithful to experience *now* this new creational life on account of the eschatological Spirit. Moreover, in the same way that the Holy Spirit constitutes the humanity of Christ, so the Spirit constitutes all renewed humanity, “spiritually” renewing both body and soul, now in part, later in full. In this section, we consider the way in which Calvin reads the pattern of the Spirit’s work with respect to the

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<sup>92</sup> III.25.8.

<sup>93</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 6:5.

<sup>94</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 8:29.

<sup>95</sup> Billings, in *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, provides a helpful entryway into the idea of participation in Calvin.

human body: effective union with Christ, renovation of the whole human creature, and the present foretaste of bodily life in the age to come.

Commenting on John 14:16, Calvin writes, “Christ’s proper work was to appease the wrath of God by atoning for the sins of the world, to redeem men from death and to procure righteousness and life. That of the Spirit is to make us partakers not only of Christ Himself, but of all His blessings.”<sup>96</sup> Apart from participation in the Spirit, it is impossible to “taste either the fatherly favor of God or the beneficence of Christ.”<sup>97</sup> For Calvin, the “sacred and mystic union” with Christ is strictly a pneumatological bond. “We are said *to be in him* because, grafted into His body, we are partakers of all His righteousness and all His blessings. He is said to be in us because He plainly shows by the efficacy of His Spirit that He is the author and cause of our life.”<sup>98</sup> To stress this point, Calvin claims that is not an “inflowing of substance” that the faithful receive but rather the “grace and power of the Spirit.”<sup>99</sup> Equally important, Calvin maintains that the believer’s participation in the Spirit is a christologically oriented reality. He writes, “the Spirit bestows on us nothing apart from Christ; but He takes from Christ what he sheds on us.”<sup>100</sup>

With regard to the renewal of humanity, for Calvin, the Christian bears the image of

Christ in two stages: now in part, in the *eschaton* in full. The Christian also experiences

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<sup>96</sup> See also his comments on Jn. 16:14; 1 Cor. 15:27, 57; and Col. 1:20.

<sup>97</sup> III.1.2; cf. III.1.4. III.1.1: “Yet since we see that not all indiscriminately embrace that communion with Christ which is offered through the gospel, reason itself teaches us to climb higher and to examine into the secret energy of the Spirit, by which we come to enjoy Christ and all his benefits.”

<sup>98</sup> *Comm.* John 14:20, emphasis original. Cf. *Comm.* Rom. 8:6.

<sup>99</sup> I.15.5.

<sup>100</sup> *Comm.* John 16:14. “For as soon as the Spirit is severed from Christ’s Word the door is open to all sorts of craziness and impostures.”

the renewal of the *imago* at two levels: in the soul and in the body. On the first point, he observes:

For we now begin to bear the image of Christ, and we are daily being transformed into it more and more; but that image depends upon spiritual regeneration. But then, it will be restored to fullness, in our body as well as our soul; what has now begun will be brought to completion, and we will obtain in reality what as yet we are only hoping for.<sup>101</sup>

While “the blessed state of the soul after death is the beginning of this building” (that is, the “heavenly tent” conformable to Christ’s image), its completion is the glory of the final resurrection.<sup>102</sup> The human body will share in the glory of God, Calvin readily grants, “but only after it has been renewed and restored to life by the Spirit of Christ.”<sup>103</sup> As believers advance in faith, “they continually aspire to new increases of the Spirit, so that the firstfruits with which they are imbued suffice for the continuance of eternal life.”<sup>104</sup>

Undoubtedly, there is a predominant sense in Calvin that the renovating work of the Spirit concerns itself with the “faculties” of the soul.<sup>105</sup> Since the *imago* resides chiefly in the soul, so the reasoning goes, this too constitutes the chief domain of the Spirit’s work: to bring the heart, mind and will under the dominion of Christ.<sup>106</sup> Yet it is also true that his christological commitments do not allow Calvin to keep the body too far from the

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<sup>101</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:49. Cf. III.3.9.

<sup>102</sup> *Comm.* 2 Cor. 5:1.

<sup>103</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:50.

<sup>104</sup> *Comm.* John 7:38. Calvin in a comment on Rom. 8:23 wryly observes: “Since the fullness of the Spirit has not yet been bestowed on us, it is not strange that we are moved with unrest.”

<sup>105</sup> Noteworthy are his comments on Rom. 7:18 and 1 Cor. 15:44.

<sup>106</sup> *Comm.* Col. 3:10. *Comm.* John 1:13, “The illumination of our minds by the Holy Spirit belongs to our renewal.” Cf. his comments in I.15.4; III.1.4; *Comm.* Phil. 2:13; *Comm.* John 3:5.

purview of the Spirit's work. Even as the Spirit constitutes Christ's whole life, so the Spirit conforms the whole life of the redeemed. Commenting on 2 Corinthians 7:1, he writes, "It is as if he said, 'We should not only have consciences which are pure in God's sight, but we should consecrate to him our whole body and all our members so that no impurities can be seen in any part of us.'"<sup>107</sup> Calvin pulls all the theological strands together in this comment on Romans 6:15:

We should note that the spiritual union which we have with Christ is not a matter of the soul alone, but of the body also, so that we are flesh of His flesh etc. (Eph. 5:30). The hope of the resurrection would be faint, if our union with Him were not complete and total like that.

And it is precisely because Christ's own body, his "flesh," as Saint John names it (Jn. 1:14), is quickened by the Spirit, that the faithful experience *even now* a quickening of their bodies by the power of Christ's Spirit.<sup>108</sup>

With respect to the human body, Calvin perceives a dual task in the Spirit's "spiritual" work: arousing hope for the resurrection of the body *and* investing the body of this age with a foretaste of the body of the age to come.<sup>109</sup> To experience spiritual renewal is first and foremost to experience Spirit-ual renewal: the Spirit-enabled mortification of the body under the condition of sin and the Spirit-enabled vivification of the body under the

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<sup>107</sup> *Comm.* 2 Cor. 7:1. The illuminating work of the Spirit, Calvin argues in a note on Col. 3:10, is "lively and effectual, so as not only to enlighten by kindling the light of truth, but also to transform the whole man."

<sup>108</sup> *Comm.* John 6:63.

<sup>109</sup> III.1.2: The Spirit "arouses hope of a full renewal 'because he who raised Christ from the dead will quicken our mortal bodies, because of his Spirit that dwells in us.'" III.25.8: "the Spirit of God is continually urging us to hope for the resurrection of our flesh."

dominion of Christ.<sup>110</sup> “As, however, Christ’s kingdom is spiritual, this change must take place chiefly in the Spirit, and hence it is with propriety that he begins with this.”<sup>111</sup> The “sons of God” are reckoned spiritual because of the quickening power of the Spirit in them,<sup>112</sup> while spiritual-mindedness designates a condition of life which only the Spirit can procure for the Christian.<sup>113</sup> The term “spirit,” as often as not in Calvin’s commentaries, stands for the Spirit of regeneration, not for the soul.

This passage also teaches us that by the word *Spirit* Paul has not up to this point meant the *mind* or the *understanding*, which the advocates of free will call the superior part of the soul, but the gift of heaven. He explains that it is those whom God governs by His Spirit who are spiritual, and not those who obey reason on their own impulse.<sup>114</sup>

While there remains a proclivity in Calvin to want to restrict the Holy Spirit’s “spiritual” work to the sphere of the soul, his christology yet again opens up a more holistic picture of the Spirit’s work. Following Paul’s line of thought in 1 Corinthians 6, Calvin contends that since God has made the bodies of the faithful “members of Christ,” it matters what they do with their bodies now: “since God the Father has united us to His Son, what a disgraceful thing it would be to tear our bodies away from that sacred union, and give them over to things quite unworthy of Christ.” *En Christo*, that is, the physical body has “passed entirely into the power of God.” Because of this, holiness is now to be played out

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<sup>110</sup> This is a line of argument which Calvin pursues in his discussion of the ascension (IV.17.28) and of the Lord’s Supper (IV.17.33).

<sup>111</sup> *Comm.* 2 Cor. 5:7. Cf. his comment on 1 Cor. 15:44. II.3.1, “The Spirit is so contrasted with flesh that no intermediate thing is let. Accordingly, whatever is not spiritual in man is by this reckoning called ‘carnal’.”

<sup>112</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 8:10.

<sup>113</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 8:6; Rom. 7:14.

<sup>114</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 8:9, emphasis added.



in the body, no less than “in the whole of our life.”<sup>115</sup> An additional reason why it matters what the faithful do with their physical bodies is a dynamic continuity—christologically determined, pneumatologically capacitated—that obtains between the present body and the resurrected body. What would be the point, Calvin asks, of devoting “feet, hands, eyes, and tongue to God’s service if they were not to share in its fruit and reward” in the age to come?<sup>116</sup> Calvin presses his imagined interlocutor:

What of the fact that [the bodies of the faithful] are also members of Christ? Or that God commands all their parts to be sanctified to him? Or that it is his will that his name be praised with men’s tongues, that pure hands be lifted to himself, that sacrifices be offered? What madness is it for that part of man, deemed by the Heavenly Judge worthy of such shining honor, to be by mortal man reduced to dust beyond hope of restoration?<sup>117</sup>

It is not only the mind and the heart that must be enlisted in the work of sanctification. The body too must play its part. “Our members, too, are to be dedicated and consecrated to His will so that all our powers of soul and body may aspire to His glory alone.”<sup>118</sup> Even before the last resurrection, then, Calvin will insist that the human body experiences the renewing operation of the eschatological Spirit because of its union to Christ.<sup>119</sup>

#### **4.2.4 Summary**

To summarize our exposition thus far, we have seen that while Calvin regarded the body as a bearer of divine glory, he placed the soul in unique relation to the *imago Dei*, with

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<sup>115</sup> *Comm. Rom.* 12:1.

<sup>116</sup> III.25.8.

<sup>117</sup> III.25.7.

<sup>118</sup> *Comm. Rom.* 6:13; cf. his comments 1 Thess. 5:23 and 1 Cor. 6:13-20.

<sup>119</sup> *Comm. Rom.* 8:11.

particular emphasis on the soul's internal and spiritual qualities, qualities which the faithful shared with God. Even as the whole human creature was frail and fallen, so God in Christ intended to save the whole creature. We noted a tendency in Calvin to equivocate over the goodness of the material dimension of the human creature, enlisting the language of "prison" to highlight a problematic characteristic of the physical body. Yet if a true estimation of the human body were to be found, we saw how it would need to be found "in Christ," in whom the faithful discovered a wonderful exchange: the hope of resurrected body. The only way the faithful could hope to partake of such a body, moreover, was by the power of the Holy Spirit, who united the faithful with Christ, in both soul and body, now in part, in the *eschaton* in full.

#### **4.3 CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

As we transition now to a critical analysis of Calvin's theology of the human body, certain questions need to be asked. To what extent does a platonic mindset dominate Calvin's approach? Is he in fact a pessimist, as some have argued, or is he simply inconsistent in his thinking, as others have alleged? Has his rhetoric on the physical body in some way distorted his theological and liturgical proposals? Is there another way to read the relation of the body to the *imago*? Do the interior activities of the soul sum up the meaning of the image of God in the human creature and thus also the priorities of public worship? And does "spiritual" worship in a new covenantal era necessarily reduce the body to a minimalist role?

Contextual, rhetorical and exegetical questions figure largely here, not just theological ones. In the following section, I propose three criticisms of Calvin's theology of the body. A first criticism concerns Calvin's language about the human body, specifically as it relates to the *imago* and his stress on the interior activities of the soul. A second criticism presses Calvin's understanding of the "spiritual" nature of God in the direction of his more expressly pneumatological understandings of this term. A third criticism involves Calvin's equation of "spirit and truth" with the sort of "spiritual" worship which he believes is appropriate to a new covenantal age. In light of the fact that this topic opens up a much larger set of biblical and theological issues, I devote chapter five to this single question.

#### ***4.3.1 Contextual questions***

As Calvin scholars have widely noted, Calvin's anthropology must be carefully set within its proper historical context.<sup>120</sup> Much like Saint Paul's anthropology, in fact, Calvin's writing has an occasionalist quality about it, shaping the terminology and the uses of terms. With respect to his contemporary interlocutors, Anabaptists, humanists, Libertines, Nicodemites, and Rome serve as foils to his own thinking on the human body.<sup>121</sup> Over against the Libertines, for example, Calvin stresses the created nature of the soul, while over against the Anabaptists he emphasizes the soul's immortality. With regard to the church fathers, both Augustine and Chrysostom function as conceptual backdrops for

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<sup>120</sup> See T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993); David C. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Heiko Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness: Calvin between Humanism and Reformation," in *Humanity and Divinity in Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. John O'Malley (New York: Brill, 1993), 252: "it has not been sufficiently noted that Calvin intended to develop a new biblical anthropology by redefining its key terms."

<sup>121</sup> See Engel, *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology*, 154.

Calvin's arguments.<sup>122</sup> Beyond these conversation partners, it is important to keep clear the fact that the *Psychopannychia* represents Calvin's early thinking, whereas his sermons on Job, which include extensive commentary on human nature, appear towards the end of his career. In an evaluation of Calvin's anthropology, caution is required in order not to make too much or too little of any given text. Each text, in turn, must be read both contextually and stereoscopically to discern points of continuity and discontinuity with the received tradition as well as the places where Calvin makes his distinctive mark on the tradition.<sup>123</sup>

The more controverted question, one might say, is Calvin's relation to Plato. Is Calvin substantially influenced by platonic philosophy or is it simply a matter of occasional linguistic affinity? And what exactly is at stake in Calvin's appropriation of Platonic terminology such as "prison"?<sup>124</sup> Charles Partee is an especially helpful guide here. The first thing to understand, Partee explains, is that there is no one, homogenous Plato. There is instead a development in Plato's thinking on the soul, determined by the literary and historical context.<sup>125</sup> Partee writes, "It is true that Calvin's doctrine of the immortality of

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<sup>122</sup> On the patristic background for Calvin's thinking, see Brian E. Daley, "A Hope for Worms: Early Christian Hope," in *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, eds. Ted Peters, Robert John Russell, and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 136-164.

<sup>123</sup> On the conflicting judgments of scholars about the place of the "Psychopannychia" in Calvin's thought, see Engel, *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology*, Appendix V: "Calvin's *Psychopannychia*," 213-219. Engel, for her part, regards the difference between this early work and his later work as a difference of clarity rather than of contradiction. While penned early in his career (in 1534), Calvin revised the treatise on the advice of Bucer, Olivetan and Fabri, and chose to publish this revised version only in 1542. Faber, *Essays in Reformed Doctrine*, 247, urges that Calvin's comments on Gen. 2:7 can only be properly understood in connection with his sermon on Job 10:7-15. See also Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, 73-82.

<sup>124</sup> On the Hellenistic background for the idea of the body as prison of the soul, see N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 47-55.

<sup>125</sup> See Partee, "The Soul in Plato, Platonism, and Calvin," esp. 285; 287: "It is not so remarkable that Calvin was indirectly influenced by the common 'theological Platonism' of so much of Christian thought

the soul has some ‘points of contact’ with the early, religious aspect of Plato’s doctrine and its transmission in Neoplatonism, but even there the differences are more fundamental than the similarities.”<sup>126</sup> The second thing to understand, Partee suggests, rightly I believe, is that while resemblances exist between Calvin’s language and Renaissance Platonism, Calvin’s argument remains biblically rooted rather than philosophically resourced.<sup>127</sup> Rhetoric alone does not automatically signify theology, and careful attention must always be given to the function of language in particular contexts and to the pattern of language across contexts.<sup>128</sup>

### **4.3.2 Rhetorical questions**

This is something that can be affirmed no less of Calvin than of Saint Paul, both of whom employ strong, variable language to describe the human body in ways that may lead the

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from the Greek fathers through Augustine to the Renaissance Platonists, or that aspects of Calvin’s doctrine ‘resemble’ the Platonic view. In this ‘weak’ sense Calvin is not alone in being influenced by Platonism.”

<sup>126</sup> Partee, “The Soul in Plato, Platonism, and Calvin,” 279. “If all men are either Platonists or Aristotelians (Coleridge),” Partee concludes, “then in this general, historical sense Calvin was a Platonist,” no more, no less.

<sup>127</sup> Partee, *ibid.*, 293, concedes: “Perhaps Calvin over-reacted to the Anabaptists, Osiander, Servetus, and Socinus, but he firmly believed that both the soul and body are from God.” Cf. III.25.7; “Psychopannychia,” 420. See also Thomas J. Davis, “Not ‘Hidden and Far Off’: The Bodily Aspect of Salvation and its Implications for Understanding the Body in Calvin’s Theology,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 407, n. 7; Hans Dieter Betz, “The Concept of the ‘Inner Human Being’ (ὁ ἕσω ἄνθρωπος) in the Anthropology of Paul,” *New Testament Studies* 46 (2000), 340; Roy Battenhouse, “The Doctrine of Man in Calvin and Renaissance Platonism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 9 (1948): 447-471. Engel’s argument fails to convince for the same reason that I found her general argument wanting. She posits a “dual perspective” frame upon Calvin’s thinking which fails to be borne out in his actual writings.

<sup>128</sup> Davis, “Not ‘Hidden and Far Off’,” 417, argues, “it is only by looking beyond rhetoric to the actual function of body in Calvin’s thought that one can appreciate its role.” In a rather questionable methodological move, however, Davis, 408, claims: “it is from the *experience* of the decaying body that Calvin writes” (emphasis original). Davis seems to excuse Calvin’s rhetoric, if not also his theology, by appealing to the existential suffering that Calvin endured over the course of his life (which included chronic tophaceous gout, kidney stones, chronic pulmonary tuberculosis, pleurisy, hemotypsis, hemorrhoids, migraine headaches and more). While these facts shed light on Calvin’s personal experience, inspiring hopefully a measure of sympathy, and *may* explain a tendency of thought, one must be careful not to deduce a direct causal relation between existential condition and theological argument. Considering Calvin’s disciplined commitment to Scripture, though, it seems that the Reformer would have every reason to say good things about the body, regardless of his own physical experiences. See also Goodloe, “The Body in Calvin’s Theology,” 106-107.

reader to believe inconsistent thinking is at work.<sup>129</sup> This is another way of saying that any inconsistencies in Calvin's anthropology may simply be reflective of biblical inconsistencies, actual or apparent.<sup>130</sup> Robert Jewett concedes this much about Paul:

The seemingly erratic pattern of development [of Paul's anthropology] has been shown to correlate quite closely with the argumentative situation in each letter. New connotations and technical usages of the terms emerged in each instance in response to some heretical tendency or movement in a Pauline congregation.... Despite the occasional correlation of Hellenistic categories to the Judaic term heart, Paul did not in general evince any interest in producing a truly consistent anthropology.<sup>131</sup>

That being said, alleged inconsistencies might also indicate a complex idea.<sup>132</sup> While the Scriptures, for example, describe the human creature as a crown of God's glory (Ps. 8:5), or, as Calvin puts it, a "factory" of inestimable treasures,<sup>133</sup> the Scriptures also describe humanity in language which Calvin appropriates in his own colorful way: as a "poor worm of the earth, unhappy creature, miserable swine,"<sup>134</sup> an "abyss of infection,"<sup>135</sup> a

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<sup>129</sup> For a summary of the charge of inconsistent thinking in Calvin's anthropology, see Engel, *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology*, "Introduction." Richard Prins, "The Image of God in Adam and the Restoration of Man in Jesus Christ: A Study in Calvin," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 25 (1972), 34, calls Calvin's language about the soul "a confusing one at least." Cf. Brian A. Gerrish, "The Mirror of God's Goodness: Man in the Theology of Calvin," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 45 (1981), 221.

<sup>130</sup> Green, *Body, Soul and Human Life*, 46: "The biblical writers do engage questions regarding the nature of humanity, but they do so implicitly." On the variety of terms which the Old Testament uses to describe the human person, see Robert A. Di Vito, "Here One Need Not Be Oneself: The Concept of 'Self' in the Hebrew Scriptures," in *The Whole and Divided Self*, eds. David E. Aune and John McCarthy (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1997), 49-88.

<sup>131</sup> Robert Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings* (AGJU 10; Leiden: Brill, 1971), 447. Cf. Betz, "The Concept of the 'Inner Human Being'," 328.

<sup>132</sup> N. T. Wright, "Mind, Spirit, Soul and Body: All for One and One for All: Reflections on Paul's Anthropology in his Complex Contexts," a paper presented at the Society of Christian Philosophers: Regional Meeting, Fordham University, March 18, 2011. Online article accessed February 10, 2014.

<sup>133</sup> Cited in Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, 26.

<sup>134</sup> CO 35:202.

<sup>135</sup> CO 35:202.

“factory of idols,”<sup>136</sup> a “five foot worm,”<sup>137</sup> a “monster,”<sup>138</sup> “grubs crawling upon the earth,”<sup>139</sup> and unfit to be ranked with “worms, lice, fleas, and vermin.”<sup>140</sup> Does such language make Calvin a pessimist? It all depends on how this judgment is deployed. If by pessimism is meant a dim view of things, then three possibilities can be suggested: a pessimism with respect to human pride over against God;<sup>141</sup> a pessimism when humans are considered in their corrupted or fallen condition;<sup>142</sup> and a pessimism about the capacities of the human body in a liturgical context. In light of the data, it is not unreasonable to call Calvin a pessimist in all three senses. I assume his pessimism is warranted in the first two senses, but contend, as I shall hope to show below, that it is unwarranted in the third.

Where Calvin more obviously fails to persuade, however, is in his handling of the terms “flesh,” “body,” and “body as prison.” In Scripture the term *sarx* signifies two basic realities: the human creature in its creaturely status (Rom. 4:1; 9:3; 11:14; Gal. 4:23, 29; 1 Cor. 9:11; 15-50; Ps. 142:2 LXX) and in its fallen condition or what is often termed “carnal man” or “sinful man” (Rom. 7:14; 8:5, 9-11; 2 Cor. 10:2-3).<sup>143</sup> Calvin readily

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<sup>136</sup> I.11.8.

<sup>137</sup> CO 33:662; cf. Ps. 22:6.

<sup>138</sup> *Sermons on Job* 33:29.

<sup>139</sup> II.6.4.

<sup>140</sup> Cited in Gerrish, “The Mirror of God’s Goodness,” 212.

<sup>141</sup> Gerrish, “The Mirror of God’s Goodness,” 212, for example, sees “in the heavy rhetoric Calvin’s horror that man in sin has surrendered his very humanity to a life of thanklessness.”

<sup>142</sup> I.17.10, “We need not go beyond ourselves: since our body is the receptacle of a thousand diseases.”

<sup>143</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 6:12; II.3.1; III.19.4; III.14.1. Cf. Robert H. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology with Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 58.

accepts both senses, and he repeatedly stresses that the soul cannot be excluded from “the flesh” in the latter sense,<sup>144</sup> which points to a corruption of human nature *in toto*.<sup>145</sup>

But if flesh is contrasted to the Spirit as something corrupt to what is sound, the crooked to what is straight, the defiled to the holy, the polluted to the pure, we may readily conclude that the whole of man’s nature is condemned in one word. Christ is therefore saying that our understanding and reason are corrupted because they are carnal and that all the affections of the heart are depraved and wicked because they too are carnal.<sup>146</sup>

Yet as often as Calvin affirms that the whole human person is subject to the aeon of sin, his rhetorical habit is to place the body, more often than the soul, on the problematic side of “flesh.” “As the soul is the more excellent and the body the inferior part of man, so the spirit is superior to the flesh.”<sup>147</sup> “The spirit takes the place of the soul in man, but the flesh, which is the corrupt and polluted soul, that of the body.”<sup>148</sup> And again, “our souls are fixed to the earth, and so enslaved to our bodies that they have fallen from their proper excellence.”<sup>149</sup> To put the point crudely: there is more language in Calvin about the physical body as a problem to the salvific, sanctifying and ecclesial work of God than as integral to this divine work.<sup>150</sup> Where there is an appropriate judgment of the body in

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<sup>144</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 7:18; 8:7; Gen. 3:6; Ps. 97:7; Isa. 40:6, 22; John 6:63. *Comm.* Rom. 6:6, “The *body of sin*, which he mentions a little later, does not mean flesh and bones, but the whole mass of sin, for man, when left to his own nature, is a mass of sin.” On the fallen mind: II.2.13-25, he says, “an immense crowd of gods flow forth from the human mind”; cf. *Comm.* Col. 2:18. On the fallen will: II.2.26-27; II.3; II.5; esp. II.2.12. See Ernst Kinder, “The Reformers’ Doctrine of Man,” *South East Asia Journal of Theology* 5 (1964), 37; Paul Helm, “John Calvin, the ‘Sensus Divinitatis’, and the Noetic Effects of Sin,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 43 (1998): 87-107.

<sup>145</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 7:24; *Comm.* Ps. 8:7-9; *Comm.* Gen. 3:1; I.15.4.

<sup>146</sup> *Comm.* John 3:5. On the ambiguous sense of “nature” and “creation,” see Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 82-83.

<sup>147</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 7:22.

<sup>148</sup> *Comm.* 2 Cor. 5:8.

<sup>149</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 6:12. More bluntly, *Sermon on Job* 37, “our souls are more precious to [God] than our bodies.”

<sup>150</sup> See also *Comm.* Col. 2:11.



its complicity to the “deeds of the flesh,” there is all too often a failure to commend the body as a blessed instrument of God’s glory on earth.

Perhaps this tendency is in response to the biblical habit of placing the body in linguistic proximity to rebellious *sarx*.<sup>151</sup> Perhaps this rhetorical habit is mitigated by Calvin’s positive discourse on the resurrected body. But the consistently negative cast that marks Calvin’s rhetoric on the physical body generates a potential for a distorting perspective.<sup>152</sup> While there is no need to charge Calvin with an undue dependence on Plato’s anthropology, there is still a sense that his repeated use of the term “prison” to describe the physical body departs from the strictly technical, inter-textually nuanced language of Scripture (e.g. “body of sin” or “body of death”) and introduces philosophical baggage that (potentially) sends his readers in the wrong direction.<sup>153</sup> As the case may be, the notion of a prison engenders a certain prejudicial view of the physical body, which fails to reckon fully with the bodily basis of redemption to which the Scriptures bear witness.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Conversely, there is no corresponding language in Paul about a “mind of sin” or a “heart of death” or a paradoxical “carnal soul.” As Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms*, 297, rightly argues, however, in Romans the body is “dead” on account of sin, not on account of its materiality. A considerable amount of exegetical nuance is required here, as Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, 40, rightly insists: “But because of the tyranny of sin over the flesh, in [Romans] 8:4-13 flesh comes to stand for the sin which has so completely dominated the concrete physical life of the person as to become practically one with it.”

<sup>152</sup> On this point, see Selinger, *Calvin Against Himself*, 2-3.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. “Psychopannychia,” 440-444. He writes, “we will no longer walk by faith but by sight, since the load of clay [as a prison of the soul] by which we are pressed down, acts as a kind of wall of partition, keeping us far away from God” (443). He also uses the language of “celestial soul” (444), which rather confuses things. Faber’s observation, *Essays in Reformed Doctrine*, 243, that when Calvin describes body and soul from the angle of creation, he employs the language of “inn” and “guest” rather than “prison,” does not seem to be borne out by the evidence.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Udo Schnelle, *The Human Condition: Anthropology in the Teachings of Jesus, Paul, and John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 56-57. Engel, *John Calvin’s Perspectival Anthropology*, 215, makes a similar point in regards the “Psychopannychia.”

### 4.3.3 Exegetical questions: part 1

In contrast to Calvin's diminished role for the human body in the redemptive and liturgical work of God, the body plays a more prominent role in the New Testament picture, as Gundry explains, because it represents the concrete place for life "in Christ" to be quite literally worked out.<sup>155</sup> As often as not, Paul "uses sw/ma as the comprehensive expression of the human self" or as a technical term to denote the whole person in its corporal relations.<sup>156</sup> For the biblical writers this is the normative way to enact human life before God, publicly and privately.<sup>157</sup> The problem of the human body is not materiality; its problem, like the mind or heart as well, is its enslavement to sin. Its fundamental need, conversely, is transformation, not an escape from the material order.<sup>158</sup> And it is in that light that the Christian, awaiting the consummation of God's purposes for creation, seeks to live well "in the flesh" but not "according to the flesh" (2 Cor. 10:2-3), and thus imitates its Master who tabernacled in the world as "flesh" but not "according to the flesh" (Jn. 1:14; 8:15). Jewett helpfully summarizes:

unlike the word 'flesh', sw/ma can be used to depict the whole scope of salvation including the resurrection (Rom. 8:11) and redemption (Rom. 8:23) of the body and the bodily worship in the world (Rom. 12:1), which is the form of ethical activity the new aeon inaugurates and requires. The agent of this somatic salvation is the 'body of Christ' (Rom. 7:4) whose death and resurrection marked the turning of the aeons.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology with Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology*, 35.

<sup>156</sup> Schnelle, *The Human Condition*, 57.

<sup>157</sup> Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms*, 261. Bill T. Arnold, "Soul-Searching Questions About 1 Samuel 28: Samuel's Appearance at Endor and Christian Anthropology," in *What About the Soul? Neuroscience and Christian Anthropology*, ed. Joel B. Green (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 78, comments: "if ancient Israelites were faced with the question before us, I believe they would respond, 'Of course there is no existence apart from the physical!' Therefore, Samuel's appearance at Endor, once accepted as real and not delusional, must also be accepted as in some sense physical."

<sup>158</sup> Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 231.

<sup>159</sup> Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms*, 457.

In Calvin's emphasis on the soul as the seat of the "image of God" as well as the special locus of God's redemptive work, along with a corresponding diminishment of the "dusty" quality of human life, he fails to perceive the thoroughgoingly constitutive role of the physical body in sanctification and, as it concerns the public worship of the church, he ascribes the human body, at best, a subordinate or supplemental role, at worst, a problematic or worrisome role. This is in contrast to the holistic picture of the human person which the earliest pages of Scripture envision.<sup>160</sup> While we cannot treat the technical complexity that surrounds the historical-critical and theological discussions of the *imago* in Genesis, we draw attention here to one thing, namely the corporeal aspect of the image of God.

#### ***4.3.4 Exegetical questions: part 2***

Starting with the publication of Herman Gunkel's critical work on Genesis, in 1901, biblical scholars have largely moved away from a "substantialist" reading of Gen. 1:26-27, and along with a greater understanding of the relational and royal dimensions of the *imago* has also come an emphasis on the corporeal dimension of the *adam*, which in turn has led to a greater stress on the holistic nature of the human creature. As Claus Westermann comments, "Gen 1:26f is concerned neither with the corporeal nor with the

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<sup>160</sup> Joel B. Green, "Eschatology and the Nature of Humans: A Reconsideration of Pertinent Biblical Evidence," *Science and Christian Belief* 14 (2002), 33-50, argues that this holistic picture carries through right to the end, implicating our understanding of the so-called intermediate state of the human person between death and resurrection, which he believes will be embodied, our present experience of "space and time" notwithstanding.

spiritual qualities of people; it is concerned only with the person as a whole.”<sup>161</sup> Adds David Clines, “It is the *homo*, not the *animus* or the *anima*” which is envisaged by the author of Genesis.<sup>162</sup> This interpretation is underscored by a consideration of Ancient Near Eastern literature. In a comparative study of Egyptian and Babylonia literature, the language of “image” and “likeness” is used to illumine the role of the king as the embodied image of the divinity. The language also explains how the imaged-idols function as representatives or caretakers of the god. Wherever the king was, *in his very person*, there also was the god; and as the image of that god, the king mediated the rule of the god in the created sphere. While the *imago* is radically “democratized” in Genesis, the language of 1:26-27 functions in similar fashion, namely to point to the human creature as a “moulded three-dimensional embodiment” of the one, true God.<sup>163</sup> It was in the totality of the *adam*, therefore, not just the so-called soul, that God’s image was to be borne out.

This reading of the Genesis narrative is strengthened, among other ways, on philological grounds. While comparatively rare in the Old Testament, an interpretation of the preposition *beth*, “in,” of Gen. 1:27, as *beth essentia* (“of essence”), is possible and

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<sup>161</sup> Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 150. So too T. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament theology* (Newton, Mass.: Charles T. Branford, 1970), 49. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 58, adds: “one will do well to split the physical from the spiritual as little as possible: the whole person is created in God’s image.”

<sup>162</sup> David J. A. Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” *TB* 19 (1968), 86.

<sup>163</sup> P. Humbert, *Etudes sur le récit du paradis et de la chute dans la Genèse* (Secretariat de l’Université Neuchâtel, 1940), 157; cited in Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” 56. For an excellent summary of ANE background literature, see Werner H. Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte Der Priesterschrift* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1964), 127-149; see also H. Wildeberger, “Das Abbild Gottes,” *TZ* 21 (1965): 245-259.

commonly accepted by grammarians.<sup>164</sup> The reason why this matters is that it opens up a different way of translating the phrase, בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים. Instead of using the English preposition “in,” the term “as” or “in the capacity of” becomes a more plausible translation. To the point, the Human is not made *in* the image of God, nor does the Human *have* the image of God, the Human instead is created to *be* God’s image.<sup>165</sup> The function of the *imago*, then, is not to depict something in God but rather to express the character of God in the world.<sup>166</sup> As God’s image, the whole human creature—in its earthy, rational, moral, volitional, relational and affective aspects—represents the life of God in its own native sphere: creation.<sup>167</sup> Put otherwise, it is in the whole creature’s life, formally and functionally, that God was to be reflected “on earth, as in heaven.”<sup>168</sup>

With this perspective in mind, it is not surprising to discover in the New Testament a concern for the entire ἅνωθροωπος. Whenever the Scriptures speak of one dimension of human life, as scholars point out, it is usually done to emphasize, not a part, but the whole from a certain point of view. While *psyche*, for instance, may refer to the whole

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<sup>164</sup> So, for example, Exod. 6:3; Ps. 118:7. Cf. Emil Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, trans. A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976, 1910), 379; M. O’Conner and Bruce K. Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 198; Cyrus Gordon, “‘In’ of Predication or Equivalence,” *JBL* 100 (1981): 612-613.

<sup>165</sup> Clines, “In the Image of God,” 80; see also 72-79. So too Schmidt, *Schöpfungsgeschichte*, 143 n. 1: “Der Mensch sei als ‘Gottes Bild’ nicht Gott ‘gleich’, sondern nur ähnlich.” See also von Rad, *Genesis*, 56; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 136-137. Contra this view, Phyllis A Bird, “Male and Female He Created Them,” 138, n. 22, and Westermann, *Genesis*, 145.

<sup>166</sup> Corporeality in Israel extended to temple activities (1 Kgs. 6-7), feasts (Lev. 23; Esth. 9:18-32), land (Gen. 12:7; Deut. 1:8; Josh. 1:1-4), nationhood (Gen. 15:5), sacrificial cult (Lev. 1-7, 16-17), eschatological vision of the new creation (Isa. 2:1-4; 65:17); hands (Pss. 47:1; 63:4), eyes (Pss. 119:18; 141:8), feet (Ps. 119:105), tongue (Pss. 51: 14; 71:24); bowing (Pss. 95:6; 2 Chr. 29:29), dancing (Ps. 149:3; 2 Sam. 6:14), kneeling (2 Chr. 6:13; Ps. 95:6), lifting arms (Ps. 28:2; Neh. 8:6); neighbor love (Isa. 59:9-16; cf. 64:6); holiness (2 Chr. 3:8-14; cf. Lk. 1:8-11); and uncleanliness as both a physical condition and a moral one (Lev. 14:1-32; 15:1-33; Pss. 24:4; 51:7; Isa. 6:5).

<sup>167</sup> Lawson G. Stone, “The Soul: Possession, Part, or Person? The Genesis of Human Nature in Genesis 2:7,” in *What About the Soul?*, 49: “The text does not say, ‘God formed a *body* out of dust’, but that Yahweh formed ‘Adam’ out of the dust.” Contra Calvin, “Psychopannychia,” 449, 452.

<sup>168</sup> See Meredith G. Kline, “Creation in the Image of the Glory-Spirit,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 39 (1977), 268.

person in terms of its “inner life,” its “living” quality, or even simply a “human creature,” and the creature’s *pneuma* may point to the center of human personality where the encounter with God takes place, *soma*, as N. T. Wright argues, correctly I believe, “is the whole person seen in terms of public, space-time presence.”<sup>169</sup> Though the *soma* does not play the same role in the creative and redemptive work of God as either the *psyche* or the *pneuma*, it nonetheless plays its own crucial role, for it is the whole of human existence that Christ comes to make new.<sup>170</sup> Again, Wright makes the point sharply. Whereas Calvin sees 1 Thess. 5:13 as confirmation of his anthropological dualism, Wright argues that Paul’s fundamental concern is for the whole creature:

may the God of peace sanctify you wholly, *holoteleis*, and may your spirit, soul and body be preserved (*teretheie*) whole and entire (*holokleron*) unto the royal appearing of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.... when Paul thinks of human beings he sees every angle of vision as contributing to the whole, and the whole from every angle of vision. All lead to the one, the one is seen in the all. And, most importantly, each and every aspect of the human being is addressed by God, is claimed by God, is loved by God, and can respond to God.<sup>171</sup>

#### 4.3.5 Summary

Whatever else Calvin may affirm about the human body, he fails properly to emphasize its constitutive role in human life before God. As Beth Felker Jones aptly summarizes, “Calvin is clear about the holistic effects of sin, but he is less clear about the holism of

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<sup>169</sup> Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 283. Cf. Marc Cortez, *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark International, 2010), 69-70.

<sup>170</sup> See F. LeRon Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 164; Green, *Body, Soul and Human Life*, 63; Betz, “The Concept of the ‘Inner Human Being,’” 338.

<sup>171</sup> Wright, “Mind, Spirit, Soul and Body,” 14. Wright identifies seven types of dualism that might be compatible with ancient Jewish thought: heavenly, theological, moral, eschatological, epistemological, sectarian and psychological. A duality, however, is not to be readily equated or confused with a *dualism*.

redemption.”<sup>172</sup> And while a case could be made that Calvin exhibits an equally positive regard for the physical body as the Scriptures do, the language that marks his discussions of public worship and the exegetical and theological warrants which he employs to exclude or reduce the role of the body in that particular context fail to do justice to richly corporeal, kinetic vision of worship which the Scriptures advance and which God in Christ enables the church to enact by the power of his Spirit.

## **4.4 CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSALS**

### **4.4.1 A review of Calvin’s theology of the human body**

Before moving on to our constructive proposals, a review of Calvin’s theological argument is in order. As it concerns his liturgical proposals, Calvin’s theology of the human body is informed by three lines of thought. The first relates to God’s nature. “God, who is a Spirit,” Calvin writes, “must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.”<sup>173</sup> With his use of the term “spirit,” Calvin points to two realities: that God is a non-material being or “pure spirit” and that he is a rational, moral, volitional and affective personal being. The second line of thought is directly connected. Human likeness to God, for Calvin, occurs at a fundamentally “spiritual” level. From an anthropological perspective, the soul is seen here to function here as the “spiritual” place of special concourse with God, for the soul is that non-material domain where human personhood is especially expressed. And because the human creature falls *spiritually*—that is, in their souls—the human creature must also be regenerated *spiritually*. The third line of thought pertains to new covenantal

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<sup>172</sup> Beth Felker Jones, *Marks of His Wounds: Gender, Politics and Bodily Resurrection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 60.

<sup>173</sup> “The Necessity of Reforming the Church,” *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 1, 128.

worship. Calvin writes: “As God requires us to worship Him in a spiritual manner, so we most zealously urge men to all the spiritual sacrifices which He recommends.”<sup>174</sup>

What Calvin means by “spiritual” here is a simple ceremonial apparatus (over against the complex ceremonial apparatus that was appropriate “to an age of tutelage” and represented a kind of “bondage”) and a concentration on “the pure exercises of faith” (or rational and affective activities rather than “carnal” or “bodily” activities).<sup>175</sup> This emphasis corresponds to the subjective side of public worship: that which concerns human activity. The objective side of worship corresponds to the nature of God. The reason why the faithful should avoid entanglement in “petty carnal observances,” like the veneration of icons, is that this contravenes the “spiritual” and therefore “lawful” worship of an invisible God.<sup>176</sup> While Israel may have required extensive physical helps, the New Testament church no longer requires them. When too many physical activities are introduced into public worship, moreover, this tends to provoke a desire to cling to “earthly” things or to confuse earth and heaven. Where the body proves useful, for Calvin, is in its subordinate cooperation to the activities of the heart and mind. Influence hereby is construed largely as a one-way street: from soul to body.

Calvin is not as straightforward as this, of course. While he stresses the pivotal need to “pray within ourselves,”<sup>177</sup> he also commends the practical value of liturgical ceremonies

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 151-153. See also his commentary on Micah 6:6-8; 1 Pet. 2:5; John 4:23-24; Ps. 50:23; 51:17; and Malachi 1:11..

<sup>176</sup> II.8.17, with reference to the Second Commandment.

<sup>177</sup> III.20.29, 30.



as a way for the body to be “exercised.”<sup>178</sup> The faithful err when they exercise their bodies in a “mindless” fashion, yet the acts of kneeling or hand-raising, when done rightly, serve as excellent “exercises whereby we try to rise to a greater reverence for God.”<sup>179</sup> And though the believer is “shut up in the body as in a work-house,”<sup>180</sup> this is no reason, Calvin insists, not to give the physical body its due care. Why? Because it is *God* who nourishes and maintains it.<sup>181</sup> As evidence of this care, God in Christ has taken on “flesh from our flesh, bones from our bones,”<sup>182</sup> granting thereby the gift of “spiritual union” with himself. Grounded in the work of the Spirit, this union is both a future and a present reality for the faithful, living in light of the future resurrection and of their present incorporation in the divine life. In their participation in Christ, the faithful *now* find “life in their own flesh”; the human body *now* is a member of Christ; the body *now* is a temple of the Spirit—which is why “outward actions” matter *now*.<sup>183</sup>

Yet as positively as we might wish to paint the picture, Calvin’s affirmations of the constitutive role of the human body in the exercises of Christian faith occur in only a few loci: in his commentary on Christ’s body in the Lord’s Supper, on the resurrection, on 1 Corinthians 6, and on several passages in Romans. His rich insights on the human body here fail to carry over in any kind of comprehensive manner. And while it is possible to find in Calvin commendations of the physical body in the context of public worship, those commendations are the exception. More common is a concern for the “spiritual”

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<sup>178</sup> “The Necessity of Reforming the Church,” 127.

<sup>179</sup> *Institutio* 1539 IX.27.

<sup>180</sup> *Comm.* 2 Cor. 5:4.

<sup>181</sup> II.8.40, 41; III.20.44; see also Engel, *John Calvin’s Perspectival Anthropology*, 164.

<sup>182</sup> II.12.2.

<sup>183</sup> IV.17.8; *Comm.* 1 Cor. 6:15-20.

requirements of worship in a new covenantal era that prioritize the interior activities of the soul in correspondence to the *theo*-logical priority of God's non-material essence.<sup>184</sup> Where Calvin hints at a christological and pneumatological reading of the human body, this chapter argues for a more thoroughgoingly trinitarian treatment of the physical body in the context of the church's public worship.

#### 4.4.2 The constructive argument

The argument that follows can be summarized this way. If the *telos* of the human body is to be discovered, it will be discovered both *in motion* and *on the way*. To know what a human body is for, that is, we must consider the way in which it is caught up, on the one hand, in the movements of creation and, on the other, in the movement of Christ and his Spirit. We must also reckon with the fact that its good purposes can only be discerned eschatologically. This is another way of saying that the human body, as Calvin rightly insisted, is constituted by a fundamental set of relations or, more properly, *koinonia*.<sup>185</sup> To argue this dynamic view of the body's *telos* is to argue against a narrowly structural or static view of the body, on the one hand, and against all forms of radical dualism or reductive materialism, on the other.<sup>186</sup> While Calvin gets much of this right, I wish to press the idea in a much more comprehensive manner, beyond, in fact, what he himself was able to conceive for a liturgical context.

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<sup>184</sup> I.13.1. Cf. I.2.2,

<sup>185</sup> Michael Horton, "Image and Office: Human Personhood and the Covenant," in *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, eds. Richard Lints, Michael S. Horton, and Mark R. Talbot (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 181: "For the biblical writers at least, 'What is it to be human?' is ultimately a narrative-ethical rather than a metaphysical-ontological question."

<sup>186</sup> On the variety of philosophical and theological construals of the human person (esp. body *viz* the soul), see Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 69.

Specifically, I argue that the fundamental *telos* of the human body lies in its relation to Christ, as a “member,” and to the Spirit, as a “temple.” What the faithful shall receive physically in the *eschaton*, while qualitatively different from the present sin-vitiated body, will also be “more of the same,” because the Spirit who fashions bodies for the age to come is the same Spirit who inhabits the bodies of the faithful now (as a temple) in order that they may become partakers of Christ (as members). In the context of public worship, the faithful enter into the habitation of liturgical habituation, where the physical body, in its own way, but not on its own terms, forms the faithful to offer acceptable worship to God. All this is to say that the human body is christologically, pneumatologically and liturgically constituted, capable of glorifying God in its own distinctive way. This is also to say that the body has important work to perform in corporate worship.

#### **4.4.3 The human body christologically constituted**

To know what human bodies are for, we must first look at Christ’s body. We do not begin at the beginning, in Genesis. We begin at the center, with Christ. Though perhaps it might be more accurate to say that we begin at the end, with Christ ascended in glory.<sup>187</sup> His body, born of the Virgin Mary, suffering death, resurrected, and ascended to the right hand of the Father, as Calvin rightly ascertained, is *the* paradigmatic body.<sup>188</sup> What does this body tell us about all human bodies?

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<sup>187</sup> James D. G. Dunn, “1 Corinthians 15:45 – Last Adam, Life-giving Spirit,” in *Christ and the Spirit in the New Testament: Studies in Honor of C. F. D. Moule*, eds. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 140-141, “For Paul ‘the resurrection marks the *beginning* of the humanity of the Last Adam’.”

<sup>188</sup> *Comm. Phil. 3:21*, “We see, even in life, but chiefly in death the present meanness of our bodies; but the glory which they will have, conformably to Christ’s Body, is incomprehensible.”

First, this body, as the beloved apostle testifies, is *sarx* (Jn. 1:14). In canonical perspective, this body recalls the flesh which Adam beholds in his counterpart, Eve: σὰρξ ἐκ τῆς σαρκός μου (Gen. 2:23, LXX). Made from the *adamah*, this is a body that is embedded in creation. Through this body, conditioned by the rhythms of creation—of waking/sleeping, working/resting, fullness/emptiness, presence/absence—a psychosomatic, sensory-aesthetic knowledge of the world is acquired.<sup>189</sup> Upon this original flesh God pronounces a definitive benediction (Gen. 1:31) and enables it to bear his glory. In the definitive flesh of Christ, which appeared “full of grace and truth,” God’s glory is supremely witnessed. Or in Paul’s language, “In [Christ] all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form [σωματικῶς]” (Col. 2:9).<sup>190</sup> And, as Calvin rightly suggests, it is through this flesh that the faithful experience the firmest bond of fellowship with God.<sup>191</sup> This flesh is seen and touched (1 Jn. 1:1), and by its touch, it heals other bodies (Lk. 13:13). It is positively a *fleshy* flesh: “It is I myself! Touch me and see, for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have” (Lk. 24:39).<sup>192</sup> Take these physical properties away, Calvin argues, “and flesh now ceases to be.”<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> On this point, see Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Joel B. Green, *In Search of the Soul: Perspectives on the Body-Soul Problem* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010); Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 40; Green, *Body, Soul and Human Life*, 63; Christoph Schwöbel, “Recovering Human Dignity,” in *God and Human Dignity*, eds. R. Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 44-58; Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, 235: “The body is that sample of the material creation by which the human being indwells and so is related to the created world as a whole: the part both representing and being the means of relating to that part of the whole in which each particular person is placed.”

<sup>190</sup> In *Comm. Col. 2:9*, Calvin translates this term “bodily” [*corporaliter*] as “substantially” [*substantialiter*] or “essentially” [*essentialiter*] rather than “physically”; cf. *Comm. Col. 2:17*. Schnelle, *The Human Condition*, 57: flesh “is the very place where faith acquires visible form.”

<sup>191</sup> IV.15.6; II.12.2.

<sup>192</sup> It is noteworthy that the term *somata* of Rev. 18:13 carries with it the connotation of “human beings.”

<sup>193</sup> IV.17.29, “He proves himself no specter, for he is visible in his flesh.”

Through this flesh, moreover, the purpose of all flesh is apprehended: communion with God. Calvin points to this fact in his comment on John 14:28, “Let us therefore learn to view Christ humbled in the flesh, that He may lead us to the fount of blessed immortality. For he was not appointed our leader just to draw us to the sphere of the moon or the sun, but to make us one with God the Father.”<sup>194</sup> For Calvin, as Canlis rightly observes, “Communion is the groundwork of creation, the purpose of anthropology, and the *telos* toward which all creation strains.”<sup>195</sup> The key thing, then, is not the “substance” or “essence” of the body, its properties or potential, but rather its “orientation.” As Oberman notes, in Calvin’s thinking the body existed either in fellowship with God or alienated from God.<sup>196</sup> And it was in Christ’s body that the disorientation that all fallen bodies suffer is reversed. The human body is thus reoriented to its Maker, no longer “bewildered” but reconciled.<sup>197</sup> While Calvin worries at times about our need for physical manifestations of God’s presence to his people,<sup>198</sup> it remains generally true that Christ’s flesh is “the locus of human salvation.”<sup>199</sup>

*Second, Christ’s body is constituted by race, culture, history and tradition.*<sup>200</sup> This is another way of saying that it is a particular body. His is a Jewish body, “born of a woman, born under the Law,” (Gal. 4:4). Through this body, in his earthly ministry, Jesus accomplishes not everything that ever could have been done, but, more importantly, the

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<sup>194</sup> II.12.3, “our common nature with Christ is the pledge of our fellowship with the Son of God.”

<sup>195</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 54.

<sup>196</sup> Oberman, “The Pursuit of Happiness,” 17. So also Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 71; cf. II.2.20.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> See his comments on Acts 2:2.

<sup>199</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 101. Acts 2:17-18 states, “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.”

<sup>200</sup> Cf. Willie James Jennings, “He Became Truly Human”: Incarnation, Emancipation, and Authentic Humanity” *Modern Theology* 12 (1996): 239-255.

will of the Father, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In Calvin's words, "He has achieved [salvation] for us by the whole course of his obedience."<sup>201</sup> While, according to Richard Prins, Calvin never explicitly states exactly in what respects the "image of Christ" differs from the "image of Adam," nevertheless "by inference it is possible to conclude that Christ's image does involve his suffering, his humility, his marvelous works, his death and glorious resurrection, and certainly his possession of the life-giving Spirit, since in all these Christ shows forth the glory of his Father."<sup>202</sup> Even if Calvin fails to stress this fact sufficiently, there is still a sense that Christ's particular human life is seen as the definitive stage for God's redemptive work,<sup>203</sup> and that the integrity of his mission is inseparable from the Jewishness that marked his particular body (as a synecdoche for his life).<sup>204</sup>

As a particular body, Christ's body is also a strictly localized body. During his earthly sojourn Jesus goes to this town but not that town, healing this person but not that one, embracing some but not all.<sup>205</sup> He comes to Israel, for the sake of the nations, yet he restricts his ministry to an astonishingly small geographic space. In his ascension, Christ's body remains a localized particular body. This fact was of special concern to Calvin. "Let them not, then, ascribe this property to Christ's glorious body—that it is in many places at once and not held in any space." Christ's body is "seated" at the right

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<sup>201</sup> II.16.5.

<sup>202</sup> Prins, "The Image of God in Adam and the Restoration of Man in Jesus Christ," 43.

<sup>203</sup> Calvin hints at this possibility in *Comm.* John 17:22: "Christ is not only the image of God, insofar as He is the eternal Word of God, but even on His human nature, which He has in common with us, the likeness of the glory of the Father has been engraved so as to form his members to the resemblance of it."

<sup>204</sup> See, in particular, Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 85.

<sup>205</sup> Günter Thomas, "Resurrection to New Life: Pneumatological Implications of the Eschatological Transition," in *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, 270, "The embodiment of the Spirit will preserve not only identities but also *shaped and thereby limited life*" (emphasis original).

hand of the Majesty on high, he argued, not ubiquitous; it is emplaced in the heavenlies, not ontologically diffused, for “it is the true nature of a body to be contained in space, to have its own dimensions and its own shape.”<sup>206</sup> The problem with the advocates of Christ’s ubiquity in the Lord’s Supper, Calvin insists, is that they wish to “make a spirit out of Christ’s flesh.” Yet what stood “at the right hand of the Father” was not a “specter” but the concrete body of Christ.<sup>207</sup> To insist on the integrity of Christ’s corporeality in heaven, then, was, for Calvin, to preserve the particularity of all human bodies.<sup>208</sup>

*Third, Christ’s body is marked by continuity and discontinuity.* In the gospels, Christ’s wounds serve as a locus of continuity between his crucified body and his resurrected body. According to John’s gospel, Jesus takes the initiative to exhibit his wounds, “his hands and his side” (Jn. 20:20). This act comes not in response to doubt but rather to the word of “peace” (Jn. 20:19); it is a positive act, not a conciliatory one; a commendation of his body, not a concession to weak faith. When Thomas realizes that he has missed out on this exchange, he demands the same affirmative witness.<sup>209</sup> “Believing” in Jesus is, for John, a visceral, somatic thing (Jn. 20:27), and to recall Christ’s wounds is a way for the church to remember Christ rightly.<sup>210</sup> More strongly even, it is this wounded body that

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<sup>206</sup> IV.17.29. “But how weak and fragile that hope would be, if this very flesh of ours had not been truly raised in Christ, and had not entered into the Kingdom of Heaven!”

<sup>207</sup> Ibid. *Comm.* Acts 1:9, “I willingly confess that Christ is ascended that he may fulfill all things; but I say that he is spread abroad everywhere by the power of his Spirit, not by the substance of his flesh.”

<sup>208</sup> IV.17.12-19. David H. Kelsey, “Human Being,” in *Christian Theology: An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks*, eds. P. Hodgson and Robert King (London: SPCK, 1998), 144: “Whatever it is, salvation will be an affirmation of the essential finitude of human nature, not an escape from it.”

<sup>209</sup> Marianne Meye Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 115: “Thomas’s statement ‘unless I see ... I will not believe’ is not an expression of doubt and unbelief but a request for a resurrection appearance of the Lord such as the other disciples had.”

<sup>210</sup> Thomas, “Resurrection to New Life,” 263-264: “Christ’s body becomes the visible medium for his memory. The cross remains inscribed in the body of the Resurrected One. The resurrection of Christ was not built on an episode of amnesia.”

constitutes the identity of the Second Person of the Trinity. Following a similar exchange in the Lukan narrative (Lk. 24:38-40), Jesus requests of his disciples something to eat. Calvin supposes that Jesus' post-resurrection act of eating functioned as pantomimed acts of condescension.<sup>211</sup> The disciples' weak faith required, Calvin believed, what could only be regarded as a sign of corruption in the present age.<sup>212</sup> To be free from the need for food, conversely, pointed to a discontinuity in Jesus' body.

However, as Joel Green argues, rightly I believe, these "earthy" eating episodes mark a significant point of continuity in the person of Jesus. "[Jesus] is not only capable of eating, but actually initiates a resumption of the table fellowship that had characterized Jesus' ministry in Galilee and en route to Jerusalem. Hence, the post-resurrection persistence of Jesus' identity is established, first, with reference to his physicality and, second, with reference to relationality and mission."<sup>213</sup> Yet in the fact that Jesus receives the gift of a *soma pneumatikon* (1 Cor. 15:44; Rom. 8:11, 23), this new body exists in sharp discontinuity with the body which bore the "likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3). While the substance of his body remained the same, Calvin writes, Christ's resurrected body possessed a different, "quickenened" quality.<sup>214</sup> The Spirit fashions for Christ an incorruptible body, "a body for the realm of the Spirit,"<sup>215</sup> that is not simply alive, a

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<sup>211</sup> *Comm.* Luke 24:42; *Comm.* Matt. 22:30.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. "Psychopannychia," 451, where he describes food, drink and sleep as "signs of corruption" and a kind of defect of the soul in the present age. See also *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:44.

<sup>213</sup> Green, *Body, Soul and Human Life*, 168.

<sup>214</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:39; III.25.3; *Comm.* 1 Pet. 3:18; *Comm.* Rom. 1:4; 8:11; *Comm.* Eph. 1:19-20.

<sup>215</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1276-1281. See also Alan G. Padgett, "The Body in Resurrection: Science and Scripture on the 'Spiritual Body' (1 Cor 15:35-58)," *Word & World* 22 (2002): 155-163.



*nephesh hayah*, but “hyperalive, excessively alive,” as Jeremy Begbie describes it.<sup>216</sup> And it is such a body, “animated and controlled by the Holy Spirit,” that the faithful can anticipate in their incorporation to Christ’s glorified life.<sup>217</sup>

*Fourth, in Christ we discover the true extent of the body’s brokenness.* Calvin writes, “clothed with our flesh [Christ] vanquished death and sin together that the victory and triumph might be ours. He offered as a sacrifice the flesh he received from us, that he might wipe out our guilt by his act of expiation and appease the Father’s righteous wrath.”<sup>218</sup> In Christ the present body is seen to be a “body of death.” It is not simply a body caught up in the forces of entropy, it is instead categorically a “body of sin,” under the judgment of sin. This is the good news, Calvin maintains, because it is a form of truth-telling that human self-deception desperately requires. Ours is a body marked by infirmity (and therefore vulnerable to disease and entropy) as well as stained by sin (and therefore susceptible to rebellious and disordered passions). For Calvin, a proper christology requires a sober realism about the effects of sin on body. This is a liberating, rather than a depressing, truth.

Although Calvin’s rhetoric may degenerate into an obsession with the frail and fallen quality of creaturely life, what needs to be remembered is that there is a good purpose to this rhetoric. Canlis explains, “Calvin’s emphasis on creaturely frailty and sin is not to

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<sup>216</sup> Jeremy S. Begbie, “Looking to the Future: A Hopeful Subversion,” in *For the Beauty of the Church: Casting a Vision for the Arts*, ed. W. David O. Taylor (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010), 198, n. 6. Dunn, “1 Corinthians 15:45 – Last Adam, Life-giving Spirit,” argues that the phrase “life-giving Spirit” constitutes for Paul the continuity between the historical Jesus and the exalted Lord.

<sup>217</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit—In Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries, and Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 80.

<sup>218</sup> II.12.3.

stress the distance from God but to stress that it is God who takes the initiative with us—not we with him.”<sup>219</sup> This too is good news. In Christ’s initiative, to become “flesh from our flesh, bones from our bones,”<sup>220</sup> we discover not only the comprehensive corruption of the body but also its destiny to be hale and holy, capable of fellowship with God.<sup>221</sup> In Colin Gunton’s words, “the Father sends the Spirit to form a body for his Son out of the only material available to hand: the soiled flesh of the created order which he comes to redeem; so that this human life, as a perfect sacrifice of and to God the Father becomes the means of the sacrifice of praise of the whole world.”<sup>222</sup> In assuming a body “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” Calvin argues, Christ thereby experiences our common infirmities, “in order that He might be more inclined to sympathy.”<sup>223</sup> In Christ, then, we discover the One who in the flesh empathizes with weak and bewildered bodies, which groan for their full redemption (Rom. 8:23).<sup>224</sup>

The only way that other human bodies can attain this christomorphic *telos* is by being made a member of the body of Christ, which is possible only by the Holy Spirit.<sup>225</sup>

#### **4.4.4 The human body pneumatologically constituted**

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<sup>219</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 64-65.

<sup>220</sup> II.12.2.

<sup>221</sup> Wendell Berry, “The Body and the Earth,” in *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press, 2002), 98-99: “The word health belongs to a family of words, a listing of which will suggest how far the consideration of health must carry us: heal, whole, wholesome, hale, hallow, holy.”

<sup>222</sup> Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, 223-224.

<sup>223</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 8:3. See also *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:47.

<sup>224</sup> IV.17.9; cf. *Comm.* Jn. 11:33-35, Christ clings to his people, Calvin writes, “wholly in spirit and body.”

<sup>225</sup> *Comm.* Eph. 3:17, “It is a mistake to imagine that the Spirit can be obtained without obtaining Christ; and it is equally foolish and absurd to dream that we can receive Christ without the Spirit.”

The *double entendre* expressed in the phrase, “the body of Christ,” points to the somatic and ecclesial nature of the redemptive work which the Spirit of Christ accomplishes in God’s people. The human body in its most fundamental sense is both a *corpus Christi* and a *corpus ecclesiasticus*.<sup>226</sup> In Pauline terms, as Udo Schnelle observes, “there is no crucified One (Rom. 7:4) or exalted One (Phil. 3:21) without his body, just as conversely participation in the body of Christ is not imaginable without the glorification of God in the sw/ma of the believer.”<sup>227</sup> How does the Holy Spirit enable human bodies to become partakers of Christ’s body and thereby achieve their God-given end?

*First, the Scriptures make clear that there is no salvation apart from the physical body of Christ, crucified and resurrected, nor apart from the Body of Christ, his church, which in both cases is a gift of the Holy Spirit.*<sup>228</sup> To be “in Christ” is to be “with Christ,” which in turn is to be integrated to the body of Christ in both senses.<sup>229</sup> This idea is especially vivid in Calvin’s sacramental writings. To partake of Christ’s flesh, he maintains, is to experience the infusion of Christ’s life into us, “as if it penetrated into our bones and marrow.”<sup>230</sup> The flesh of Christ effective now:

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<sup>226</sup> This phrase intentionally plays off of Robert W. Jenson’s language from his essay, “*Anima Ecclesiastica*,” in *God and Human Dignity*, 59-71.

<sup>227</sup> Schnelle, *The Human Condition*, 59.

<sup>228</sup> Steven R. Guthrie, *Creator Spirit: The Holy Spirit and the Art of Becoming Human* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 69: “Wherever Jesus, the bearer-of-the-Spirit goes, life breaks out, not some metaphorical, etherealized, ‘immaterial’ sort of life, either, but real bodily vitality.”

<sup>229</sup> Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms*, 301. Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 117: “The Spirit is not a spiritualized mode of Christ; rather, the Spirit is the person in whom we now have access to the embodied Jesus.”

<sup>230</sup> IV.17.10. See also his comments on Luke 24 and 1 Cor. 10:16. *Comm. Jn.* 6:51, “For in His flesh was accomplished man’s redemption; in it a sacrifice was offered to atone for sins, and an obedience yielded to God to reconcile Him to us; it was also filled with the sanctification of the Spirit; finally, having overcome death, it was received into the heavenly glory.”

Such, I say, is the corporeal presence which the nature of the sacrament requires, and which we say is here displayed in such power and efficacy, that it not only gives our minds undoubted assurance of eternal life, but also secures the immortality of our flesh, since it is now quickened by his immortal flesh, and in a manner shines in his immortality.<sup>231</sup>

In the quickening of the human body, which occurs when the redeemed partake of the Eucharistic elements, a material thing feeds them with the material body of Christ by the Spirit's power.<sup>232</sup> Calvin writes: “[Christ] shows that in his humanity there also dwells fullness of life, so that whoever has partaken of his flesh and blood may at the same time enjoy participation in life.... In like manner, the flesh of Christ is like a rich and inexhaustible fountain that pours into us the life springing forth from the Godhead into itself.”<sup>233</sup> This is a Spirit-ual work, Calvin insists.<sup>234</sup> The faithful partake of the “proper substance” of the body of Christ by way of the “secret and miraculous power of God,” that is, the Holy Spirit, which is another way of saying, for Calvin, a “spiritual” participation.<sup>235</sup> As he remarks on John 6:63, “those who raise their eyes to the power of the Spirit with which the flesh is imbued, will feel from the effect itself and the experience of faith that quickening is no empty word.”<sup>236</sup> Always this partaking of Christ's flesh is for the sake of communion.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> IV.17.32, Beveridge translation, emphasis added.

<sup>232</sup> Cf. Davis, “Not ‘Hidden and Far Off’,” 415; Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, 136; Samuel Wells, *God's Companions: Reimagining Christian Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 72.

<sup>233</sup> IV.17.9. Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, 102, points to a possible weakness in Calvin's sacramental theology here, where the language of “channel” can give the impression that God acts *through* a man, not *as* a man.

<sup>234</sup> III.1.2. Also III.25.3: “[Christ] was raised by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Quickener of us in common with him.” Cf. Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, 101. The pneumatological source of life in Christ's flesh is less explicit in *Comm. Jn. 6:51*, “For as the eternal Word of God is the fountain of life, so His Flesh is a channel to pour out to us the life which resides intrinsically, as they say, in His divinity. In this sense it is called life-giving, because it communicates to us a life that it borrows from elsewhere.”

<sup>235</sup> “Short Treatise on the Lord's Supper,” in *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 2, 198.

<sup>236</sup> It is in this passage, too, that Calvin equates the “Spirit” with “spiritual.”

<sup>237</sup> In *Comm. Jn. 6:35*, commenting on the meaning of the phrase “I am the bread of life,” Calvin writes, “For faith does not look at Christ merely from afar, but embraces Him, that He may become ours and dwell

Not only is the physical body of Christ necessary for the faithful, so too is their incorporation into the church, the embodied presence of Christ in the world. “By the grace and power of the same Spirit,” Calvin writes, “we are made [Christ’s] members, to keep us under himself and in turn to possess him.”<sup>238</sup> Apart from our participation in the “spiritual and mystical body of Christ,”<sup>239</sup> it is impossible to experience “any forgiveness of sins or any salvation.”<sup>240</sup> Dieter Betz notes that Scripture consistently describes Christian formation as “the education of the sw/ma as it participates in the life of the body of Christ.”<sup>241</sup> Calvin adds, “[Paul] takes it for granted that in the person of Christ there had been exhibited a specimen of the power which belongs to the whole body of the Church.”<sup>242</sup> To be in Christ is to be in Christ’s body: this too is a Spirit-ual work. Calvin writes:

Though every one of us is said to be the temple of God and is so described, yet all must be united together in one, and joined together by mutual love, so that one temple may be made of us all. Since it is true that each one is a temple in which God dwells by His Spirit, so all ought to be so fitted together, that they may form the structure of one universal temple.<sup>243</sup>

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in us. It causes us to be united in His body, to have life in common with Him and, in short, to be one with Him.” Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 115, 163, draws out the pneumatological dimension of Calvin’s idea of communion with God.

<sup>238</sup> III.1.3. *Comm.* Jn. 7:38, “For the chief glory of Christ’s Kingdom is that He governs the Church by His Spirit.”

<sup>239</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 12:12.

<sup>240</sup> IV.1.4. For Calvin there is no enjoyment of “God’s fatherly favor” apart from participation in the visible church or “mother.”

<sup>241</sup> Betz, “The Concept of the ‘Inner Human Being’,” 328.

<sup>242</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 8:11.

<sup>243</sup> *Comm.* 1 Pet. 2:5.

*Second, the human body achieves its telos by conducting itself as a “temple of the Holy Spirit.”* As with the phrase, “body of Christ,” this phrase also carries a double sense. The first is corporate, the second is corporeal. In 1 Corinthians 3:16, Paul asks the believers, “οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ναὸς θεοῦ ἐστε καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν?” The pronoun here is plural (“y’all”), and what once described the physical Jerusalem temple, now describes the people of God: an *embodied* counter-narrative to the pagan temples that characterized the city of Corinth. Calvin, rightly, I believe, contends that the “καὶ” should be translated “because” rather than “and.”<sup>244</sup> The believers are the temple of God precisely because the Spirit dwells in them. Like a human body, the community of Christ is constituted by the Holy Spirit in order that they might be many-in-one. In consequence of this ontological reality, drawing on cultic language, as Anthony Thiselton explains, “To commit an offense against a fellow believer has therefore been described as *sacrilege*.”<sup>245</sup> Ontology here implies a particular ethic. Paul argues a similar line of thought in 1 Corinthians 6:13-20, “ἢ οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι τὸ σῶμα ὑμῶν ναὸς τοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν ἁγίου πνεύματός ἐστιν.” The corporate (again, “y’all”) is now seen to be inseparable from the corporeal. The faithful, Calvin writes, are united to Christ not only in “spirit” but also in “flesh”: “Christ is so joined to us, and we to Him, that we are united in one body with Him.”<sup>246</sup> The faithful are, quite literally, “flesh of His flesh,” which, for Calvin, is what Paul has in mind when he describes “the spiritual union [*coniugium*] between us and Christ,” that is, the union which the Spirit obtains between human bodies, the body of Christ, and the Body of Christ.

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<sup>244</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 3:16.

<sup>245</sup> Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, 475, emphasis original.

<sup>246</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 6:15.

The ramifications of this reality are several. For one, as a temple of the Spirit, the body experiences now the power of the age to come. The Spirit infuses the life of the age to come in bodies *today* which paradoxically (mysteriously?) are subject to the decay of a fallen cosmos. To be members of Christ's body, "of his bones and of his flesh," as Calvin argues, means that we belong to another, not ourselves.<sup>247</sup> Because the human body is Christ's, it ought to be consecrated to Christ. And because of the Spirit who indwells it, the human body belongs to the realm of Christ's resurrected body, and therefore again should be consecrated in anticipation of its full participation in that realm. Put otherwise, to the extent that the eschatological Spirit infuses the human body with a taste of the age to come, so the faithful are to behave corporeally, "in Christ," *as if* they were already citizens of the New Jerusalem.<sup>248</sup> Calvin comments:

With the same end in view [Paul] asserted in verse 19 that not only our souls, but also our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, so that we may be under no delusions about acquitting ourselves well towards Him, for we can only do that when we yield ourselves to His service, wholly and completely, so that He may also direct the outward actions of our lives by His Word.<sup>249</sup>

While Calvin may muddle things by needlessly stressing the fact that the soul is a temple—when Paul nowhere makes that point, nor need he under the circumstances—and

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<sup>247</sup> *Comm.* Eph. 5:30.

<sup>248</sup> Again Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, 242, emphasis original, puts her finger on theological dilemma: "Calvin failed to see how our participation in the ascended Christ, the center of the new creation, brings our present materiality into this new eschatological reality. The Ascension does not merely locate Christ in heaven; rather, the risen, *human* Jesus also sends his Spirit to accomplish in creation what was accomplished first in him. By doing so, he transforms the physical from serving as a barrier to participation into becoming the very means by which we enjoy Christ in the Spirit." David P. Henreckson, in "Possessing Heaven in Our Head: A Reformed Reading of Incarnational Ascent in Kathryn Tanner," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 4 (2010): 171-184, explores a similar question, yet more focused on the descent and ascent of Jesus vis-à-vis the *telos* of humanity.

<sup>249</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 6:20.

by using the language of “the filth of the earth” to describe what Paul would more likely identify as rebellious flesh, still Calvin rightly identifies the place of the human body in the economy of God, as belonging to Jesus as a gift of the Father through the Spirit, rather than as a “property” which we “own” to do with as we please. Samuel Wells’ description of the implications of baptism for the human body is pertinent here. At the moment the human body is handed over to baptism, he writes:

It is the end of a story in which one can talk in the same way about ‘my’ body or even ‘my’ child: for the body that matters is henceforth the body of Christ.... No longer is the body characterized by beauty or strength or age or fitness: henceforth what matters is its membership of Christ’s body, which is always youthful but walking the way of the cross, resurrected but poured out in service.<sup>250</sup>

*Third, the Holy Spirit gives the gift of particularity to human bodies.* In the same way that the Spirit particularizes Jesus’ body, so the Spirit particularizes all human bodies.<sup>251</sup>

Calvin underscores the ministry of the Spirit in Jesus’ life in his comment on John 3:34, “And indeed it is right that the Spirit should dwell in Him without measure, that we may all draw from His fullness, as we have seen.... The Father has poured out upon [Christ] an unlimited wealth of His Spirit.”<sup>252</sup> Christ was sinless at birth not because of his divine nature but “because he was sanctified by the Spirit.”<sup>253</sup> It is the Spirit who empowers Jesus to accomplish the mission of the Father, but it is also Jesus who gives the Spirit to his disciples so that they too, renewed by that same Spirit, may accomplish the Father’s

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<sup>250</sup> Wells, *God’s Companions*, 72.

<sup>251</sup> Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce, “Self, Identity, and Body in Paul and John,” in *Self, Soul and Body in Religious Experience*, eds. Albert I. Baumgarten, J. Assmann, and G.G. Stroumsa, SHR 78 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 192-193.

<sup>252</sup> See also *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15:46-47 and *Comm.* Rom. 6:9. II.13.4, “For we make Christ free of all stain not just because he was begotten of his mother without copulation with man, but because he was sanctified by the Spirit that the generation might be pure and undefiled as would have been true before Adam’s fall.”

<sup>253</sup> II.13.4.



mission. “For the fullness of the Spirit was poured out upon Him so that He might bestow it upon each one in a definite measure.”<sup>254</sup> This gift of the Spirit is for the sake ultimately of communion. Canlis helpfully summarizes: “participation is nuanced with communion, for the Spirit acts to affirm creation’s particularity and freedom even as it is shepherded toward its *telos* of Trinitarian communion.”<sup>255</sup>

As Calvin recognized, the Spirit is active at every point of Jesus’ life: overshadowing him at his birth (Luke 1:35), moving him to visit the temple as a child (Luke 2:27), descending upon him at his baptism (Mark 1:10), driving him into the desert to be tempted (Matt. 4:1), empowering his teaching (Luke 4:18; John 3:34) as well as his works of healing and exorcism (Matt. 12:28; Luke 4:14-21), superintending his death (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 3:18), raising him from the dead (Rom. 1:4; 8:11; cf. 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 15:42-49) and partnering with him in the summons of the heavenly bride of Christ (Rev. 22:17).<sup>256</sup> At Pentecost, Jesus gives instructions to his apostles *by* the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:2). At Christ’s ascension a cloud hides him from his disciples’ sight (Acts 1:9). This cloud recalls the cloud that envelopes (ἐπεσκέαζεν) Jesus at his transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36), an event which in turn uses the same language of Luke 1:35 where the Spirit envelopes (ἐπισκέασει) Mary at her conception.<sup>257</sup> The Spirit, then, is the one who enables Jesus not

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<sup>254</sup> *Comm. Jn. 20:22.*

<sup>255</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 60. In *Comm. 1 Cor. 15:45*, Calvin writes, “the Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon Him, that by the power of the Spirit He might rise from the dead, and raise up others” into fellowship with God.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. Eugene J. Rogers, *After the Spirit: A Constructive Pneumatology from Resources outside the Modern West* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 75-208.

<sup>257</sup> Eugene Rogers, *After the Spirit*, 54: “In the New Testament, the Spirit leads, follows, or accompanies the Son into the most intimate places: not, instructively, into his ‘mind’ or ‘heart’, but into much messier places, paradigms of the physical: the womb, the wilderness, the garden, the grave.”

only to be a particular person, but also to possess a particular body.<sup>258</sup> The particularity of all human bodies, in this light, is derivative of the particular body which Jesus enjoys on account of the Spirit's work.

*Fourth, like Christ, the bodies of the faithful experience both continuity and discontinuity.*

John Barclay offers this observation of Paul's use of the term *pneumatikos*: "[it] describes people not through analysis of their human constitution but in relation to their new status as graced by the Spirit of God."<sup>259</sup> Πνευματικός in Pauline Christianity, that is, designates an eschatological rather than an anthropological reality, and thus a σώμα πνευματικόν points to an eschatological tension for the Christian. Insofar as they will receive a "Spiritual body" to replace their *soma psychikon*, the redeemed shall enjoy a radically different bodily life in the age to come. But inasmuch as the human body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, the faithful are to live now in continuous relationship to the final fulfillment of God for the human body.<sup>260</sup> For this reason Calvin emphasizes the Pauline requirement for believers to "present" their members to righteousness (Rom. 6:13), to "offer" their bodies as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1), and to "glorify" God with their bodies (1 Cor. 6:20). Even though the physical body suffers the rot and decay caused by entropic forces,

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<sup>258</sup> Cf. Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 198-204. On this issue, see Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 3, trans. David Smith (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), 167; Thomas G. Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995); Jurgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 60-72; Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, 117-121.

<sup>259</sup> John M. G. Barclay, "Πνευματικός in the Social Dialect of Pauline Christianity," in *The Holy Spirit and Christian Origins: Essays in Honor of James D. G. Dunn*, eds. Graham N. Stanton, Bruce W. Longenecker, and Stephen C. Barton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 161.

<sup>260</sup> Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 24, observes this of Calvin: "in anticipation of the 'end', [the faithful] already experience joy as the foretaste of heaven... It must therefore be emphasized that Calvin's understanding of happiness should not be spiritualized. After all, the creation 'in all its parts' has only one purpose: to serve mankind as source and resource of happiness."

it nonetheless remains even till death the site for holiness to be played out in all spheres of life.<sup>261</sup>

One implication of this eschatological tension is the way in which bodily freedom is regarded. Put simply, the renewing work of the Spirit implies for the physical body a freedom *from* and a freedom *for*. Reworking Karl Barth's language in *Church Dogmatics* III.3, while God frees the body to "be itself," this freedom is to be seen as a bounded rather than an unbounded freedom.<sup>262</sup> It is a freedom to be a certain kind of body, not any kind of body. It is to be a body "within its limits": limits to its possibilities, capacities, development and place.<sup>263</sup> The human body is also free, not when it lives as it pleases, but when it lives before the face of God.<sup>264</sup> To be just this kind of physical body is Christ's glory and the creature's too.<sup>265</sup> "It has freedom to experience and accomplish that which is proper to it, to do that which it can do, and to be satisfied."<sup>266</sup> We are in good hands, after all.<sup>267</sup> God preserves the creature to live fully *in* God, *for* God, and thus also fully *for* others rather than in the imprisoned walls of a solipsistic pursuit of "self-realization." And what preserves the creature in this freedom? For both Barth and Calvin, the answer is the Holy Spirit, for it is the Spirit who gifts the faithful with a freedom to offer their bodies as unceasing living sacrifices.

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<sup>261</sup> The fact that our bodies are betrayed by advanced age, regularly disappoint us, unexpectedly fall ill, repeatedly break down or fail to live up to our expectations, as Calvin knew quite well, is no reason for the Christian to yield to despair or to acts of bodily sabotage.

<sup>262</sup> Barth, *CD* IV.4, 22.

<sup>263</sup> Barth, *CD* III.3, 87. To seek for a freedom which exists outside of the freedom granted by God in Christ is for Barth to seek the freedom of a "second god."

<sup>264</sup> Barth, *CD* III.3, 92.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 149; 168.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>267</sup> Barth, *CD* III.3, 123, 130, 132.

*Fifth, the Spirit is the one who gives the faithful power to mortify their rebellious flesh and to live in their bodies in Christ-like fashion.* The remedy for the debilitating frailty and corruption that mark human bodies is the empowering presence of the Spirit. Calvin highlights this point repeatedly. The Spirit, he writes, corrects “the inordinate desires of the flesh.”<sup>268</sup> This includes all “weaknesses” that characterize the “infirmity of our nature and all the outward signs of humiliation.”<sup>269</sup> “The only remedy for such a great weakness is for Christ to rule us by His Spirit, which He promises to do.”<sup>270</sup> Not only does the Spirit empower the faithful, the Spirit also suffers with them. “The Spirit itself takes part of the burden which oppresses our weakness, and not only gives us help and succor but lifts us up, as though it itself underwent the burden with us.”<sup>271</sup> The Spirit trains all bodily desires, enabling the faithful to “steadfastly persevere in choosing what is good.”<sup>272</sup> Calvin stresses that the mortifying and vivifying work of the Spirit obtains a gradual sanctification for the faithful. While gradual, it is nonetheless a certain renewal of the believer.<sup>273</sup> As he comments in the *Institutes*:

This restoration [*instauratio*] does not take place in one moment or one day or one year; but through continual and sometimes even slow advance God wipes out in his elect the corruptions of the flesh, cleanses them of guilt, consecrates them to himself as temples renewing all their minds to true purity that they may practice repentance throughout their lives and know that this warfare will end only at death.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 8:2; see also his comments on Rom. 6:6; 8:13.

<sup>269</sup> *Comm.* 2 Cor. 12:10.

<sup>270</sup> *Comm.* Jn. 14:18. Cf. III.6.5; *Comm.* 2 Cor. 12:9.

<sup>271</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 8:26.

<sup>272</sup> III.10.1; *Comm.* 2 Cor. 5:5.

<sup>273</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 8:11: “[Paul] is not speaking of the last resurrection ... but of the continual operation of the Spirit, by which He gradually mortifies the remains of the flesh and renews in us the heavenly life.” Cf. *Comm.* Jn. 17:17.

<sup>274</sup> III.3.9. Cf. *Comm.* Rom. 8:1; *Comm.* Jn 7:38.

As confident as Calvin is about the Spirit's effective work in the believer, it is curious that this kind of language fails to factor in any kind of substantial way in his worries over the disordered passions of the body in a liturgical context. A proper pneumatology would need to retain a confidence in the sanctifying power of the Spirit in all domains of Christian life. In practice, while Calvin preferred weekly Communion as normative for the church, he acceded to a monthly practice, and then to a quarterly celebration, on account of the "weakness" of Genevan believers.<sup>275</sup> Canlis rightly presses Calvin: "In neither scenario is the Lord's Supper a physical tribute to the goodness of the physical world and the Spirit's role of creating communion in the world but acts as either condescension to, or even a temptation toward, the flesh."<sup>276</sup> In his inordinate anxiety about bodily temptations in worship, Calvin misses out on an opportunity to commend the reordering power of the Spirit in this central context for spiritual formation.

*Sixth, the fundamental thrust of the New Testament is to understand the "spiritual" work of God as the work of the Spirit to conform the whole human person to the life of Christ.* This is a comprehensive reality. No sphere of life is left untouched by the Spirit-ual work of God. Calvin summarizes the Christian life this way:

Ever since [Christ] engrafted us into his body, we must take especial care not to disfigure ourselves, who are his members, with any spot or blemish. Ever since Christ himself, who is our Head, ascended into heaven, it behooves us, having laid aside love of earthly things, wholeheartedly to aspire heavenward. Ever since

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<sup>275</sup> In his "Articles Concerning the Organization of the Church," *CO* 10a:7, he writes, "Since the infirmity of the people is still such that there is danger that this holy and excellent mystery might be brought into contempt if it were celebrated too often ... it has seemed good to us that the Holy Supper should be celebrated once a month."

<sup>276</sup> Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, 170.

the Holy Spirit dedicated us as temples to God, we must take care that God's glory shine through us, and must not commit anything to defile ourselves with the filthiness of sin. Ever since both our souls and bodies were destined for heavenly incorruption and an unfading crown, we ought to strive manfully to keep them pure and uncorrupted until the Day of the Lord. These, I say, are the most auspicious foundations upon which to establish one's life.<sup>277</sup>

For Calvin, both internal and external dimensions of human life fall under the governance of the Holy Spirit. This becomes especially clear in his anti-Nicodemite writings.<sup>278</sup>

Human beings owe God a dual honor, "which is comprised of the spiritual service of the heart, and of external adoration."<sup>279</sup> Because "the Lord has rescued our body and soul from death, he has secured the one as well as the other, in order to be their master and ruler. Therefore, after both body and soul in man have been consecrated and dedicated to God, it is necessary that his glory shine forth just as much in one as it does in the other."<sup>280</sup> While true "religion and sanctity" do not hinge on external matters, there is still value in an external service, "adoring God with the eyes, hands, or feet," which functions as "an appendage and accessory of spiritual service."<sup>281</sup>

There is no doubt that the accent in Calvin's use of the term "spiritual" lands on the person of the Spirit.<sup>282</sup> At its best, then, Calvin's theology of materiality rests on the work

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<sup>277</sup> III.6.3.

<sup>278</sup> See, in particular, Calvin's letter of 1537 to his fellow believers in France, "On Shunning the Unlawful Rites of the Ungodly and Preserving the Purity of the Christian Religion," in *Tracts & Treatises*, vol. 3, 359-411, esp. 372-373.

<sup>279</sup> *CO* 24:387; cited in Eire, *War Against the Idols*, 256, 258. See also *CO* 11: 328.

<sup>280</sup> In his *Petit Traicté*, *CO* 6:580; cited in Eire, *War Against the Idols*, 258.

<sup>281</sup> *Response à un Holandois*, *CO* 9: 597; cited in Eire, *War Against the Idols*, 259. In the *Petite Traicté*, *CO* 6: 566, he writes, "Ma doctrine est, que l'homme fidele se doit sanctifier et consacrer à Dieu, tant de corps que d'esprit: mais que l'esprit, comme le principal, aille en premier lieu."

<sup>282</sup> Cf. Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, 193. This is a point which Philip W. Butin repeatedly makes in his writings on Calvin. See, for example, "Constructive Iconoclasm: Trinitarian Concern in Reformed Worship" *Studia Liturgica* 19 (1989): 133-142; "John Calvin's Humanist Image of Popular Late-

of the Two Hands of God to bring all of creation into fellowship with the Father. At its best, as Canlis observes, “Calvin saw the Spirit’s work as that of transposition: taking what was the realm of physicality and moving it to the Trinity’s domain.”<sup>283</sup> The material realm, in Calvin’s thinking, follows the gravitational pull of the Spirit’s work to bring all things into fellowship with God. There is never *mere* materiality. There is always materiality *headed somewhere*. Yet at its worst, in Calvin, the physical body fails to receive a thoroughgoing pneumatological treatment because, unlike the soul, it remains downstream of the “spiritual” work of God, rather than fully consonant with this work. And because Calvin regards public worship as first and foremost a set of exercises of the interior life, the physical exercises which he commends remain in subordinate relation to the so-called soulish ones. Canlis again captures the problem well:

Calvin’s great strength lay in his rich and consistent emphasis on the necessity of human participation in Christ. His weakness lay in his inability (or polemical reticence?) to reflect on the fittingness of the material realm for just such a relation. This reticence resulted in a suspicion of material things as unable to bear the weight of spiritual reality. That the Spirit does not lead us ‘up and away’ to God but creates in material things God’s divine reality is something from which Calvin tends to shy away.<sup>284</sup>

Calvin’s hesitations notwithstanding, one of the central places where the faithful learn how to view their bodies rightly and to live a bodily righteous life is in public worship. It

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Medieval Piety and Its Contribution to Reformed Worship” *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 419-431; and *Revelation, Redemption, and Response: Calvin’s Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), esp. ch. 6. While Butin rightly believes that Calvin’s primary referent in the concept of “spiritual” is the Holy Spirit, I wish to suggest that the matter is more complicated than that.

<sup>283</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 116.

<sup>284</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 170. Calvin’s “mistrust of the physical realm left him tongue-tied over its *downward* implications for the material realm (whether in the form of the sacraments, the church, or elements of our humanity)” (168).

is here that the faithful learn what it means to disciple the human body. This too is a work of the Two Hands of God.<sup>285</sup>

#### **4.4.5 The human body liturgically constituted**

In what way does the church's liturgical context contribute to the attainment of physical body's *telos*? *First, to worship well corporeally requires that the faithful worship well corporately* (and of course vice versa). Calvin asserts: "whoever refused to pray in the holy assembly of the godly knows not what it is to pray individually, or in a secret spot, or at home."<sup>286</sup> Public worship is a central place for the believer's formation. Apart from this exercise of right praise, Calvin states, the conditions in which right confession might take place are jeopardized.<sup>287</sup> Indeed the "whole substance of Christianity" consists firstly in "the mode in which God is duly worshipped."<sup>288</sup> Central to right worship is, as always, communion with God. As he comments on Psalm 24:7, "What is the design of the preaching of the word, the sacraments, the holy assemblies, and the whole external government of the church, but that we may be united to God?" This communion is "through Christ," where all "ceremonies, to be exercises of piety, ought to lead us straight to Christ."<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Hughes Oliphant Old, "John Calvin and the Prophetic Criticism of Worship," in *Calvin Studies III*, ed. John H. Leith (Davidson, NC: The Colloquium on Calvin Studies, 1986), 76.

<sup>286</sup> III.20.29.

<sup>287</sup> *De Fugendis CO* 5:244: "genuine piety begets genuine confession."

<sup>288</sup> "The Necessity of Reforming the Church," 126. In his reply to Sadoletto, *CO* 5:392, he adds, "nothing is more dangerous to our salvation than a twisted and perverse worship of God."

<sup>289</sup> IV.10.29; cf. *Comm.* 1 Pet. 2:5. With respect to the visible sign of the sacrament in his 1545 "Catechism of the Church of Geneva," in *Theological Treatises*, vol. 2, 85, he writes, "we are to recognize the sign in light of an aid, by which we may be directed straight to Christ and from him seek salvation and real felicity."



While Calvin persists in seeing “the infirmities of our flesh” as an impediment to the ability of external aids to lift the faithful up “even to God,” the biblical narrative keeps Calvin returning to the importance of corporeal practices in corporate worship.<sup>290</sup> In fact, one could go so far as to argue, on Calvinian terms, that to know what a physical body is requires participation in the Body of the Christ, where public worship functions as a fundamental orientation for this embodied life in Christ. If the human body discovers its right orientation by being conformed to *body* of Christ, then the *Body* of Christ (the church) in worship becomes a primary locus where physical bodies are rightly formed.

*Second, the primary corporeal activities of public worship include training or discipling of the human body.* Not only do the faithful learn what bodies are for through the practices of worship, it is also through the members of the church that the faithful receive the help to live rightly in one’s own body. Ministries of singing, prayer, healing, counseling, friendship and community, among others, are key here. Calvin offers this commendation of the sacraments: “The purpose of the mysteries [i.e. the sacraments] is to give us practice in devotion and love.”<sup>291</sup> “The prayers,” he continues, “also ought to be effective for doing all those things. Besides all this, the Lord works efficaciously by His Spirit, because He does not want the things, which He has appointed, to be fruitless,” but instead that all would “be made better men as a result of them.”<sup>292</sup> To offer up our bodies is, for Calvin, to offer “not only our skin and bones, but the totality of which we are composed.”<sup>293</sup> It is the whole human person, in all liturgical activities, which is to be

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<sup>290</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 24.

<sup>291</sup> Cf. *Comm.* Eph. 4:16.

<sup>292</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 11:17.

<sup>293</sup> *Comm.* Rom. 12:1.

offered as a living sacrifice. A sacrifice, significantly, is something that is not only used but also used-up, yet here in public worship the body remains living, not dead. And in being consumed by the Spirit, it becomes even more alive with the life of Christ, not diminished.<sup>294</sup>

Training the faithful, in practical terms, takes place through gestures and movements such as kneeling, lifting holy hands, passing of the kiss of peace, standing, bowing, walking, dancing, and such. For Calvin, however, only those physical expressions which the New Testament commands or exhibits in practice are worthy of commendation.<sup>295</sup> This is one of the deficiencies of Calvin's liturgical theology, in that it fails to bring the whole body into participation of the Spirit's comprehensive work in the human creature. To include only the descriptive instances that appear in the New Testament is to underestimate the power of the whole body, in a range of postures and actions, to form the whole person. In a sense Calvin endows the body with too anemic a capacity to form the soul. As Margaret Miles offers, "For Calvin the capacity of the soul to affect the body is not matched by any capacity of the body to affect the soul. The body remains 'motion devoid of essence'."<sup>296</sup> Though it bears the sparks of God's glory and though its passions are formidable, for Calvin the body does not possess the same constitutive capacity as the heart or the mind. Against Calvin's worries over the body's errant passions, we argue that the body positively contributes to the Spirit's work of sanctification: to counter the idols of the mind, the forgetfulness of memories, a will that is bent against God, the disordered affections, as well as the distorted passions of the body itself. The body is hereby invited

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<sup>294</sup> See Rom. 12:1 and 2 Cor. 4:10, 13; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 1 Thess. 5:23.

<sup>295</sup> Cf. Old, "John Calvin and the Prophetic Critique of Worship," 82.

<sup>296</sup> Miles, "Theology, Anthropology, and the Human Body," 318.

to participate in the Spirit's work to reorder the human body to Christ's order, animating it with new life, for the sake of *this* body's worship in *this* Body of Christ.<sup>297</sup>

*Third, the aim of public worship ought to be the discipleship of the whole human person through a set of holistic "exercises."*<sup>298</sup> In light of their adoption by the Spirit and reception of Christ's grace, as Calvin comments on 1 Timothy 2:8, Paul invites the church to pray by lifting their hands. Liturgical activities, for Calvin, are a logical function of theological realities. He writes:

we should learn therefore that this practice is in keeping with true godliness, provided that the truth it represents also accompanies it; firstly, knowing that God is to be sought in heaven, we should form no earthly or carnal conception of Him, also that we should lay aside fleshly affections so that nothing may prevent our hearts from rising above this world.<sup>299</sup>

While idolaters shut God up in wood or stone, and hypocrites offer one thing with their bodies which contradicts the condition of their hearts, the faithful are to offer their bodies to God with integrity. When done in this way, such practices strengthen the often weak soul.<sup>300</sup> They must never of course become attempts to manipulate God, nor should they

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<sup>297</sup> Steven R. Guthrie, "Temples of the Spirit: Worship as Embodied Performance," in *Faithful Performances: Enacting Christian Tradition*, eds. Trevor A. Hart and Steven R. Guthrie (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007), 104: "If one's thought is shaped by one's bodily experience, then as a group of Christians—the Body of Christ—move *their bodies* together in the worship of God, they develop a shared and distinctive conceptual vocabulary; a common gestural lexicon around which they may organize meaning" (emphasis original).

<sup>298</sup> Stressing the holistic aspect of sanctification, Calvin writes, in *Comm. Rom.* 6:11, "As Christ was raised to an incorruptible life, so you are regenerated by the grace of God, in order that you may lead the whole of your life in holiness and righteousness, since the power of the Holy Spirit, by which you have been renewed, is eternal, and will flourish for ever."

<sup>299</sup> *Comm.* 1 Tim. 2:8.

<sup>300</sup> Cf. Old, "John Calvin and the Prophetic Critique of Worship," 78. In III.20.29, Calvin notes that Christ's example of the regular exercise of prayer serves to remind human beings how "unsteady" mind their minds are.

be practiced in “heart-less” fashion. Yet prayer, as an exercise of the tongue, functions as “a tutelage for our weakness, which should be thus exercised and repeatedly stimulated.”<sup>301</sup> Singing is commended for a similar reason. When the Christian sings, this exercises “the mind in thinking of God and keeps it attentive—unstable and variable as it is, and readily relaxed and diverted in different directions, unless it be supported by various helps.”<sup>302</sup> The faithful are also to lift their hands, alongside their heart and mind.<sup>303</sup> In lifting the hands, the Christian indicates his desire to be “diligent in the exercise” of supplication and thanksgiving.<sup>304</sup> Kneeling too is recommended, though not necessarily commanded. Calvin summarizes his liturgical ethos this way:

But because [God] did not will in outward discipline and ceremonies to prescribe in detail what we ought to do (because he foresaw that this depended upon the state of the times, and he did not deem one form suitable for all ages), here we must take refuge in those general rules which he has given, that whatever the necessity of the church will require for order and decorum should be tested against these. Lastly, because he has taught nothing specifically, and because these things are not necessary to salvation, and for the upbuilding of the church ought to be variously accommodated to the customs of each nation and age, it will be fitting ... to change and abrogate traditional practices and to establish new ones. Indeed, I admit that we ought not to charge into innovation rashly, suddenly, for insufficient cause. *But love will best judge what may hurt or edify; and if we let love be our guide, all will be safe.*<sup>305</sup>

The pastoral wisdom exhibited in this remarkable statement will eventually make it possible for both minimalist and expansive uses of the human body in the liturgy to

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<sup>301</sup> III.20.50; cf. III.20.29; *Comm.* Ps. 51:17.

<sup>302</sup> III.20.31.

<sup>303</sup> III.20.16.

<sup>304</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 63:4.

<sup>305</sup> IV.10.30, emphasis added. On this point, see James H. Nichols, “The Liturgical Tradition of the Reformed Churches,” *Theology Today* 11 (1954): 210-224.

appear in the Reformed tradition. Yet what is missing in his recommendations for physical expression in worship is the kind of expressly christological and pneumatological rendering of bodily activities which appear in his 1 Timothy comments. The terms on which he construes “spiritual” worship make it nearly impossible for him to read activities like kneeling or hand-raising as *proper* to God’s nature. More frequently, they are regarded as functions of the body as a bearer of God’s glory or as subsidiary aids to the soul.<sup>306</sup> Physical aids to worship, for Calvin, are principally coordinated to the needs of the soul. All too rarely are they tied to the constitutive work of Christ and the Spirit.

*Fourth, public worship is not a matter of self-expression but of formative expression.* Just as Christian worship ought to make space for spontaneous expressions of prayer and praise, it ought also to encourage ritualized and symbolic expression. A ritualized form of expression will involve repeated activities, as Calvin observed, that are performed for the good of the body, regardless of temperament or the feelings of the moment.<sup>307</sup> A symbolic form of expression will take seriously the christomorphic shape of all of worship, in which the physical body is invited to take part. It is in this sense that we might say that the Christian in corporate worship is *informed* in Christ, *transformed* by the Spirit, and *re-formed* by embodied practices, both free and *pre-formed*.<sup>308</sup> To put the

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<sup>306</sup> III.20.31, “since the glory of God ought, in a measure, to shine in the several parts of our bodies, it is especially fitting that the tongue has been assigned and destined for this task, both through singing and through speaking.”

<sup>307</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 11:17.

<sup>308</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 14:40: “The Lord allows us freedom in regard to outward rites, in order that we may not think that His worship is confined to those things. At the same time, however, He has not allowed us unlimited and unbridled liberty, but has, so to speak, put railings round about it; or at any rate He has restricted the freedom, which He has given us, in such a way that it is only from His Word that we can make up our minds about what is right.”

point in practical terms, the church does not do everything that could be done with the physical body in the context of public worship. While they may use them in playful ways, perhaps by dancing during a song, they will not play sports with them. They will only do certain things with the body, some of these repeatedly, some occasionally. These things will remind them that they do not perceive their bodies rightly simply by moving them about throughout the week. They perceive them rightly by being gathered *in* their own bodies, *as* a Body, *around* Christ's body.

*Fifth, in public worship the human body enters into creation's ongoing praise.* If the human body is made from the *adamah*, the earthy stuff of creation, then it is not unreasonable, on Calvinian terms, to believe that it too participates in creation's ongoing praise. It too is, in fact, already at praise. It too will in some way reveal the invisible God through its tangible presence. It too will school the church in the "school of the beasts." It too will awaken in the heart of the faithful a desire for God through the beauty of its form and functions. It too, in some fashion, will be able to admonish the human heart of its ingratitude and pride in light of such divine munificence. It too, finally, will enact and summon the body of believers to the praise of God. Whether the Christian acknowledges or cooperates with creation's praise is another matter. Humility would be required here, where the faithful are continually offered the opportunity to lift up their bodies *coram Deo*, while also learning how the human body might lead the faithful in a praise which resonates with the doxology of creation.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> See Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, 200.

## 4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have called attention to three lines of thought in Calvin's rendition of "spiritual" worship: 1) a concern to stress the non-material nature of God, 2) a worry over the questionable need for physical helps as well as their capacity to bind the faithful to "earth," rather than enable them to ascend to "heaven," and 3) the implicit priority given to the interior activities of the soul over the exterior activities of the body. In light of these currents in Calvin's thought, what some believe we have in Calvin is an "eschatology of invisibility" and the requirement of humility before a transcendent of God which must be preserved at all costs in public worship.<sup>310</sup> If this chapter's analysis has been accurate, however, such a judgment is an overstatement, if not a misrepresentation of what appears to be a more complicated set of ideas in Calvin. As I have suggested, Calvin is at his most persuasive when he interprets the meaning of the physical body in light of Christ's body—in its physical, sacramental and ecclesial senses. He is similarly persuasive when he traces out the logical implications of the body as a "temple of the Spirit." And when faced with what he regarded as the hypocritical conduct of the "Nicodemite" believers, I showed how Calvin brings body and soul into an intimate, mutually determinative relation. If a *telos* for the human body is discernable in Calvin's theology, then, it will point to both its beautiful order and its tragic disorder, both its hope in Christ's resurrected body and the power it obtains from the Holy Spirit to enable the faithful to live the whole of their lives in faithful obedience to God.

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<sup>310</sup> Richard A. Ray, "John Calvin on Theatrical Trifles in Worship," in *Calvin Studies VI*, ed. John H. Leith (Davidson, NC: The Colloquium on Calvin Studies, 1992), 108.

The weakness of Calvin's thinking, as I have asserted, involves three facets: 1) a failure to reckon more comprehensively with the body's *Spirit*-ual condition, 2) a tendency to indulge in rhetoric (such as "prison of the body") that pulls the body closer towards the sorts of problematic platonic or libertine thinking which he himself wished to avoid, and 3) a proclivity to restrict himself to the express examples of embodied worship in the New Testament rather than hewing closely to his christological reading of the human body which, we have argued, would open up a wide range of liturgically fitting bodily postures and expressions, observable throughout all of Scripture and borne out in the church's historical worship. Anticipating the next chapter, I note here that the pattern which we observe in Calvin's thinking on the human body plays itself out in similar fashion to his thinking on the material condition of public worship. Here too we discover a tension where the language of "spirit" points, on the one hand, to the work of the Holy Spirit to capacitate material things to bear Christ's glory and to form God's people and, on the other, to a diminution of material things for the sake of a "simple" worship. Here too we discover that "spirit and truth" plays a far more interesting role in Calvin's theology, and in the biblical texts which he marshals on behalf of a "simple" liturgy, than we might at first glance suspect.



# CHAPTER FIVE

## “Simple”

“Atque hic rursus notandum est, non conferri veritatem cum mendacio, sed cum externa figurarum accessione, ut sit pura simplexque, ut loquuntur, spiritualis cultus substantia.”

– **John Calvin**<sup>1</sup>

“In the name of a deeper spiritualism ... Calvin’s systematic removal of the regenerate Christian away from materialism, obscure complexity, and over-sensuous involvement in the earthly arts receives its seminal inspiration from a reading and interpretation of several key scriptural models.” – **Peter Auksi**<sup>2</sup>

“Such concern [over holy places, sacred spaces, sanctified traditions] now hinders or prevents the real worship for which God looks.” – **James D. G. Dunn**<sup>3</sup>

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In his exegesis of John 4:23-24, Calvin infers a mutually determinative relation between the ideas of “spiritual” and “simple” worship, both of which, he maintains, point to the reality that the church has left behind the “shadows” of Israel’s worship. As I noted in chapter one, for Calvin, while God allows Israel to worship with musical instruments, a new covenantal era requires a simple worship devoid of such “papist amusements.”

Calvin grants that Christians will have need of external aids to worship, but he insists that they be moderate and sober—in concord with the simplicity of Christ and his gospel.

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<sup>1</sup> *Comm.* Jn. 4:23. Though the idea of divine simplicity is important to Calvin’s theology proper (e.g. I.13.2; I.13.20-23), I leave it untreated here, because it is not perceived to have any direct influence on his liturgical theology. Cf. Paul Helm, “Anthropomorphism Protestant Style,” in *Whose God? Which Tradition? The Nature of Belief in God*, ed. D. Z. Phillips (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008), 137-157.

<sup>2</sup> Auksi, *Christian Plain Style*, 224.

<sup>3</sup> Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1991), 93.

Though the term “simplicity” (ἀπλότης) appears rarely in the New Testament,<sup>4</sup> Calvin places the idea of simplicity at the center of his liturgical proposals, and similar to the tendencies which have been observed in preceding chapters, Calvin’s emphasis on simple worship involves a diminished role for materiality in public worship. How does Calvin arrive at his understanding of “simple” worship? And might there be trajectories in his theology that open up different possibilities for the material condition of worship?

In this chapter, I argue that Calvin’s notion of “simple” points not to a single meaning but rather to a plurality of meanings, even if we may discover in them a family resemblance. I suggest that Calvin’s idea of “simple” worship is inextricably linked to his understanding of the language of John 4, particularly the phrase, “ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ.” As a passage which plays a central role in his liturgical theology, John 4 highlights for Calvin two distinct, but interrelated, concerns: the need for a minimal role for materiality in worship and the need for a moderate number of ceremonies. While leaving these twin concerns fluid in my investigation, I concentrate on Calvin’s view of the relation between “simple” and materiality in a liturgical context. In response to Calvin’s exegesis of John 4 and its implications for public worship, I argue that the exchange between Jesus and the Samaritan woman points to a trinitarian rather than a narrowly patrological line of thought; that the pericope of John 4 is concerned with a christological and pneumatological orientation to worship rather than an anthropological one; and that since neither materiality nor simplicity represent a primary concern for this

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<sup>4</sup> See Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22; 2 Cor. 1:12; 11:3. Most English Bible translations render the Greek with the language of “sincere” or “pure.” NASB uses the language of “simplicity,” while the KJV is one of the few translations to qualify Christ rather than the believer with the term. A different sense of the term is employed in Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11, 13. A variant of the term appears in Matt. 6:22; Lk. 11:34.

text, there is a need to consider trajectories in John rather than explicit directives. In doing so, I argue that a positive regard for materiality is discernable throughout John's gospel, not a negative one. I propose, finally, that whatever else worship "in Spirit and Truth" may be, for John it is a materially and symbolically mediated worship, rooted in the activity of the triune God.

The task of this chapter falls into three parts. In part one, I examine the different uses of "simple" in Calvin's theology and I revisit his exegesis of John 4:23-24. In part two, I proffer an alternative reading of the key phrases from this passage (πνεῦμα ὁ θεός and ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ). In part three, I offer four constructive proposals in dialogue with Calvin, which reckon with the role of the material shape of worship in the light of the work of the triune God.

## **5.2 EXPOSITION OF CALVIN**

To gain a clear understanding of Calvin's appeal to simplicity as a requirement for public worship, we need first to consider other uses to which he puts the idea. As we will see, the term "simple" not only qualifies his convictions about musical instruments, it also describes his apprehension of Jesus' speech habits, the priority of Paul's preaching, the Bible's rhetorical style, the requirements of doctrine, and the material and ceremonial shape of public worship. Especially noteworthy is the fact that Calvin enlists the language of simplicity to qualify his understanding of worship which occurs "in spirit and in truth." In the following section, I catalog Calvin's use of "simple" into three groups—1) doctrine, 2) ceremonies, 3) the material shape of worship—and then draw attention to its

significant connection to “spirit and truth.” In each of these arenas, Calvin demonstrates a concern over anything which might intrude upon the right worship of God.

### 5.2.1 The polyvalence of “simple” in Calvin

#### *Simple doctrine*

One arena where Calvin conscripts the language of simplicity is in relation to doctrine. Here the primary contrast stands between doctrine or “the gospel” (biblically considered) and “human tradition” (pejoratively considered). Calvin’s 1547 commentary on Second Corinthians is pivotal. With Beza and Jerome, but against Erasmus, Calvin insists that the phrase from 11:3, ἀπὸ τῆς ἀπλότητος [καὶ τῆς ἀγνότητος] τῆς εἰς τὸν Χριστόν, should be translated as, “that you may not be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ [*a simplicitate quae in Christo est*].” Calvin maintains that ἀπλότητος should modify “Christ” rather than the Corinthian believers, whom Paul addresses. For what is being corrupted is the simplicity of Christ, not the simplicity of the Christian’s devotion. The former, he writes, points to the “pure simplicity of the gospel [*in pura evangelii simplicitate manemus*],” or the “pure doctrine of Christ,” which admits of “no foreign admixtures” or “profane and foreign contrivances.”<sup>5</sup> Paul’s fear for the Corinthian believers, as Calvin explains, is that “they would turn aside little by little from the simplicity they had learnt [*a simplicitate, quam didicerant*]” in the beginning of their faith.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Comm.* 2 Cor. 11:3.

<sup>6</sup> See Calvin’s comments on Psalms 33 and 81. Against this reading, see Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 496-502; Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, WBC, vol. 40 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 333-338.

This basic conviction is played out in the rest of Calvin’s writings. For the Pharisees and scribes, Calvin remarks, “the simple command of God” was insufficient.<sup>7</sup> “It is quite clear that Christ was setting the word ‘leaven’ in opposition to the simple and pure Word of God.”<sup>8</sup> Calvin cross-references 2 Corinthians 11:3 to argue that “faith is adulterated as soon as we are led away from the simplicity of Christ.”<sup>9</sup> In a note on Colossians 2, Calvin writes that the Father has appointed Christ to be the sole teacher of the church in order that Christ “might retain us in the simplicity of His Gospel.”<sup>10</sup> In his 1544 treatise, “On the Necessity of Reforming the Church,” Calvin urges Christians to a “simple and sincere obedience” to Christ.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in his “Confession of Faith,” published nearly twenty years later, Calvin adds “that it is not for us to invent what to us seems good, or to follow what may have been devised in the brain of other men, but to confine ourselves simply to the purity of Scripture.”<sup>12</sup>

Christ’s style of speaking, Calvin believes, reflects and perhaps even establishes this characteristic of doctrinal simplicity. “For the preaching of Christ is bare and simple, therefore it ought not to be obscured by an overlying disguise of words.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, it was for the sake of the uneducated and poor that Jesus displayed *une simplicité grande*.<sup>14</sup> And

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<sup>7</sup> *Comm.* Matt. 15:2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Comm.* Matt. 16:12. For Calvin, the contrast is between “the simple truth of God and the figment which men invent out of their own ideas.”

<sup>10</sup> *Comm.* Col. 2:8. See also his remarks on 1 Cor. 14:40.

<sup>11</sup> “On the Necessity of Reforming the Church,” in *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 1, 148.

<sup>12</sup> “Confession of Faith, in the Name of the Reformed Churches of France,” in *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 2, 147. See also, “On Shunning the Unlawful Rites of the Ungodly and Preserving the Purity of the Christian Religion,” in *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 3, 371, 406.

<sup>13</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 1:17.

<sup>14</sup> *CO* 34:528. Cf. *Comm.* Jn. 3:2; 16:12.

what does one find in Scripture? “Complete simplicity,” Calvin answers.<sup>15</sup> In both manner and substance the Scriptures are “so simple that it seems to be only a doctrine for fools.”<sup>16</sup> It is this pattern of Scripture that emboldens Calvin “to fight [false] eloquence with the simplicity of the gospel.”<sup>17</sup> What Calvin stands against, in every case, is the “outward brilliancy of words,” the intoxication “with empty delights,” “the tickling” of ears with jingles, or the attempt to cover up the cross of Christ with ostentation.<sup>18</sup>

### *Simple ceremonies*

What Calvin finds objectionable in “non-simple” doctrine, he finds equally objectionable in “non-simple” liturgical ceremonies. In this case Calvin posits a contrast between simple worship that arises out of an “inward sincerity of heart” and an excess of ceremonies which binds the conscience in an unconscionable fashion, and which grounds true worship in a false trust of external aids. The chief error of the Pharisees, as Calvin reads Matthew 15, is that they made true religion consist in external ceremonies, “only they thought nothing of true holiness, which consists of a genuine integrity of heart.”<sup>19</sup> Contrary to the Roman church, “the worship of God is spiritual and is not placed in sprinkling with water or in other ceremonies.”<sup>20</sup> As he stresses in a comment on Matthew 16:6, “neglecting spiritual worship, [they] bring in the traditions of men in their transitory disguises, as if God could be snared in such traps. For although external ceremonies may

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<sup>15</sup> *CO* 51:134.

<sup>16</sup> *CO* 53:653.

<sup>17</sup> *CO* 49:321.

<sup>18</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 1:17; cf. *Comm.* 1 Cor. 2:3. In *Comm.* 1 Cor. 1:17; in I.7.2 he asserts that the Bible’s power lies in its “unpolished simplicity, almost bordering on rudeness, [which] makes a deeper impression than the loftiest flights of oratory.”

<sup>19</sup> *Comm.* Matt. 15:7-8.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

be impressive, before God they are childish trifles, save in so far as by their help we are trained in true godliness.”

This concern for simple worship over against a bloated ceremonial worship, as we observed in chapter one,<sup>21</sup> directly informs Calvin’s view of musical instruments. His comment on Psalm 81:1-3 is representative:

With respect to the tabret, harp, and psaltery, we have formerly observed, and will find it necessary afterwards to repeat the same remark, that the Levites, under the law, were justified in making use of instrumental music in the worship of God; it having been his will to train his people, while they were as yet tender and like children, by such rudiments, until the coming of Christ. But now when the clear light of the gospel has dissipated the shadows of the law, and taught us that God is to be served in a simpler [*simplicem*] form, it would be to act a foolish and mistaken part to imitate that which the prophet enjoined only upon those of his own time.

Rome’s error, Calvin repeatedly argues, is to “burden the Church with an excess of ceremonies.”<sup>22</sup> While Israel benefited from an elaborate ceremonial system, as “wholesome exercises and aids to godliness,” now God commands the church to worship in a ceremonially simple manner.<sup>23</sup> For Calvin, Rome’s liturgy is little more than a “theatrical show,” utterly opposed to the dignified expression of pure worship which the New Testament enjoins.<sup>24</sup> Instead of being “living exercises of piety,” these excess ceremonies are “frivolous and useless.”<sup>25</sup> The papists “pursue the shadow for the substance,” turning God’s worship into “fictitious worship,” where superstition,

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<sup>21</sup> See p. 33.

<sup>22</sup> *Comm.* Gal. 4:5.

<sup>23</sup> *Comm.* Gal. 4:9.

<sup>24</sup> “On the Necessity,” 131.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

hypocrisy and idolatry abound.<sup>26</sup> Against all this, Calvin asserts: “we worship God more simply. That we have in no respect detracted from the spiritual worship of God, is attested by fact.”<sup>27</sup> The only kinds of ceremonies the church requires, in the end, are those that are “sober and suitable.”<sup>28</sup>

### *Simple material shape of worship*

In contrast to a sensory-rich worship, Calvin argues for a simple or minimal use of material media in worship.<sup>29</sup> Similar to his concern for a ceremonially simple worship, Calvin maintains that external exercises in public worship yield only a negligible benefit.<sup>30</sup> A pure conscience and a sincere heart, as emblematic of true godliness, are far more valuable, he reasons in an appeal to both Christ and Saint Paul.

This means that the man who has godliness lacks nothing, even though he does not have the small assistance these ascetic practices can afford. Godliness is the beginning, middle and end of Christian living and where it is complete, there is nothing lacking. Christ did not follow as ascetic a way of life as John the Baptist, and yet He was not for that reason any whit inferior.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 133, 148. The catalog of abuses, according to Calvin, includes the veneration of images and relics, turning the Mass into a spectacle, encouraging prayer to the saints and angels, forbidding the eating of meat on Friday, enjoining priestly celibacy, and requiring auricular confession.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>28</sup> “Short Treatise on the Lord’s Supper,” in *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 2, 192.

<sup>29</sup> George, *Whitewash and the New Aesthetic of the Protestant Reformation*, 403-404, observes that this idea of simplicity “signifies the absence of ‘as-thoughness’” or mimesis. Whitewash, on this understanding, both represents the purity and transcendence of God and functions as a chastening device.

<sup>30</sup> *Comm.* 1 Tim. 4:7.

<sup>31</sup> *Comm.* 1 Tim. 4:8; cf. *Comm.* 2 Cor. 4:16; *Comm.* Rom. 14:18.



Though “bodily exercises” may be of some value, as Calvin understands “vigils, long fasts, lying on the ground and such like,” the apostle Paul regards them as of “small and meager” profit.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, to bring musical instruments or other visual decorations into public worship, Calvin writes in a note on 1 Samuel 18:6, is to engage in a “ridiculous and inept imitation of papistry,” when all that is needed is “a simple and pure [*pura et simplex*] singing of the divine praises, coming from heart and mouth, and in the vulgar tongue.”<sup>33</sup> This diminished role for material aids to worship is, at some level, consonant with Calvin’s ambiguous regard for the sacraments as *tangible media*.<sup>34</sup> In Question #24 of his “Confession of Faith,” Calvin asks why the sacraments are necessary. He answers: human “ignorance and frailty” make such external signs necessary; or more theologically precisely, the church’s practice of the sacraments is a divine condescension to human weakness.<sup>35</sup> On this account, Calvin considers it a regrettable fact that Scripture and preaching are not enough for the faithful.<sup>36</sup> If Christians were “wholly spiritual,” like angels, he writes, they would not have need of them.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Simple as a correlate of “spirit and truth”***

The idea that physical aids of worship involve an appeal to human “weakness” is fully at play in Calvin’s association of “simple” with the notion of worship in “spirit and truth.”

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<sup>32</sup> *Comm.* 1 Tim. 4:7-8. He adds, “Thus even though the heart be pure and the motive upright, Paul finds nothing in outward actions he can value highly.” Cf. *Comm.* Col. 2:22; III.19.8.

<sup>33</sup> *CO* 30:259.

<sup>34</sup> On this point, see also Selinger, *Calvin Against Himself*, 66-68.

<sup>35</sup> “Short Treatise,” 166.

<sup>36</sup> “Confession of Faith,” 152, 159.

<sup>37</sup> “Catechism of the Church of Geneva,” in *Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 2, 84, 91. Cf. III.20.30; IV.5.18.

In book three of the 1559 *Institutes*, Calvin insists that both Jews and pagans err by placing false confidence in their physical temples of worship. Since the faithful are themselves God’s true temples, the locus of true worship lies in an interior, non-material space, “for we have the commandment to call upon the Lord, without distinction of place, ‘in spirit and in truth’.”<sup>38</sup> In his comment on the language of Paul in Philippians 3, *qui spiritu Deum colimus*, Calvin writes, “But we are the truly circumcised, who worship God in spirit and in truth.”<sup>39</sup> This follows logically, Calvin believes, from the fact that God is himself a “spirit.”<sup>40</sup> Calvin argues that this has been God’s way all along: “Nor from the beginning was there any other method of worshipping God, the only difference being, that this spiritual truth, which with us is naked and simple, was under the former dispensation wrapt up in figures.”<sup>41</sup> Calvin ties this assertion, in “On the Necessity of Reforming the Church,” directly to John 4:23.

For by these words he meant not to declare that God was not worshipped by the fathers in this spiritual manner, but only to point out a distinction in the external forms, viz., that while they had the Spirit shadowed forth by many figures, we have it in simplicity. But it has always been an acknowledged point, that God, who is a Spirit, must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.<sup>42</sup>

To affirm the simple worship God “in spirit and in truth” is to reject external splendor and ceremonial ostentation which is “agreeable to our carnal nature.”<sup>43</sup> As I noted in

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<sup>38</sup> III.20.30.

<sup>39</sup> *Comm.* Phil. 3:3.

<sup>40</sup> “Catechism,” 71. From the 1541 French version: “Puis que Dieu est Esprit.” From the 1545 Latin version: “Quandoquidem Deus spiritus est.” *CO* 6:85-86; cf. *CO* 24:350.

<sup>41</sup> “On the Necessity,” 127.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 153-154.

chapter one,<sup>44</sup> Calvin's reading of Jesus' sermonette to the Samaritan woman involves an emphasis on the priority of the soul in worship, while external ceremonies are regarded as "a sort of appendage," which, again, "our weakness renders" necessary.<sup>45</sup> The kind of worship which the Father seeks, Calvin maintains in his 1553 John commentary, "is the pure and simple substance of spiritual worship."<sup>46</sup>

To summarize, while Calvin employs the notion of "simple" in diverse settings, a common thread runs throughout. First, the gospel must remain unencumbered of spurious "traditions" and rhetorical pomposities which distort the Christian faith, and, second, all sorts of liturgical ostentations and engorgements must be removed which draw the faithful away from the true worship of God. It is, one might say, a consistent concern with theological, rhetorical or liturgical "barnacles" which intrude upon the "simple" exchange between God and the faithful in the public assembly.<sup>47</sup> Inasmuch as Calvin regards "simple" as a logical and liturgical derivative of worship "in spirit and truth," it is necessary that we revisit his exegesis of John 4:23-24. Consistent with the patterns that have been observed thus far, materiality will be seen to stand in a problematic tension to worship which occurs "in spirit and truth." This brief investigation, in turn, will invite a critical analysis of the kind of worship which the Father seeks in a new covenantal era.

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<sup>44</sup> See pp. 36-37.

<sup>45</sup> *Comm.* John 4:23.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* Old, "John Calvin and the Prophetic Critique of Worship," 82: "For Calvin, to invent Christian incense rites or to make of the Lord's Supper a Christian sacrifice, when there is neither dominical nor apostolic warrant for it, is to go the way of the Samaritans rather than to worship God in spirit and truth."

<sup>47</sup> Olivier Millet, "Art and Literature," in *The Calvin Handbook*, 426, observes that the "art of simplicity" was paramount in all of Calvin's literary endeavors. For an extended treatment of this point, see Millet, *Calvin et la Dynamique de la Parole: Étude de rhétorique réformée* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1992).

### 5.2.2 Revisiting Calvin's exegesis of John 4:23-24

Calvin sets the scene in John 4 by noting that the woman's language in 4:20 signifies an interest in the nature of "pure worship." Calvin understands this phrase to mean public worship. From Jesus' statement in 4:22, Calvin deduces a contrast between "what God enjoins us in the Gospel," on the one hand, and the shadow of ceremonies which include incense, lights, sacred vestments, etc., on the other. Once Calvin arrives at verses 23 and 24, a series of antonymous terms frame the shape of his argument. Worship "in spirit and truth" marks a contrast between:

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| - spiritual                 | - external figures                        |
| - substance                 | - shadows                                 |
| - inward faith of the heart | - external obedience                      |
| - pure worship              | - flavor of carnality and earthliness     |
| - nothing hidden            | - veil of temple                          |
| - naked truth of Christ     | - outward ceremonies                      |
| - age of maturity           | - age of childishness                     |
| - moderate and sober        | - excessive and human inventions          |
| - handed down by Christ     | - the "doubly carnal show" of Rome        |
| - purity of worship         | - corruptions of worship                  |
| - godly & true worship      | - perverted and hypocritical              |
| - bare and simple worship   | - swollen mass of ceremonies              |
| - truth                     | - outward addition of figures             |
| - spiritual worship         | - the coverings of the ancient ceremonies |

- viz. God's nature - outward ceremonies

On one side of this contrast stand three key elements: 1) a new covenantal era, 2) a stress on “soulish” activities in public worship, and 3) the need for a moderate form of worship. On the other side stand three corresponding elements: 1) an old covenantal era, 2) a worry over a materially oriented public worship, and 3) the experience of a “swollen mass of ceremonies.” Above it all stands a desire to remain faithful to the nature or essence of God. When Calvin states that true worship “rests in the spirit,” he means that it must remain consistent with God’s being as non-material, rather than, as ancient commentators had done, point to the work of the Spirit of Christ.<sup>48</sup> Ceremonies, concomitantly, are to be regarded as “adventitious” and should be kept sober in order not to obscure the “naked truth of Christ.”<sup>49</sup> For Calvin, an excess of material symbols of worship not only belongs to the old age of the church, their very materiality appeals to the cravings of human nature. This explains, to his mind, the propinquity of humans to invent false ways to worship God. God’s nature “no more agrees with the flesh than fire does with water.... God is so unlike us that those things which please us most are to Him disgusting and boring.”<sup>50</sup> Only “plain and simple worship” pleases God, oriented around the “inward faith of the heart.”<sup>51</sup>

While Calvin’s anxiety about the material shape of worship cannot be separated from the historical circumstances which set the content and rhetoric of his thought in a proper

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<sup>48</sup> *Comm.* John 4:24.

<sup>49</sup> *Comm.* John 4:23.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

perspective, it is also necessary to ask whether he has rightly interpreted the meaning of John 4:23-24.<sup>52</sup> Does worship “in spirit and truth” demand a simple worship of the heart? And does “simplicity” require a minimal role for materiality in corporate worship? To answer these questions, I re-examine Jesus’ exchange with the woman at the well. I do so in considerable detail because of the pivotal role that this passage plays in Calvin’s thinking about public worship.

### 5.3 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Two basic traditions of interpretation characterize the church’s reading of John 4:23-24, with its decisive language on the character of worship with the advent of Christ and the gift of the Spirit. One tradition includes, among others, Calvin and those Reformed theologians who follow closely in his path.<sup>53</sup> In this tradition, the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman are understood to point to the essential nature of God (πνεῦμα ὁ θεός) as well as to the interior condition of the human worshiper (ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ). In this tradition, materiality is regarded as negligible, irrelevant or problematic to true worship. The comment of eighteenth-century English Presbyterian Matthew Henry is typical: “Christians shall worship God, not in the ceremonial observances of the Mosaic

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<sup>52</sup> See, for example, Barbara Pitkin, “Calvin as Commentator on the Gospel of John,” in *Calvin and the Bible*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 164-198, esp. the bibliographic list on 176, n. 49; Pitkin, “Seeing and Believing in the Commentaries on John by Martin Bucer and John Calvin,” *Church History* 68 (1999): 865-885; Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See*; Craig S. Farmer, *The Gospel of John in the Sixteenth Century: The Johannine Exegesis of Wolfgang Musculus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Craig S. Farmer, “Changing Images of the Samaritan Woman in Early Reformed Commentaries on John,” *Church History* 65 (1996): 365-375; Dan G. Danner, “Johannine Christology During the Reformation,” in *Johannine Studies: Essays in Honor of Frank Pack*, ed. James E. Priest (Malibu, CA: Pepperdine University Press, 1989), 36-53. See also Butin, “Calvin’s Humanist Image of Popular Late-Medieval Piety,” 424-431.

<sup>53</sup> Others who follow this interpretative tradition include James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 93; also James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 253; Ernst Haenchen, *John 1*, trans. Robert W. Funk (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 223; George Johnston, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1970), 46.

institution, but in *spiritual* ordinances, consisting less in *bodily exercise*, and animated and invigorated more with divine power and energy.”<sup>54</sup> New Testament scholar Andreas Köstenberger extends this thought further, when he says that “true worship is not a matter of geographical location (worship in a church building), physical posture (kneeling or standing), or following a particular liturgy or external rituals,” but rather a matter of the heart or “spirit,”<sup>55</sup> while the Reformed Baptist pastor John Piper opines forcefully:

What we find in the New Testament, perhaps to our amazement, is an utterly stunning degree of indifference to worship as an outward ritual, and an utterly radical intensification of worship as an inward experience of the heart.<sup>56</sup>

A second tradition of interpretation moves in a largely opposite direction.<sup>57</sup> Here the language of John’s gospel is understood to point to the activities of the triune God. Here, also, questions of location or materiality are not seen to stand in necessarily contrastive relation to the worship which Jesus announces. The Roman Catholic biblical scholar Raymond Brown, for example, writes, “Today most exegetes agree that in proclaiming worship in Spirit and truth, Jesus is not contrasting external worship with internal worship.... An idea of purely internal worship ill fits the NT scene with its Eucharistic

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<sup>54</sup> *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 5—Matthew to John (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1986), 906, emphasis original.

<sup>55</sup> Andreas Köstenberger, “John,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 439. Köstenberger is inconsistent in his use of the language of *pneuma*, in some cases designating an attribute of God (“spirit”), in other cases describing the third Person of the Trinity (“Spirit”). In neither case, however, does materiality play an integral role to his conclusions about worship.

<sup>56</sup> John Piper, “Worship God!”, sermon given on November 9, 1997; see [http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/TopicIndex/60/1016\\_Worship\\_God/](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/TopicIndex/60/1016_Worship_God/).

<sup>57</sup> See D. Moody Smith, “John,” in *The Harper Collins Bible Commentary*, ed. James L. Mays (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988), 956-986; E. C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (London: Faber & Faber, 1947); Dorothy A. Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel: The Interplay of Form and Meaning*, JSNT 95 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994).

gatherings, hymn singing, baptism in water, etc.”<sup>58</sup> Marianne Meye Thompson, situated in a Reformed ecclesial context, adds this note: “That Jesus speaks of an alternative worship does not demonstrate that Christian worship of God renders irrelevant protected sacred space and holy places; precisely the opposite.”<sup>59</sup> What exactly constitutes that “opposite” is the question which drives the remainder of this investigation.

While I am sympathetic to this second tradition of interpretation, and while I assume that Benny Thettayil’s exegesis of this passage is largely persuasive,<sup>60</sup> I wish to suggest the possibility that a more positive assessment of the material shape of worship, not simply the preclusion of an anti-material reading, might emerge out of John 4:23-24.<sup>61</sup> More broadly, while John’s gospel may not yield clear directives regarding the material shape of worship, we may well discover specific orientations in the narrative which make certain conclusions more plausible than others and which problematize Calvin’s assumptions about so-called simple worship. The three tasks of this section include a careful examination of the language of 1) πνεῦμα ὁ θεός, 2) ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ, and 3) τόπος.

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<sup>58</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 1, Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), 180.

<sup>59</sup> Marianne Meye Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 216-217. Similarly, Gary M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), esp. 164. Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 1 (New York: Seabury, 1968), 437; J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 253; Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 163, 164.

<sup>60</sup> Benny Thettayil, *In Spirit and Truth: An Exegetical Study of John 4:19-26 and a Theological Investigation of the Replacement Theme in the Fourth Gospel* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007). Thettayil’s monograph represents, to-date, the most comprehensive treatment of the text, and, to my mind, one of the most convincing too. His conclusion remains consonant with this latter, “catholic” hermeneutical trajectory.

<sup>61</sup> C. K. Barrett, in *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 238 (hereafter *St. John*), asserts: “This clause [i.e. 4:23] has perhaps as much claim as 20:30f. to be regarded as expressing the purpose of the gospel.”



### 5.3.1 “God is Spirit”

With the phrase πνεῦμα ὁ θεός, in 4:24, interpretation has followed along two veins.

One vein of interpretation has seen in Jesus’ statement an assertion concerning the essential nature of God, what I call the “essentialist” reading.<sup>62</sup> Leon Morris, in this light, suggests that the Samaritan woman’s attempt to steer the conversation in a new direction, in v. 20, “serves to open up the way for Jesus to speak of the essential nature of God and of the worship that should be offered him.”<sup>63</sup> In like manner, J. H. Bernard states, “It is the Essential Being, rather than the Personality, of God which is in question.”<sup>64</sup> John H. Bennetch, following a line of thought reminiscent of Calvin’s exegesis, believes that *ho Theos* functions as a synonym for “the Father,” and that Jesus’ emphasis lies on the non-material nature of God.<sup>65</sup>

A different vein of interpretation argues that 4:24 presents an “actualist” rather than an “essentialist” description of God. Jesus’ language, that is, is intended to exhibit God’s dynamic relation to humanity, rather than indicate a divine attribute. At stake here is God *pro nobis*, not God *in se*. Lesslie Newbigin captures this hermeneutical tradition well:

This action of the Father [to seek true worshipers] is the Father himself in action, for God is Spirit, and Spirit is action—the mighty action which is ‘from above’ and which, like the wind, is invisible and yet unmistakable in its presence and its powerful effects. God is not essence but action. His being is action, and the action

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<sup>62</sup> So, e.g., Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 42, 66.

<sup>63</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 236.

<sup>64</sup> J. H. Bernard, *Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 1, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), 150.

<sup>65</sup> J. H. Bennetch, “John 4:24a: A Greek Study,” *Biblioteca Sacra* 107 (1950), 80, 73. See also Calvin’s comments in *SR* 54:149.

is the seeking of true worshippers out of Jewry and out of Samaria and out of every nation.<sup>66</sup>

Similar to such phrases as “God is light” and “God is love,” the phrase “God is Spirit” can be seen hereby to describe an activity of God.<sup>67</sup> These are things God *does*; in doing them we witness who God *is*. Thompson observes, rightly I believe, that “the statement that ‘God is spirit’ would again underscore the point that true worship of the Father results from the action of God’s spirit.... The Spirit who enables re-birth to new life empowers worship of the true God.”<sup>68</sup> Four points can be adduced on behalf of an actualist reading of πνεῦμα ὁ θεός.

First, it is unlikely that God’s non-material nature would have been in doubt for faithful Samaritans or Jews.<sup>69</sup> Did this woman really need reminding that God has no physical body (per Bennetch), that “God is invisible and unknowable” (per Barrett), or that “the mystery of divine invisibility” (per Johnston) was key.<sup>70</sup> Arguments such as these fail to persuade in light of the religious and historical context for John 4, especially if we are right in assuming a Jewish background rather than an exclusively Greek background for

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<sup>66</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 53. For actualist interpretations, see also Brown, *John*, 172, 180; Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, 244; Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 437f, though he makes several confusing comments about “Spirit” and “flesh”; Smith, “John,” 964; Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 253; R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John’s Gospel: A Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 134; Burge, *The Anointed Community*, 147; Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, New Century Bible (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), 189-190; J. F. McHugh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of John 1-4*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2009), 306-315; Stephen Smalley, “Pneumatology in the Johannine Gospel and Apocalypse,” in *Exploring*, 289-300; George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, WBC vol. 36, second edition (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 61-66.

<sup>67</sup> Thettayil, *In Spirit and Truth*, 124, identifies the various arguments surrounding the anarthous use of *pneuma*. He reasons, rightly I believe, that the definite article is implied and that a definite Spirit, not any spirit, is in view.

<sup>68</sup> Thompson, *Gospel of John*, 215-216.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Thettayil, *In Spirit and Truth*, 43-105.

<sup>70</sup> Barrett, *St. John*, 238; Johnston, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John*, 15; Burge, *The Anointed Community*, 192, argues that “personal efforts and ambitions” might be seen to replace the power of God.

John's gospel.<sup>71</sup> Second, an essentialist reading is unwarranted from the narrative itself. What the woman needs is not a rebuke of anthropomorphic projections of God. What she needs, according to 4:7-15, is living water; what she gets, according to 4:25-30, is a revelation of the messiah.<sup>72</sup> Jesus' answer to her question remains consistent with his answer to Nicodemus (3:1-21): that the work of the Spirit, whom Jesus equates with "living water" in 7:37-39, is required in order to enter into God's kingdom. Third, it is a strange and confused logical move, as is often done, to assert that the non-material nature of God (God *as* spirit) establishes the basis for right-hearted worship (humans *as* spirit).<sup>73</sup>

Fourth, the primary sense of "spirit" in John does not stand in opposition to matter, as B. F. Westcott alleges.<sup>74</sup> Nor is it intended to describe the immanent activities of God, where the divine "spirit" communicates with the human "spirit," as Dunn conjectures.<sup>75</sup> Instead, the Johannine language of πνεῦμα describes the sovereign activities of God over a dark

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<sup>71</sup> On this point, see W. D. Davies, "Reflections on Aspects of the Jewish Background of the Gospel of John," in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, eds. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 43-64; Peder Borgen, "The Gospel of John and Hellenism: Some Observations," *ibid.*, 98-123; and the seminal works of J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979) and Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979). See also D. Moody Smith, *Johannine Christianity: Essays on its Setting, Sources, and Theology* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 1984) as well as *The Theology of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. 10-20 (on Hellenism and Judaism), 139-144 (on the Spirit-Paraclete); Jack P. Lewis, "The Semitic Background of the Gospel of John," in *Johannine Studies*, 97-110; Thompson, *Gospel of John*, ch. 4; Smalley, "Pneumatology in the Johannine Gospel and Apocalypse," 297. Even if we assume a Greek-speaking readership, the language of John, though not foreign to Hellenistic sources, has its primary basis in Old Testament categories.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Isa. 55:1; Rev. 22:17.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Terry Johnson, *Reformed Worship: Worship that is according to Scripture* (Reformed Academic Press, 2000), 21. Like many in the conservative Reformed tradition, Johnson's reading of John 4:23-24 fails to reckon with the broader narratival, rhetorical, historical and theological dynamics of John's gospel.

<sup>74</sup> B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 73.

<sup>75</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1975), 353.

and broken world.<sup>76</sup> For John, participation in life “from above” is possible only by the Spirit, whom the Father gives to those who believe in his Son (20:31).<sup>77</sup> It is God’s Spirit who calls forth true worship and enables new birth to occur.<sup>78</sup> Dale Bruner puts the point well: “Worship is only secondarily and reflexively humans seeking *God*; it is, first of all and creatively, the divine Father, through Jesus the Truth, by the Fountain Spirit—the one God seeking humans and moving them upward to him.”<sup>79</sup> Stephen Um concludes similarly, “True worshippers must be empowered by the Spirit of God in order to encounter God in worship, as they respond to the Father in exclusive worship by recognizing his divine reality of eschatological life found in the True Temple of God.”<sup>80</sup>

Because the meaning of the phrase “God is Spirit” is illumined by and contextually related to the language of ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ, it is to this question that we now turn.

### 5.3.2 “In Spirit and Truth”

As with πνεῦμα ὁ θεός in 4:24, the phrase from 4:23, ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ, involves two divergent lines of thought. One view believes this phrase describes a facet

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<sup>76</sup> Instances of the language of “Spirit” alone include John 1:32, 33; 3:5, 6, 8, 34; 4:23, 24; 6:63; 7:39; while the phrase “Holy Spirit” appears in 1:33; 14:26; 20:22. For John, it is the Spirit who unites Father and Son; God and ecclesial community; the Redeemer to the redeemed.

<sup>77</sup> See Thettayil, *In Spirit and Truth*, 128-130; 159: “God can be worshiped as the Father only by those who possess the Spirit by whom God begets them from above (3:5).”

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, 138.

<sup>79</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 264, emphasis original.

<sup>80</sup> Stephen T. Um, *The Theme of Temple Christology in John’s Gospel* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 178. Um reaches this conclusion after having traced the concept of “Spirit” in relation to eschatological life in early Judaism.

of human beings.<sup>81</sup> It points, that is, to an internal and invisible condition of the rightly oriented worshiper. C. H. Dodd writes that “ἀληθεία has in the Fourth Gospel in general its Hellenistic sense of reality, reality as apprehended, or knowledge of reality. Thus πνεῦμα has some very close relation to reality, unseen and eternal.”<sup>82</sup> Adds George Johnston, “The outlook and mentality of John strongly indicate that we are to interpret ‘worship in spirit’ as inward worship, the offering of the heart, done out of love and not within a legal system like that of the Synagogue.”<sup>83</sup> With Moloney the concern is for the “total orientation of one’s life” toward God, while for Michaels the “state of the heart” lies at the basis of right worship.<sup>84</sup>

Against this reading, Brown, appealing to the theological arc of John, insists that the phrase has little to do with the inner recesses of the worshiper precisely because, “the Spirit is the Spirit of God, not the spirit of man.”<sup>85</sup> What the phrase describes is not

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<sup>81</sup> The habits of commentators are far from consistent or self-evidentially consistent in their use of capitals or lack thereof. In this vein, Gordon Fee offers a perceptive analysis of the way in which English-language Bibles, starting with the KJV (1611) on through to the TNIV (2002), have translated the term *pneuma* in the NT. In Paul’s use of *pneuma*, as Fee perceives, “it is not always clear whether he intends the divine Spirit or the human spirit or simply an attitude.” In “Translational Tendenz: English Versions of Πνεῦμα in Paul,” in *The Holy Spirit and Christian Origins: Essays in honor of James D. G. Dunn*, eds. Graham N. Stanton, Bruce W. Longenecker and Stephen C. Barton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 349-359.

<sup>82</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 223.

<sup>83</sup> George Johnston, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 45. Similarly, Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 157. Having argued an “essentialist” position, Köstenberger ventures a conclusion which extends beyond the terms that the text itself allows, importing language (e.g. “physical posture” or “heart”) which require careful, disciplined treatment.

<sup>84</sup> Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 129; Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 255. See also Rodney Whitacre, in *John*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999), 106, who sums up this interpretive tradition.

<sup>85</sup> Brown, *John*, 180. To this we might add that in the same way that, in John, Jesus is the hypostasized *Logos* of God, so the Paraclete is the hypostasized *Pneuma* of God. See also Brown, “The Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel,” *New Testament Studies* 13 (1967): 113-132; Thompson, *The Gospel of John*, 185-186; Gail R. O’Day, *The Gospel of John*, The New Interpreter’s Bible, vol. IX (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 568; Schnackeburg, *St. John*, 438-440.

something the worshiper does; it describes something that happens *to* the worshiper.<sup>86</sup>

Central for John is not the heart of the worshiper but the work of Christ and the Spirit, who together enable one to enter ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.<sup>87</sup> It is the Spirit, Jesus tells the woman, who makes worship possible “in the hour that is coming, and now is.”<sup>88</sup> The Spirit who descends and remains upon Jesus is that same Spirit who accomplishes the will of the Father in the ones who believe in the Son.<sup>89</sup> Thompson argues this case from the logic of the narrative:

Both [the narrative of Nicodemus and of the woman] point the reader away from the human being as self-sufficient actor to the human being as recipient of the activity and Spirit of God. It would then seem odd if in conversation with the Samaritan woman Jesus were to urge her to ‘look within’, as it were, for the strength and capacity to offer true worship. Quite the contrary, one is brought into the eschatological hour by God’s caring activity in Jesus and by the divinely sent Spirit of God.<sup>90</sup>

How then should the phrase be understood? Many view it as a hendiadys.<sup>91</sup> By regarding the two terms in dynamic relationship, acceptable worship can be seen as that which occurs *in the Spirit who brings to bear the Truth, that is, Jesus*, upon the life of the

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<sup>86</sup> Both Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 190, and David E. Aune, *The Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology in Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 104, argue against this reading, respectively suggesting that the concern of the text is neither with an “inward form of worship” nor an “individualized mysticism.”

<sup>87</sup> Explicit language of “heart” in John appears in few contexts, mainly related to emotional conditions, e.g., 14:27; 16:6; 16:22. 12:38-41, citing Isa. 6:9-10, describes the work of God on the human heart.

<sup>88</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 225-226, comes close to this sense but muddles a trinitarian reading with his choice of terms and irregular capitalizations, which render the Spirit in impersonal terms, while the Word is rendered in more personal ones.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. J. Marsh, *Saint John*, Pelican Gospel Commentaries (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), 218.

<sup>90</sup> Thompson, *Gospel of John*, 215, over against, say, R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 322: “It centers in the worshipper’s own ‘spirit’ and spirit nature.... We should say, all true worship is one of the soul.”

<sup>91</sup> NB: John 1:14, “grace and truth”; 1:4, “light” and “life.”

worshiper.<sup>92</sup> In John's narrative, Jesus is presented as the fullness of truth (1:14), the revelation of the truth of God (5:25-33; 8:45-46; 17:17; 18:37), the truth himself (8:32; 14:6), and the one who bestows the Spirit of truth to his disciples (15:26; 16:13). In John, it is *both* "the truth shall make you free" (8:32) *and* "if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (8:36). The Spirit, in turn, is the one who bears witness to the Truth and who makes the presence of Jesus real to his disciples. The Spirit is the "other" helper, inasmuch as Jesus is seen to be the "first" helper (14:16-18).<sup>93</sup> Thettayil observes, "This provision of the Spirit is made possible by the work of him who is the truth (14:6), and who by his glorification pours out the Spirit, called the Spirit of truth (14:17; 15:26)."<sup>94</sup>

The kind of worship that the Father seeks, then, has a clear christocentric and pneumatic shape: it is *in* the Truth, not merely *of* the truth; and it is by *the* Spirit, not by *any* spirit. New covenantal worship arises out of a right orientation to the person of Jesus, rather than to "the way things really are,"<sup>95</sup> and it requires the work of the Spirit, rather than the sincerity of the human heart, as important as that may be, to orient the worshiper to the Father.<sup>96</sup> Over against ἀληθεία, in John, stands not un-truth, but un-Jesus, as it were. The opposite of πνεῦμα, likewise, is not hypocrisy but false spirits (cf. 1 Jn. 4). The "hour," then, which Jesus discloses in his person invites an intimate relationship with God *as*

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<sup>92</sup> Felix Porsch, *Pneuma und Word: Ein exegetischer Beitrag zur Pneumatologie des Johannesevangeliums* (Frankfurt am Main: Josef Knecht, 1974), 159, puts it this way: "Es sind also in Wirklichkeit nicht zwei Prinzipien, sondern nur eins: die durch das Pneuma vom Glaubenden angenommene Wahrheit oder das <pneumatische> Offenbarungswort Jesu" (emphasis original). Dorothy Lee, "In the Spirit of Truth," 280.

<sup>93</sup> Thiselton, *Holy Spirit*, 143.

<sup>94</sup> Thettayil, *In Spirit and Truth*, 158.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. C. John Collins, "John 4:23-24, 'IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH': An Idiomatic Proposal," *Presbyterion* 21 (1995): 120-121. Collins believes that Jesus' statement to the Samaritan woman that "real" worshippers will worship in spirit, indicates in the inner self, "that is to say, in reality."

<sup>96</sup> A. Boyd Luter, Jr., "'Worship' as Service: The New Testament Usage of *Latreuo*," *Criswell Theological Review* 2 (1988): 339-340. Luter asserts that to worship "in spirit" is to worship in a new realm, which he believes points to a genuine interior condition of the worshiper.

Father, through Jesus *as* Truth, by the Spirit *as* Paraclete.<sup>97</sup> It is, as Thompson rightly sees it, a matter of a “reorientation of one’s worship through and in the presence of God in the living temple, Jesus, and in the realm of the Spirit.”<sup>98</sup>

Here, then, we begin to discern the *trinitarian* shape of Jesus’ exchange with the Samaritan woman.<sup>99</sup> Worship “in this new time” occurs in the Spirit who bears witness to Jesus, the perfect Son of the Father, while the Son is the one who both mediates worship to the Father and is himself a proper object of worship.<sup>100</sup> These are not two poles around which the church’s worship orbits: a “truth” pole and a “spirit” pole. Instead it is the unified work of Son and Spirit, who together enable the faithful to offer acceptable worship to the Father. It is, as Thettayil rightly argues, “essentially God-centered, made possible by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and in personal knowledge of and conformity to God’s Word-made-flesh, the one who is God’s ἀληθεία, the faithful exposition and fulfillment of God and his saving purposes.”<sup>101</sup> Evoking the peculiar vocabulary of John, Bruner points to the triune pattern of worship: “it is the special gifts of the Christocentric

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<sup>97</sup> McHugh, *John 1-4*, 315.

<sup>98</sup> Thompson, *Gospel of John*, 217.

<sup>99</sup> A trinitarian reading of the text is far from new. Such a reading goes back to Athanasius, Basil, Hilary, Cyril of Alexandria and Ambrose. Cf. McHugh, *John 1-4*, 312-314. See also Anthony J. Casarella’s excellent treatment of the Paraclete passages in the writings of the Church Fathers: *The Johannine Paraclete in the Church Fathers: A Study in the History of Exegesis* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1983). *Ancient Christian Doctrine*, vol. 4, “We Believe in the Holy Spirit,” ed. Joel C. Elowsky (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009) includes some helpful material. Thiselton, *Holy Spirit*, 134, notes that what is implicit in the Synoptics becomes more explicit in John, namely “an anticipation of a doctrine of the Holy Trinity.”

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Lee, “In the Spirit of Truth,” 287-292. The language of John’s narrative implies at some level the economy of the Trinity. See also Smith, “John,” 964; Wright, “Worship and the Spirit in the New Testament”; Burge, *Anointed*, 197; Schnackenburg, *John*, 438-440; Thompson, *Gospel of John*, 214-216.

<sup>101</sup> Thettayil, *In Spirit and Truth*, 163.



Holy Spirit, the truthful Son, and the worship-seeking and worship-receiving Father who, together, make true worship possible.”<sup>102</sup>

If this trinitarian reading of John 4:23-24 is largely correct, what does it mean to worship God in the sphere of πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ? And what does this “sphere” imply for the material shape of worship in this new hour? Since the text itself does not provide a direct answer to this double question, it will be necessary to consider the nature of the contrast at play in Jesus’ exchange with the nameless woman. Of particular import here is the language of *topos* or place/space.

### 5.3.3 The language of *topos* in 4:20-23

<sup>20</sup>οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ προσεκύνησαν: καὶ ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ἐστὶν ὁ τόπος ὅπου προσκυνεῖν δεῖ. <sup>21</sup>λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Πίστευέ μοι, γύναι, ὅτι ἔρχεται ὥρα ὅτε οὔτε ἐν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ οὔτε ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις προσκυνήσετε τῷ πατρὶ. <sup>22</sup>ὑμεῖς προσκυνεῖτε ὃ οὐκ οἶδατε: ἡμεῖς προσκυνοῦμεν ὃ οἶδαμεν, ὅτι ἡ σωτηρία ἐκ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐστίν. <sup>23</sup>ἀλλὰ ἔρχεται ὥρα, καὶ νῦν ἐστίν, ὅτε οἱ ἀληθινοὶ προσκυνηταὶ προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ πατρὶ ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ: καὶ γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ τοιοῦτους ζητεῖ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας αὐτόν.

In looking at the immediate backdrop to our text, a heightened rhetorical interplay can be observed between the language of place and worship. Does this interplay imply a negative estimation of “place”? Is there an indifferent view of materiality at work here? Are place and materiality set in oppositional relationship to worship in this eschatological

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<sup>102</sup> Bruner, *The Gospel of John*, 264. Cf. A. T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 182.

hour? To answer these questions we must consider the nature of the contrast at work in Jesus' response to the Samaritan woman. In v. 20 the woman uses three key terms: ἐν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ, ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις, and ὁ τόπος. Two initial observations can be offered.

First, all three terms function as semantic equivalents. Worship for both Samaritan and Jew took place on a mountain—Gerizim (or what is presently called the Judean mountains) and Jerusalem—and while both mountains could be regarded as geographic places, the term *topos* in the New Testament often serves as a euphemism for “the temple.”<sup>103</sup> Thus *topos* here should be viewed, at the very least, as both an actual place and a symbolic place.<sup>104</sup> A second observation is that Jesus' answer is far from straightforward. Where the woman makes reference to a geographical place, Jesus answers by contrasting two geographical τόποι with a figurative τόπος. Jesus' answer, regarding worship which takes place “in Spirit and Truth,” points to a non-locative reality, a place of sorts but not a geographically situated one. Clearly, an apples-to-apples comparison is not in play.

To say, as Schnackenburg does, that the contrast points to a difference between a human-empowered temple and a God-empowered temple seems to miss the point sharply. It is to

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<sup>103</sup> Beasley-Murray, *John*, 61. Cf. Deut. 12:1-14; John 11:48, which English Bibles often translate as “temple”; also Acts 6:13-14 and 21:28, which includes both “place” and “holy place” to designate the temple.

<sup>104</sup> Thettayil, *In Spirit and Truth*, 68, “In a nutshell, τόπος is the term that was often used for the sanctuaries that were found throughout the pre-monarchic Israel and later this is the term used for the Jerusalem temple itself when no other sanctuaries were allowed by the divine decree.” See, e.g., Deut. 12:2-5; 2 Chron. 6:6; 7:12; Ps. 78:68; Acts 7:7, 49; John 11:48.

belie, in fact, the words of Yahweh concerning tabernacle and temple worship.<sup>105</sup>

Brown's suggestion, shared by Burge, that the shift in view is "from the place of worship (20-21) to the manner of worship" seems equally unsatisfying.<sup>106</sup> If the Old Testament prophetic critique is to be believed, the manner of worship played an equally important role in Israel's worship.<sup>107</sup> Walter Bauer's assertion that true worshipers are those who are "freed from every chain that binds men to the realm of the flesh, to sacred times and places and ceremonies," reflects a widespread, perhaps understandable, but flawed conviction in Protestant circles.<sup>108</sup> Over against these approaches, I suggest four ways by which the contrast might be understood.

Over against "Spirit and Truth" stand 1) the τόποι as *physical* localities, 2) the τόποι as *singular* localities, 3) the τόποι as *representative* of the cult practiced in each respective locality or 4) the τόποι as *symbolic* of their singular locality *along with* their respective singular cultic practices. All four possibilities presume that the primary concern in Jesus' statement is the question of space, whether literal or figurative. I suggest that option #4 is the more plausible view of the contrast. On one side of the equation, in the case of the Jews, stands the Jerusalem temple whose significance lies in both its exclusive geographical place as well as in the ceremonies which fundamentally oriented its

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<sup>105</sup> Schnackenburg, *John*, 437. Cf. Exod. 25-40; Lev. 6-16; Num. 1:48-51; 1 Kgs. 6-8. See also John Witvliet's excellent essay, "The Former Prophets and the Practice of Christian Worship," in *Worship Seeking Understanding*, 23-38.

<sup>106</sup> Brown, *John*, 180; Burge, *The Anointed Community*, 164-165.

<sup>107</sup> See, for example, Amos 5:21-26; Micah 4:1-2; 6:6-8; Hosea 8:11-13; Jer. 7:21-26; Ezek. 16:15-21; Pss. 15; 24; 119. For a picture of the future when God would renew Israel's worship, see Isa. 19:19-21; 56:6-7; 60:7; Jer. 17:24-27; 33:10-11, 17-18; Ezek. 20:40-41. Cf. H. H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel* (London: SPCK, 1967). H. Strathmann, in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4, eds. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1967), 61: "Right disposition of the heart and the demonstration of this in the whole of religious and moral conduct. Here is indeed the true uniqueness of the religion [and worship] of Israel."

<sup>108</sup> Cited in Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, 244.

corporate life, while on the other side stands the as yet enigmatic space marked out by “Spirit and Truth.”<sup>109</sup> In Jesus’ reference to these τόποι, then, he speaks of a complex symbol, whose unique physical and ceremonial role had come to an end, yielding to the sphere of πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ.

But let us consider another possibility, namely that the primary concern is not space but time. If this is the case, as Thompson maintains, then the focus of the exchange becomes the eschatological hour at hand.<sup>110</sup> As she remarks, “The Gospel focuses on the arrival of the hour that brings the fulfillment of the hope for the new temple. Thus the rebuke that could be offered of Jewish worship is that it is behind the times, failing to keep in step with God’s spirit and the messianic fulfillment brought by Jesus.”<sup>111</sup> How then would one get in step with the new time? By submitting to the work of the Spirit who, in turn, bears witness to Jesus who himself invites people “to an un-heard of intimacy with the ‘Father’.”<sup>112</sup> The contrast, in this perspective, involves a tension between “old time” and “new time,” with space playing a derivative or secondary role.

Whether one takes space or time as a primary concern in Jesus’ declaration, however, the relevant point is this: John 4:23-24 remains silent on the question of materiality *per se*.

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<sup>109</sup> Thompson, *Gospel of John*, 194-208, proposes a helpful taxonomy of the sorts of views of worship which characterized the period of Second Temple Judaism. See also Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 369-442; *The New Testament and the People of God*, 224-226. The Jerusalem temple held in itself the religious, national, political and economic concerns of the Jewish people.

<sup>110</sup> Another interesting possibility, which McHugh, *John 1-4*, 314-315, alludes to, is that the *leitmotif* that marks this passage is that of “father.” Thus: “our father Jacob” (v. 12) vs. “our fathers worshiped on this mountain” (v. 20) vs. “a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem” (v. 21), “the true worshipers will worship the Father” (v. 23), and “they are the kinds of worshipers the Father seeks.”

<sup>111</sup> Thompson, *Gospel of John*, 216. Cf. Thettayil, *In Spirit and Truth*, 75-78, 106-112.

<sup>112</sup> Schnackenburg, *John*, 437. Cyril of Alexandria says something similar; cf. McHugh, *John 1-4*, 313, 315.

Materiality itself obtains neither a negative nor a positive judgment in Jesus' oblique assertion. An anti-material polemic or the dismissal of symbolic place can only be inferred. In fact, the text declares only that the symbolic and exclusive geographical τόποι which Gerizim and Jerusalem occupied no longer serve the purposes of the Father in this eschatological hour.<sup>113</sup> The physical locality of worship and whatever symbolic qualities it will assume in the new age will need to be discerned, somehow, somehow, in the sphere of the "Spirit and Truth."<sup>114</sup>

#### 5.3.4 Summary observations

If worship in "Spirit and Truth," as I have argued thus far, is not chiefly about an interiorized, immaterial worship, and if 4:23-24 does not represent an anti-material polemic, then what positive relation, if any, obtains between "Spirit and Truth" and the material aspect of worship envisioned in John's gospel? What does this "sphere" look like? Is it materially "simple" or is it otherwise? Three brief observations can be suggested in transition to the constructive proposals of this chapter.

First, John 4 does not answer this question, because the text is frankly not interested in the question. Where commentators have concluded that the text proposes a certain material shape of worship, whether minimal or maximal, whether positive or negative,

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<sup>113</sup> Cf. Richard J. Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church," in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 425.

<sup>114</sup> See Thettayil, *In Spirit and Truth*, 162. He suggests that "the use of ἐν may be taken either as *local* or *metaphorical*" (emphasis original), and believes there is an analogous relationship to the language of ἐν Χριστῷ.

this owes more to the presuppositions of the commentator than to the logic of the text.<sup>115</sup>

Jesus does not tell the woman where or how worship spatially must occur, because his central concern is not a locative or geographic one. His concern is a theological one.

Second, the idea of “simple” worship, which Calvin argues in his exegesis, is foreign to the meaning of John 4:23-24. It is an inference, perhaps, which Calvin draws in light of his own theological and liturgical presuppositions, but it is also an erroneous one, a foreign import at odds with this *locus classicus* on worship. All that the text supposes is that space and matter have acquired a new significance in light of the work of Christ and the gift of the Spirit.

Third, the text *does* state that these two τόποι, Gerizim and Jerusalem, will no longer suffice for the kind of worship which the Father seeks. A new thing is required. The narrative as such prods us to look to a kind of worship that will take place in the “sphere” of πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ. It prods us to ask how materiality fares in this new “hour” of worship, as John discerns it.

Without an explicit statement in 4:23-24 regarding the material shape of worship, then, it is necessary to look to patterns of thought in the Johannine narrative which might orient an answer one way or another. Three patterns of thought in John lead me to believe that we might, in fact, find a positive answer: the way in which the Fourth Gospel regards

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<sup>115</sup> Such is unfortunately often the case in Reformed readings of John, as, for example, Ligon Duncan, “Traditional Evangelical Worship,” in *Perspectives on Christian Worship: 5 Views*, ed. J. Matthew Pinson (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009), 115; Bryan Chappel, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 54, 67108-110; *Worship by the Book*, ed. Don A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

Jesus as the new “holy place”; a motif of new creation as it touches upon the Spirit’s work; and the intrinsic link between *semeia* and materiality.

## **5.4 CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSALS**

While Calvin says plenty else about the incarnation of Christ, the work of the Spirit in creation, and the purpose of material symbols in worship, as I have noted in previous chapters, for the purposes of the present investigation I restrict myself to Calvin’s observations on John’s gospel. To whatever extent Calvin’s conviction about simple worship is definitively shaped by his reading of John, it is here that we will discover important patterns of thought, preferred vocabulary, and logical tendencies—in both Calvin and John. It is here, too, that we must judge whether Calvin has read John rightly, even if we must hold off final judgment in light of Calvin’s analysis of these topics elsewhere. Though Calvin can be seen to commend the material shape of God’s salvific work in John, the predominant tendency is to marginalize or to dismiss it. Largely parting ways with Calvin’s reading of John’s gospel, I shall argue that the fundamental trajectories of the Johannine narrative invite us to infer a positive relationship between materiality and worship, not a merely ambivalent one nor an expressly negative one.

### **5.4.1 Jesus as the new “holy place”**

*First, Jesus as the new “holy place” in John establishes the definitive goodness of materiality.* In his comment on John 1:14, Calvin remarks that though God hid himself

“under the lowliness of the flesh,” yet this flesh still manifested the divine glory.<sup>116</sup>

Calvin calls Christ’s body the “abode” of his divinity. “For we know that the Son of God so clothed Himself with our nature that in the flesh which He assumed the eternal majesty of God dwelt as in His Sanctuary.”<sup>117</sup> Christ takes on this *sarx*, Calvin believes, in order to raise the faithful into fellowship with the Father. From heaven Christ descends to put on human flesh in order that, “by stretching out a brotherly hand to us, He might raise us to heaven along with Himself.”<sup>118</sup> This idea of union with God, as I have noted in chapter four, is particularly evident in Calvin’s commentary on John 6. Faith, he writes, does not keep the redeemed at a distance from Christ; it brings them into a close embrace. “It causes us to be united in His body, to have life in common with Him and, in short, to be one with Him.”<sup>119</sup> Through Christ’s flesh the entire redemption of humanity is accomplished:

in it a sacrifice was offered to atone for sins, and an obedience yielded to God to reconcile Him to us; it was also filled with the sanctification of the Spirit; finally, having overcome death, it was received into the heavenly glory.<sup>120</sup>

No one who rejects Christ the man, Calvin argues, can participate in union with the Father which the Spirit accomplishes. Christ’s flesh, indeed, is Spirit-vivified and Spirit-vivifying for those who receive it in faith: “it is necessary to eat the crucified flesh for it to benefit us.”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> *Comm.* John 1:14.

<sup>117</sup> *Comm.* John 2:19.

<sup>118</sup> *Comm.* John 3:13.

<sup>119</sup> *Comm.* John 6:35.

<sup>120</sup> *Comm.* John 6:51.

<sup>121</sup> *Comm.* John 6:63; cf. his comments on 8:36.



Yet as positively as Calvin is able to speak of Christ's flesh, he believes that John's use of *sarx* implies a mitigated benefit. The *sarx* which Jesus is said to take on in 1:14 is not, Calvin supposes, a euphemism for corrupt human nature but rather a description of mortal humanity: "It denotes derogatorily his frail and almost transient nature."<sup>122</sup> Calvin exclaims, "How great is the distance between the spiritual glory of the Word of God and the stinking filth of our flesh!"<sup>123</sup> He imagines a similar response by Jesus' opponents in John 6, "Despise me if you like for the low and despicable appearance of my flesh; yet within that despicable flesh is life' . . ."<sup>124</sup> When Christ shows his wounded body to the disciples, Calvin assumes an act of condescension is at work. Jesus exhibits his wounds, that is, for the sake of a weak faith. Moreover, to believe that these wounds are permanently inscribed in Jesus' body, Calvin insists, is "ridiculous."<sup>125</sup> In Thomas' experience of touching the wounded side and the pierced hands, Calvin accuses the doubting disciple of "binding faith (which springs from hearing and ought to be entirely fixed to the Word) to the other senses."<sup>126</sup>

Against such a reading, there is every reason to believe that even if *sarx* signals a "Johannine *theologia crucis*," as Martin Hengel believes, it surely receives a more positive estimation in John than Calvin seems willing to accord it.<sup>127</sup> The Johannine narrative involves no explicit denigration of Christ's flesh, nor a sense that the wounded body of Jesus is a cause for embarrassment to the disciples, as Calvin supposes. John 2 is

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<sup>122</sup> This is in contrast to what he believes is being addressed in John 3:6.

<sup>123</sup> *Comm.* John 1:14.

<sup>124</sup> *Comm.* John 6:53.

<sup>125</sup> *Comm.* John 20:20.

<sup>126</sup> *Comm.* John 20:29.

<sup>127</sup> Hengel, "The Prologue of the Gospel of John as the Gateway to Christological Truth," 283. Cf. Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4. Calvin's interpretation of John 6 stays much closer to the basic trajectory of John on the material creation.

a decisive text, for it is here that the reader discovers the proper *telos* of 1:14.<sup>128</sup> The *Logos* becomes *sarx* because it is Jesus' body-as-temple that will now serve as the new "holy place." Jesus hereby replaces the Mosaic tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple and becomes the embodied place of meeting. In him space has been "Christified," as I noted back in chapter three (cf. 2:13-25; 8:59).<sup>129</sup> As Craig Koester remarks in his book *The Dwelling of God*, Jesus assumes for John the role of the new portable presence of God.<sup>130</sup> This presence is touched, anointed, bathed, caressed, leaned against, poked, pulled and torn, and then offered for the life of the world. It is through this flesh (*σὰρξ*) that God tabernacles (*σκηνοῶ*) with humanity and exhibits his glory (*δόξα*). Through this flesh God's glory becomes tangible, not tangential, in the revelation of the messiah. Through this flesh the restoration of the cosmos properly begins.<sup>131</sup>

It is especially noteworthy that the language of tabernacle and temple, which John uses to describe Jesus' life (1:14; 2:19, 21), appears elsewhere only once, in John's Ἀποκάλυψις. In Revelation 21:3, the tabernacle of God is said to be with humanity (*σκηνώσει μετ' αὐτῶν*, Rev. 7:15), while in Revelation 15:5, the language of temple (*ὄναος*), tabernacle of meeting (*σκηνή τοῦ μαρτυρίου*), and divine glory (*δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ*) are together employed to recount John's vision of a sign (*σημεῖον*). The embodied presence of God is an abiding concern of John's. If the authorship of the Fourth Gospel can be linked to John's First Epistle, then the multi-sensory language of 1 John 1:1-3

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Gale A. Yee, *Jewish Feasts and The Gospel of John* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989).

<sup>129</sup> Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 290. Against this view, see Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (London: Continuum, 2005), 177. See p. 123.

<sup>130</sup> Koester, *Dwelling of God*, 100-115. Cf. Wisdom 9:15; 2 Cor. 5:1,4; LXX uses for the Israelite tabernacle. Cf. also Rev. 21:3 as well as Ezek. 47:1-12 with its imagery of water flowing out from under the threshold of the temple, echoing both Gen. 2 and Ps. 1.

<sup>131</sup> See chapter three on this point.

serves only to underscore the important relation between God's self-revelation and materiality in Johannine perspective. It is precisely this Christ, "who was revealed in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16), whom the church confesses. It is through this wounded flesh that Jesus offers his body, "just as he will in every future Eucharist," as Cyril of Alexandria says it.<sup>132</sup> It is in this pierced body that the faithful discover not a condescension to a weak faith, regrettably in need of palpable attestation, as Calvin believed, but rather a radical vision of the Second Person of the Trinity as a Suffering Servant, sympathetic to the somatic condition of human creatures.

Stressing the pneumatic dimension of this embodied presence, Dorothy Lee remarks that "The Spirit who abides on Jesus draws believers to the Son as the heavenly yet material τόπος: the site of worship of the Father."<sup>133</sup> Worship in John's gospel, then, can be said to occur through the humanity of Jesus, by way of the Spirit.<sup>134</sup> As the new holy place, Jesus occupies a Spirit-empowered corporeal space through which encounter with the Father is made possible.<sup>135</sup> Whatever else worship "in" Christ means, it means nothing less than worship mediated through the flesh of Christ, capable, as I noted in chapter four, of unmarred habitation by the Holy Spirit. As Lee rightly puts it, "Rather than a 'spiritualized' form of worship, therefore, John presents an understanding of πνεῦμα which is intimately linked to the body of Jesus [per 2:21], crucified and risen."<sup>136</sup> To worship "in Truth," in a Johannine sense, then, points to a worship that occurs not only

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<sup>132</sup> Cited in Bruner, *The Gospel of John*, 1190.

<sup>133</sup> Lee, "In the Spirit of Truth: Worship and Prayer in the Gospel of John and the Early Fathers," *Vigiliae Christianae* 58 (2004), 285.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Trevor Hart, "Humankind in Christ and Christ in Humankind: Salvation as Participation in Our Substitute in the Theology of John Calvin," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42 (1989): 67-84.

<sup>135</sup> This is to argue against Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 295.

<sup>136</sup> Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 82.

*because* of Jesus, with its accompanying soteriological and eschatological significance, but also *in and on account of his corporeality*, with implications for creation itself.<sup>137</sup>

In John, the *Logos* becomes *sarx* and redeems all *sarx*. All *sarx*, and by implication all of the material creation, is implicated in this renovative work of Jesus. If all of creation is renewed through the body of Christ, then I suggest that the material shape of worship cannot be excluded from this renewing work. It too must somehow give expression to a world which has been healed and reconfigured on account of Christ's body. To speak of the reconfiguring work of Christ's flesh, moreover, is surely also to speak of the *Spirit's* reconfiguration of the place of worship.

#### **5.4.2 The Holy Spirit's re-creative work in John**

*Second, the Spirit's work of recreation in John points to the on-going goodness of materiality for the church's worship.* Calvin is sensitive to the way in which the Spirit, in John, functions in adjectival fashion.<sup>138</sup> To speak of the spiritual work of God, as often as not, is to speak of the work of the Spirit, the *interior magister*, Calvin believes.<sup>139</sup> As such, the only way to receive the benefits of Christ's work is to receive them Spiritually.<sup>140</sup> This idea confirms what we have already seen in chapter four of the dissertation,<sup>141</sup> which I regard as one of the most compelling features of Calvin's theology. With John's gospel, Calvin attends to specific pneumatological activity. It is

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<sup>137</sup> John 20:27 could be seen to play a significant role for this point. Cf. Thompson, *The Gospel of John*, 216-217.

<sup>138</sup> *Comm.* John 6:63.

<sup>139</sup> *Comm.* John 14:16.

<sup>140</sup> *Comm.* John 14:16; 20:22.

<sup>141</sup> See pp. 194-207.

the Spirit who illumines darkened creatures.<sup>142</sup> It is the Spirit who places the Word in the hearts of the faithful. It is the Spirit who establishes faith in them, while also increasing in them an appetite for grace.<sup>143</sup> It is the Spirit who leads the faithful towards “the school of Christ,” equipping and empowering the disciple for God’s mission in the world.<sup>144</sup> And it is the Spirit whom Jesus gives to his disciples in order to complete the work of salvation in them:

Christ was the Patron of His own so long as He lived in the world. Afterwards He committed them to the protection and guardianship of the Spirit.... While He dwelt in the world, He openly manifested Himself as their Patron. Now He guards us by His Spirit.

While Calvin regards Christ’s work in John (through an admittedly “Pauline lens”), as atonement and redemption, the work of the Spirit, he believes, “is to make us partakers not only of Christ Himself, but of all His blessings.”<sup>145</sup>

As noted in previous chapters, Calvin is especially concerned with the interior work of salvation, which, for him, describes the *interius et arcanum Spiritus testimonium*.<sup>146</sup> The corporeal shape of renewed humanity receives much less emphasis. The sacramental bread, Calvin writes, is given for “the spiritual nourishment of the soul.”<sup>147</sup> The language of “rivers” in 7:38 points to “the multiple graces of the Spirit, which are necessary for the

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<sup>142</sup> *Comm.* John 6:46.

<sup>143</sup> *Comm.* John 8:32; 15:26; 7:37.

<sup>144</sup> *Comm.* John 16:14; 20:22.

<sup>145</sup> Pitkin, “Calvin as Commentator on the Gospel of John,” 193.

<sup>146</sup> *Comm.* John 15:26.

<sup>147</sup> *Comm.* John 6:32.

spiritual life of the soul.”<sup>148</sup> Because the soul is seen to take priority over the body in the redemptive work of Christ, the organs of hearing and speaking, in Calvin’s mind, take priority over the organs of sight and sense. God “sounds in our ears by the mouth of men; and He addresses us inwardly by His Spirit.”<sup>149</sup> Preaching is deemed inherently valuable, furthermore, while the sacraments are viewed as concessions to the weak need of humans for sensory attestation.<sup>150</sup> Neither oracles nor visions should be sought, he adds, since the preached Word, which is “in our mouth and heart,” suffices.<sup>151</sup> The primary power of the Spirit, in this vein, is exhibited “in the outward teaching of the Gospel and the voice of men,”<sup>152</sup> while Christian faith rests “in the simple Word and does not depend at all on the sense and reason of the flesh.”<sup>153</sup>

Calvin’s commentary on John 20:22 is emblematic of his construal of material symbols of worship in the Fourth Gospel. When “Popish theologasters” surmise from this text the liturgical practice of “breathing,” or when they infer a sacrament of penance from 20:23, Calvin views this as a gross misunderstanding of the gospel. No sacramental practice is to be inferred from Christ’s action to breathe upon his disciples.<sup>154</sup> What papal religion does here is to pervert the gospel. As Calvin sardonically writes:

Did the Spirit have to come down from heaven for the apostles to learn by what ceremony cups and their altars must be consecrated, church bells baptized, holy

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<sup>148</sup> *Comm.* John 7:38.

<sup>149</sup> *Comm.* John 14:26.

<sup>150</sup> *Comm.* John 15:27.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> *Comm.* John 16:8.

<sup>153</sup> *Comm.* John 20:29.

<sup>154</sup> *Comm.* John 20:22.

water blessed and Mass celebrated?... Thus, by a false claim to the Spirit, the world has been bewitched to leave the simple purity of Christ.<sup>155</sup>

Such a conclusion is, of course, consistent with what Calvin supposes is the purpose of John's gospel. As he explains in his commentary preface, similar to Clement of Alexandria long before him, while the Synoptic gospels exhibit Christ's "body," the Fourth Gospel presents his "soul."<sup>156</sup> Though external aids to faith have their place in public worship, Calvin believed that singular emphasis should be placed on the work of the Spirit in the interior life of the Christian.

To take this line of thought, however, is to underestimate the importance of the Genesis sub-text in John, with its implications for the material creation.<sup>157</sup> Beginning with John's theological reworking of Genesis 1 (in John 1:1-18), through to the end where the beloved disciple evokes the language of Yahweh as Gardener from Genesis 2-3 (John 20:15), the Fourth Gospel witnesses to the new creational work of Christ and the Spirit all throughout.<sup>158</sup> Dunn notes that, for John, "Jesus is the author of the new creation as he

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<sup>155</sup> *Comm.* John 16:12, 14.

<sup>156</sup> "Last of all, aware that the physical facts [ta somatika] had been recorded in the Gospels, encouraged by his pupils and irresistibly moved by the Spirit, John wrote a spiritual Gospel [ta pneumatika]." – St. Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD). Cited in Thompson, "The Historical Jesus and the Johannine Christ," 26.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. John R. Levison, *Filled with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); John Painter, "Rereading Genesis in the prologue of John?" in *Neotestamentica et Philonica* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 179-201; Elaine Pagels, "Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 118.3 (Fall 1999): 477-496; Raymond T. Stamm, "Creation and Revelation in the Gospel of John," in *Search the Scriptures: New Testament Studies in Honor of Raymond T. Stamm* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 13-32; Murray Rae, "The Testimony of Works in the Christology of John's Gospel," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*, eds. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 295-310, esp. his treatment of the "new creation" theme; Martin Hengel, "The Prologue of the Gospel of John as the Gateway to Christological Truth," in *ibid.*, 265-294.

<sup>158</sup> Hengel, "The Prologue of the Gospel of John as the Gateway to Christological Truth," 289.

was of the old.”<sup>159</sup> Yet it is also necessary to stress that it is the Spirit who effects this work of recreation. John 20:22 serves as an exemplar of this work.<sup>160</sup> The larger setting reads this way:

<sup>21</sup>εἶπεν οὖν αὐτοῖς [ὁ Ἰησοῦς] πάλιν, Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν: καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ πατήρ, καὶ γὰρ πέμπω ὑμᾶς. <sup>22</sup>καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἐνεφύσησεν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον: <sup>23</sup>ἂν τινῶν ἀφήτε τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἀφένονται αὐτοῖς, ἂν τινῶν κρατῆτε κεκράτηνται.

As commentators have pointed out, the verb “inbreathe” (ἐνεφύσησεν) is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament. Although singular, language very similar to this appears in Genesis 2:7 (LXX), Ezekiel 37:9 (LXX), and the Wisdom of Solomon 15:15. Each of these texts, in turn, describes the creation or re-creation of human beings.<sup>161</sup> Stephen Um deduces from this intertextual connection that “The Evangelist’s use of this rare term was intended to imply that Jesus actually imparted the eschatological Spirit or new creational breath of life.”<sup>162</sup> John Levison, rightly I believe, assumes a re-creation narrative is intended by this phrasing.

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<sup>159</sup> Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-Examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 180.

<sup>160</sup> See, especially, Cornelis Bennema, “The Giving of the Spirit in John 19-20: Another Round,” in *The Spirit and Christ in the New Testament and Christian Theology: Essays in Honor of Max Turner*, eds. I. Howard Marshall, Volker Rabens, and Cornelis Bennema (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 86-105. His summary of the literature on this passage on p. 88, n. 8, is particularly helpful. Two exegetical concerns which emerge from this text will not be addressed, because they are not immediately relevant to my investigation: 1) whether 20:22 is intended to describe a literal or non-literal experience, and 2) in what way 20:22 is to be related to Acts 2. On these two questions, see, for starters, Um, *The Theme of Temple Christology in John’s Gospel*, 180-182; Bennema, “The Giving of the Spirit in John 19-20: Another Round,” 92-93, 98, 102-104.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Bennema, “The Giving of the Spirit in John 19-20: Another Round,” 95.

<sup>162</sup> Um, *The Theme of Temple Christology in John’s Gospel*, 181. He cites 2 Macc. 7:22-23; 14:46; Wis. 15:11; 4 Ezra 3:5; Jos. Asen. 12:1-2; 4Q381 Frag. 1:7; 4Q504 Frag. 8:5.



Though formerly without breath, like a freshly formed *adam* in the dirt, the moribund widow's son on Elijah's bed and a despondent Israelite nation reduced to very many, very dry bones, the disciples into whom Jesus breathes his Holy Spirit become a new community, charged with a new task, and given new authority.<sup>163</sup>

Just as the language of John 3:5 points to the sovereign work of the Spirit to effect new life in the disciple,<sup>164</sup> so too the language of 20:22 underscores the work of new creation which the Spirit accomplishes through the Son.<sup>165</sup> In giving the Spirit to his disciples, Jesus' action evokes the eschatological promises of God which Israel's prophets announced long ago (Ps. 104:30; Ezek. 36:33-36; 37:4-5; Isa. 44:3). Jesus also fulfills hereby the promise which John the Baptist announced in 1:33. Isaiah, for his part, announces a day when "wasteland" (*midbar*) will no longer mark Israel's lot. That day will take place, he writes, when "the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field" (32:15); on that day, *shalom* will characterize both the state of the land and the relations between humans.

It is no coincidence, then, that Jesus, in 20:21, speaks this peace to his disciples (cf. 14:27), his emissaries of the new age of the Spirit.<sup>166</sup> In three distinctive actions—speaking peace, breathing the Spirit, entrusting to his disciples a priestly vocation—the reader hears echoes of Yahweh's activity in the early chapters of Genesis, which the

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<sup>163</sup> Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 371. cf. The Septuagint renderings of Gen. 2:7; 1 Kgs. 17:21; Ezek. 37:9; Wis. 15:11. So, too, Thompson, by way of Dunn and Schnackenburg, in "The Breath of Life," in *The Holy Spirit and Christian Origins*, 69-78

<sup>164</sup> Linda Belleville, "'Born of Water and Spirit': John 3:5," *Trinity Journal* (1980), 137: the "broader concept of ζωή, especially the infusion of spiritual life (πνεῦμα) is basic to the prophetic promises and foundational to Jewish intertestamental eschatological expectation." Um, *The Theme of Temple Christology in John's Gospel*, 180, notes how John 7:39 "seems to clarify that the 'living water' is the end-time Spirit which those who believe will receive in fullness after the resurrection."

<sup>165</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17; Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, 137.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. Jubilees 1:23-25.

prophets in various ways apply to Israel's vocation.<sup>167</sup> Where Israel failed to fulfill this calling, however, Jesus is shown in John's gospel to be the one who perfectly fulfills God's will (1:29; 5:14; 8:7-11; 16:7-11). John's gospel also suggests that the Spirit will continue Jesus' work in the lives of the disciples. In the so-called Upper Room discourse, Jesus commissions his disciples to be agents of this new life, announcing the new creation which the Spirit achieves in them in fulfillment of God's promise to make a new people, called by his name (Ezek. 36).<sup>168</sup> As Lee summarizes, "The Spirit is central to the creative and re-creative work of God, played out in the mission and ministry of Jesus."<sup>169</sup>

Over against Calvin, I suggest that the eschatological work of the Spirit concerns not only a redeemed community but also a renewed creation. The material particulars of the eschatological era, including the particulars of worship, cannot be seen, I argue, to stand outside of the Spirit's concerns. To do so is to ignore the comprehensive scope of Christ's redemptive work.<sup>170</sup> To do so is to fail to reckon with John's presentation of the Spirit as the one who, as agent of both the Father and the Son, realizes and fulfills the divine will *on earth*.<sup>171</sup> Though Calvin was right to stress the work of the Spirit to renew the hearts and minds of people, he largely overlooks the multiple ways in which John advances a positive relationship between the Spirit and the new creation, even as John suggests an

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<sup>167</sup> Cf. Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

<sup>168</sup> Thompson, "Breath of Life," 78: "Jesus' death and resurrection are the occasion for the Spirit's eschatological work of the recreation, renewal, cleansing, and restoration of God's people as described in the prophetic visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah as well as in later Jewish works."

<sup>169</sup> Lee, "In the Spirit of Truth," 284.

<sup>170</sup> See in particular Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 320-334; *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 202-209, 218. A. J. Kelly and F. J. Moloney, *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), offer this note: "Heaven opens itself to enfold the world into the relationship that precedes all creation, that of the Father to his Son and Word" (336).

<sup>171</sup> Smalley, "Pneumatology in the Johannine Gospel and Apocalypse," 292.

integral relation between materiality and the *semeia* which disclose the identity of the Son of God.

#### **5.4.4 The constitutive relation between *semeia* and materiality in John**

*Third, the symbolic work of Jesus in John's gospel, as semeia which reveal his glory, underscores the goodness of materiality in the symbols of the church's worship.* When John 1:32 states that the Spirit descends "as a dove" on Jesus, Calvin understands this to be an example of metonymy: "not that it is really the Spirit, but it shows Him in a way man can grasp."<sup>172</sup> This way of figuring things symbolically, Calvin adds, "is usual in the Sacraments." It is also, he explains, "a frequent and common way of speaking in Scripture."<sup>173</sup> In this instance, the Spirit is revealed as a dove in order to "represent openly that gentleness of Christ."<sup>174</sup> With respect to the "visible sign" of water, God testifies and seals the new life which Christ accomplishes in the faithful through the Spirit. When Jesus says that the wind blows where it wills, Calvin believes this is a way of speaking of the incomprehensible power of God's Spirit to preserve "the estate of our bodies."<sup>175</sup> And when Jesus spits on the ground to make clay for the blind man's eyes, no convoluted allegory is intended; it is instead a vivid evocation of Genesis 2:7. Calvin writes, "just as man was at first made of clay, so Christ used clay in restoring his eyes, to show that He had the same power over a part of the body that the Father had exercised in creating the whole man." Calvin reasons that all the outward symbols which Jesus employs in John's gospel involve a positive purpose:

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<sup>172</sup> *Comm.* John. 1:32.

<sup>173</sup> *Comm.* John 3:5.

<sup>174</sup> *Comm.* John. 1:32. Calvin cites Isa. 42:3 as a backdrop for this idea.

<sup>175</sup> *Comm.* John 3:8.

Christ freely and often adorned the outward symbols with His miracles, either to accustom believers to the use of signs, or to show that all things were under His will, or to testify that there is just so much power in each of His creatures as He chooses to give.<sup>176</sup>

And yet, as often as not, Calvin worries that these material symbols will also lead the faithful astray.<sup>177</sup> The six water pots that feature in Jesus' miracle at Cana are, for Calvin, a sign of Jewish superstition. The line of thought he argues here is typical of his general anxiety over external aids to worship:

as the world is prone to excess in externals, the Jews, not satisfied with the simplicity [*simplicitate*] enjoined by God, amused themselves with continual sprinklings; and since superstition is ambitious, it undoubtedly led to ostentation.<sup>178</sup>

Much like the Jews of Jesus' day, the Papacy arranges its public worship "for pure display."<sup>179</sup> The weak faith of the Jews in 2:23 led them to cling "to the world and earthly things." Similarly, the disciples in their final hours with Jesus sought to "bind Christ" to their senses.<sup>180</sup> Calvin explains: "For because we are carnal, nothing is harder than to tear from our minds this foolish attitude by which we drag down Christ from heaven to us."<sup>181</sup> Even Calvin's commendation of Christ's miracles is sharply qualified. While Calvin believes that faith ought to rest exclusively on "God's promises and Word," Christ

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<sup>176</sup> *Comm.* John 9:7.

<sup>177</sup> This is a worry which Calvin's contemporaries did not share to the same degree. See Pitkin, "Seeing and Believing in the Commentaries on John by Martin Bucer and John Calvin," 883-885.

<sup>178</sup> *Comm.* John 2:6.,

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.* See also Pitkin, "Calvin as Commentator on the Gospel of John," 185.

<sup>180</sup> *Comm.* John 16:5-6.

<sup>181</sup> *Comm.* John 16:7.

performs miracles for similar reasons that he gives the sacraments to the church, as “aids and supports of faith.” Echoing his sentiments on music, he writes, “We know how cold and sluggish our attention is if we are not excited by something external.”<sup>182</sup> Jesus’ command to wash one another’s feet, in John 13, is interpreted here as a general principle, whereas the Papists “hold a theatrical feet-washing” which only results, Calvin believes, in a shameful mockery of Christ.<sup>183</sup> Further, they wrongly practice the laying on of hands as a sign of apostolic succession, when all that is needed, Calvin argues, is to witness “the gifts of the Holy Spirit” in the ordained person.

While some disciples are weak, Calvin believes others are hard-hearted, as Thomas is seen to be. Rather than being regarded as a positive experience of the resurrection of the Wounded One, Calvin sees Thomas’ request to feel Christ’s wounds as a sign of a monstrous “stupidity and wickedness.”<sup>184</sup> Where future disciples are commended for believing in Jesus apart from sensory confirmation, Thomas feels the need to be “drawn violently to faith by the experience of his senses.”<sup>185</sup> As Calvin reasons, the need for such a “sensual judgment” is the opposite of faith.<sup>186</sup> Even more strongly, he argues that “all our senses fade away and fail when we have to do with God.”<sup>187</sup> In contrast to this weak

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<sup>182</sup> *Comm.* John 20:31. In a note on John 10:38, he writes, “For rebels want to know before they believe. And yet God indulges us so far as to prepare us for faith by a knowledge of His works.” See *Comm.* Jn. 2:11, 23; 4:53; 7:31; 11:45.

<sup>183</sup> *Comm.* John 13:14-15.

<sup>184</sup> *Comm.* John 20:24, 27. Cf. *Comm.* John 6:30; III.2.5; Pitkin, “Calvin as Commentator on the Gospel of John,” 194-196. While it is possible to deduce a negative contrast between Thomas and future disciples, where Thomas is seen to exhibit a lesser faith or a failure altogether, it is also possible, I believe, to infer a parallel relationship. In this light, Thomas is offered a positive—that is, desirable and not unreasonable—experience of the resurrected body of Christ, while future disciples are commended for a positive experience of faith without a direct experience of this same body, with the hope that they too one day will see, hear and touch Jesus.

<sup>185</sup> *Comm.* John 20:29.

<sup>186</sup> *Comm.* John 20:25.

<sup>187</sup> *Comm.* John 3:13.

faith, the kind of faith which Christ commends is that which acquiesces “in the simple Word [*simplici Verbo*] and does not depend at all on the sense and reason of the flesh.”<sup>188</sup>

None of these arguments should surprise us, for by now we have witnessed a consistent pattern of thought in Calvin. While he commends material symbols in John, he qualifies this commendation by noting their limited benefit or by stressing the habit of humans to pervert them by placing inordinate trust in them. Although this danger is real in John’s record of Jesus’ ministry, it does not tell the whole story. Where Calvin qualifies the benefit of the σημεῖα at every turn, no qualification of σημεῖα is required according to the Johannine narrative. Though never ends in themselves, the *semeia* by which the beloved disciple frames his story are regarded as central to God’s self-disclosure in Jesus Christ. And while they are not capable of automatically generating saving faith, as various dramatic episodes in John make clear, the material property of the σημεῖα is not seen to pose an intrinsic problem to this saving faith. Quite the opposite, an intimate link between sign and materiality is posited in the Fourth Gospel. I offer three observations on this account.

First, “sign” in John is not to be confused with “sign” as it is popularly used. Dorothy Lee explains, “Whereas the sign stands [in the everyday, non-Johannine sense] for something absent, the symbol brings to expression that which is present.”<sup>189</sup> Beyond this, in John an important connection exists between symbolic form, narrative development and

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<sup>188</sup> *Comm.* John 20:29.

<sup>189</sup> Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 16.

theological meaning.<sup>190</sup> Lee writes, “Each narrative is created to unfold a central symbol and the development of the symbol, in turn, draws out the narrative.... In theological terms, the narratives reveal the way in which material reality becomes symbolic of the divine.”<sup>191</sup> Sandra Schneiders adds that the symbol’s sensible reality involves the various Johannine characters in a transforming experience of the God revealed in Jesus Christ.<sup>192</sup> The material aspect of the σημεῖα, in this light, is fundamental to the revelatory and soteriological purposes of God, not a concession to the weaknesses of human faith, as Calvin imagined.<sup>193</sup>

Second, and more particularly, the σημεῖα “are concrete manifestations of God’s glory in the human sphere, which John views as a primary—if not the primary—clue to Jesus’ identity.”<sup>194</sup> Rather than negating Jesus’ life and ministry, they substantiate it, as evidence of God’s presence and favor.<sup>195</sup> Thus, for example, in John 5 Jesus heals a man at the pool on Sabbath day, for this is what God does: heal human bodies. In John 6 Jesus feeds an impossibly large crowd of people, for again this is what God does: feed human bodies. In John 9 Jesus heals a man born blind on Sabbath day, for this is what God does: mend human bodies. He does more than this to be sure, but according to the Fourth Evangelist

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<sup>190</sup> Lee, *ibid.*, 16: “Because the symbolic nature of the Gospel is a ‘condition of validity for its interpretation’, its theological meaning cannot be divorced from its symbolic framework.”

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 11. See also Schneiders, “History and Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Évangile de Jean* (Gembloux, Belgium: Duculot, 1977), 371-376.

<sup>192</sup> Schneiders, “Symbolism and the Sacramental Principle in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Segni e sacramenti nel vangelo di Giovanni* (Rome: Editrice Anselmiana, 1977), 223, 229.

<sup>193</sup> Cf. Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 53-86; Barrett, *St. John*, 76: the sign is “a symbolic anticipation or showing forth of a greater reality of which the *semeion* is nevertheless itself a part.”

<sup>194</sup> Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, 86.

<sup>195</sup> Thomas H. Olbricht, “The Theology of the Signs in the Gospel of John,” in *Johannine Studies*, 174, observes, “The purpose for the signs was either to bring people to believe, to confirm beliefs already held, or both.” Cf. John 1:49; 20:31.

he does no less, for it is through these intensively material acts that Jesus displays the Father's glory.<sup>196</sup> The *semeia*, then, not only point to God's *doxa*, they express it. In Johannine perspective they are in some way constitutive of Christ's identity, rather than accidental to it or mere accommodations to a "rude" people, as Calvin reckoned. Hans Weder remarks: "in them the *δόξα* of the Christ actually takes place."<sup>197</sup>

Third, regarding 4:23-24, Lee stresses, correctly I believe, that the Samaritan woman "is not offered a 'spiritualized' [i.e., non-material] understanding of worship which stands over against the physical, but rather a symbolic one."<sup>198</sup> To speak of the "sphere" in which worship is actualized in this new hour is to speak of a symbolic reality. But this does not, for John, entail an antithetical or ambivalent relationship to the material sphere. For John, there is no such thing as "mere" σημεῖον; nor is a σημεῖον to be confused for a figure of speech. Quite the opposite, the symbols in John entail a *particular* material shape: a christomorphic, Spirit-empowered shape. As such, what the language of "Spirit and Truth" points to is a symbolical instantiation of worship in a new covenantal era, with implications for not only the content and activities but also the material configuration of actual liturgies. To worship in the sphere of Christ and the Spirit, then, points to a material reality in which the glory of God is inevitably *configured* and *expressed*, much like the *semeia* throughout John.

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<sup>196</sup> Cf. Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 3.

<sup>197</sup> Hans Weder, "Deus Incarnatus: On the Hermeneutics of Christology in the Johannine Writings," in *Exploring the Gospel of John*, trans. Douglas W. Stott, 334.

<sup>198</sup> Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 82.



The Johannine *semeia*, in sum, not only represent a series of significant events which mediate and reveal the power of God, they also indicate a symbolical habit of being, describing baptism and table fellowship, foot washing and healings, feastings and breathings. The *semeia* convey an efficacious embodied presence, with implications for the entire shape of the community's life, not just doctrinal concepts or matters of the heart. When viewed this way, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the disciples would carry on this kind of symbolic way of life, entrusted as they were with the Spirit's power to perpetuate Jesus' mission.<sup>199</sup>

#### **5.4.4 Worship “in the realm” of the Spirit and the Truth**

*Fourth, whatever else worship “in Spirit and Truth” may be, whether simple or fulsome, for John it is materially and symbolically mediated worship, rooted in the activity of the triune God. With this fourth constructive proposal, the following things can be stated with a measure of confidence.*

**1.** *The primary accent in John's Gospel rests on the work of the triune God to enable disciples to worship God rightly; it does not rest on the work of the human creature.*<sup>200</sup>

This point, I suggest, is fundamentally sympathetic to Calvin's liturgical theology. As he comments in book four of the 1559 *Institutes*: “believers have no greater help than public worship, for by it God raises his own folk upward step by step.” John Witvliet summarizes what Calvin scholars have widely observed, when he says that, “At the heart

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<sup>199</sup> Wright, “Worship and the Spirit in the New Testament,” 24, links a trinitarian reading to this concern about materiality.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. R. G. Gruenler, *The Trinity in the Gospel of John: A Thematic Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1986). Hengel, “The Prologue of the Gospel of John,” 292.

of Calvin's vision is the notion that worship is charged with divine activity."<sup>201</sup> Or as Hughes Oliphant Old puts it, "What Calvin has in mind is that God is active in our worship.... For Calvin the worship of the church is a matter of divine activity rather than human creativity."<sup>202</sup> Inasmuch as this statement can be said to represent a Calvinian picture of public worship, it coheres with the basic vision of worship in John's gospel.

Yet this is not exactly the tack which Calvin takes in his exegesis of John 4:23-24. In this instance, Calvin interprets Jesus' pronouncement on worship as a statement about the essence of God, rather than about the activity of the Trinity. Calvin also believes the interior condition of the worshiper is at stake, rather than the conditions under which the triune Persons enable right worship to occur. Consistent with the trinitarian shape of the Fourth Gospel, I would argue, however, that a trinitarian reading of John 4 makes better sense of the literary, narrational and theological data.<sup>203</sup> Such a reading rightly emphasizes the distinctive activity of Father, Son and Spirit to orient worship in this "new hour."

Employing language similar to that which I advanced in chapter four, Bruner wonderfully elucidates this dynamic activity:

How do we come to God the Father? By Spirit and Truth, Jesus now teaches, that is to say, by *the Spirit's* going *down deep* into the human hearts and moving them *upward* to faith in and focus on the living Truth who is *Jesus*, who then in tandem with the Spirit brings us spiritually, or ever since his Ascension brings us through

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<sup>201</sup> Witvliet, "Images and Themes in John Calvin's Theology of Liturgy," in *Worship Seeking Understanding*, 145.

<sup>202</sup> Old, "John Calvin and the Prophetic Criticism of Worship," in *John Calvin and the Church: A Prism of Reform*, ed. Timothy George (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 234.

<sup>203</sup> On this point, Lee, "In the Spirit of Truth," 296, concedes that "we are free to speak of the Fourth Gospel as trinitarian in its understanding of worship, a Gospel that in any case 'stresses the unity of three persons', even if the distinctions are not as fine or lucid as they become at Nicea." Cf. Wright, "Worship and the Spirit in the New Testament," 11.

the outward means of grace—the Church, the Word, the sacraments, and the Christian people in the world, materially—*upward still more* to the heart’s goal: to God the Father. . . . down, down, and down; up, up, and up; and then in a moment, out, out, and out into the wide world.<sup>204</sup>

**2. *Worship in a Johannine perspective will be a materially and symbolically mediated worship.*** Calvin nowhere doubts that God himself has provided the church with suitable material symbols of worship. God has furnished his people with external helps of worship according to the need of the times (“old” or “new”), as Calvin reasons, and in a manner that befits the human condition in its earthly pilgrimage. The purpose of these helps, to his mind, is to allow the body to be “exercised” at the same time as the soul.<sup>205</sup> Indeed, all bodily exercises are seen to be useful insofar that they serve the “practice of godliness,” which concerns the integrity of the human creature.<sup>206</sup> As he explains in a comment on Genesis 12:7, “The inward worship of the heart is not sufficient, unless external profession before men be added.”<sup>207</sup> On this view, Calvin rightly perceives that John’s presentation of Jesus’ miracles involves a certain adornment by outward symbols, which, in turn, gives evidence of the need for both soul and body to be involved in the experience of genuine faith.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Bruner, *The Gospel of John*, 263-264, emphasis original.

<sup>205</sup> “On the Necessity,” 127.

<sup>206</sup> *Comm.* 1 Tim. 4:8. Calvin adds, in III.19.8, that if they have not been commanded by the Bible, such bodily exercises should be left a matter of Christian freedom; no one’s conscience ought ever to be constrained to perform them.

<sup>207</sup> *CO* 23:181: “Religion has truly its appropriate seat in the heart; but from this root, public confession afterwards arises, as its fruit.”

<sup>208</sup> *Comm.* John 9:7.

Yet inasmuch as Calvin believes that external confession is an apt fruit of the confession that arises from the heart, the dominant stress is placed on the heart and mind.<sup>209</sup> A certain regret is eventually attached to the human need for sensory attestation of God in worship. As often as not, moreover, his analysis of material symbols in John is accompanied by a certain disparagement of materiality itself. My contention is that Calvin qualifies the value of material media where the Johannine narrative requires none. While Calvin is right to issue a caution against the misunderstanding or abuse of material symbols of worship, he is wrong to regard them as marginal to the work of worship or as radically subordinate to the activities of the soul. G. K. Beale identifies in John 4 an aspect which Calvin perceived, namely that Jesus' statement to the Samaritan woman involved the offer of greater intimacy with the Father.<sup>210</sup> Yet like plenty of theologians in Calvin's wake, Beale fails to grasp the implications of Jesus' words for the material and symbolic shape of the church's worship.

This is important because John's gospel involves a contest not only of disputed beliefs but also of disputed practices.<sup>211</sup> Practices such as baptism or Passover are not regarded as irrelevant in John; instead they are transfigured with the advent of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>212</sup> The need for a symbolically informed place of worship, moreover, is not replaced by the allegedly superior, non-material activities of heart and mind. Instead,

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<sup>209</sup> III.3.16: "when we have to deal with God nothing is achieved unless we begin from the inner disposition of the heart."

<sup>210</sup> G. K. Beale, "Jesus as the Temple of the New Creation in John," unpublished paper, presented at ETS, Baltimore, MD, Nov. 2013. Beale believes that temple-like worship in a New Testament era will be focused on activities of teaching, evangelism, discipleship, and making more worshippers. This, he argues, is what a "spiritual service of worship" entails.

<sup>211</sup> This is a point Thompson persuasively argues in "Reflections on Worship in the Gospel of John," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 19 (1998): 259-278.

<sup>212</sup> Thettayil, *In Spirit and Truth*, 122.

new symbols are required by the faithful to give expression to worship in this new hour. The cleansing of the temple (John 3) issues in an embodied act of cleansing disciples' feet (John 13). "Living waters" do not endlessly swirl in the depths of the human soul; they spring out symbolically in the practice of baptism. And as Thompson observes, the miracle of Jesus at Cana does not signal messianic replacement or, as Calvin supposed, a "carnal" need for material expressions of God's kingdom, it signals rather messianic fullness.<sup>213</sup> God's abundant life, symbolized in the exorbitant production of wine, is given expression in both the body of Christ, poured out for the life of the world, and in the Eucharistic body which, "like a rich and inexhaustible fountain," as Calvin describes it, pours into the faithful the life of God.

To put my point otherwise, worship in the Johannine picture is not an immediate experience of God. It is a mediated experience: "in the Spirit," through the Truth, while also *through the church, through its people and its practices*.<sup>214</sup> Worship which the Spirit makes possible is in this way enfleshed in the new life which God in Christ makes possible in his disciples: in their speech, in their actions, in their bodies, in the material media which liturgically symbolize the new life in Christ.<sup>215</sup> Richard Hays argues that despite the common perception of John as otherworldly and ethereal, "this gospel's aesthetic vision is deeply grounded in the *particular*, the *palpable*, and the *embodied*."<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 266.

<sup>214</sup> Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel*, 82-83, makes this point explicit: "In a derivative sense, the church becomes the 'place' of Jesus' incarnate presence in the world after his ascension."

<sup>215</sup> It is noteworthy that the Scriptures include numerous examples of material objects which—both accompanied by and apart from faith—mediate the power and presence of God. These include the tabernacle altar, Moses' rod, Elijah's mantle, Elisha's bones, Paul's handkerchief, and Jesus' own robe.

<sup>216</sup> Richard B. Hays, in "The Materiality of John's Symbolic World," in *Preaching John's Gospel: The World It Imagines*, eds. David Fleenor and Dave Bland (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2008), 6, emphasis original.

Though the material creation in John obtains a provisional status, on account of its frail and sinful character, it also obtains a fundamentally positive status, because of Christ's resurrection and the Spirit who enables the disciples to live this resurrected life.<sup>217</sup> John's gospel points us therefore to a new covenantal worship where the material creation plays an indispensable, symbolical role: narratively through the story it tells (for example, in foot-washing) and dramatically through the story it enacts (by way of, for instance, Eucharistic gatherings).<sup>218</sup>

**3. *Simple worship is not an explicit description or requirement which John 4 encourages.*** Simplicity, whatever may be meant by that term, is something that must be inferred from an exegesis of the broader text. While not incompatible as a general principle for worship, a simple material and ceremonial shape of worship is not a necessary conclusion from John 4:23-24, as Calvin deduced. Though Calvin's language about simple worship involves the possibility of ambiguity, there is much less doubt about that which stands on the opposite side of simplicity. With respect to rhetoric in general, this would have included for Calvin all manner of prolixity, grandiloquence, philosophical cleverness, and "fineness of style" that distorts the meaning of the gospel, along with anything that deluded "simple folk." With regard to public worship, Calvin expressed repeated concern over empty showmanship, ostentatious external aids, chasing after paltry glory, liturgical ornamentation that obscured Christ or disguised rather than disclosed the gospel, and

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<sup>217</sup> Cf. Brown, *John*, 131, 140-141, 296, 299ff; also Jn. 6:63; Isa. 40:6-8.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. N. T. Wright, "Worship and the Spirit in the New Testament," 23.

anything that intoxicated the senses or precluded a communal experience of worship.<sup>219</sup>

These are things that become grounds for legitimate concern, I allow.

We also concede that the historical circumstances in which he executed his liturgical reforms offer a plausible explanation for Calvin's prescriptions of a "moderate" adornment of churches and a "simple" exercise of liturgical ceremonies. Yet even if public worship ought in some fashion to be simple, it is not self-evident that "simplicity" involves *less* material media.<sup>220</sup> No doubt, of course, this is taken as a self-evident truth in the Reformed tradition. Philip Butin writes, "It is little wonder that the Reformed liturgical aesthetic that emerged in Calvin's legacy regarded simplicity as the essence of beauty, and proper ordering, modesty, and gravity as the essence of decorum."<sup>221</sup> Terry Johnson embraces this legacy, when he states that "the worship of Reformed Protestantism is simple. We merely read, preach, pray, sing and see the Word of God... True worship then must be primarily (though not absolutely) non-material, non-sensual, and non-symbolic."<sup>222</sup> The "Spartan" simplicity which Robert Stevenson observes in Calvin's vision of liturgical music is not an unfair description of the aesthetic makeup of many churches which regard themselves as direct heirs of the French Reformer.<sup>223</sup>

But the requirement that the material media and symbols of worship be simple, moderate, seemly, economical or decent is an inference which must be drawn on the basis of

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<sup>219</sup> Cf. III.20.30.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. his comments on the requirement of moderation in the adornment of churches in IV.5.18. These thoughts are echoed in the Second Helvetic Confession.

<sup>221</sup> Butin, Butin, "Calvin's Humanist Image of Popular Late-Medieval Piety," 431.

<sup>222</sup> Johnson, *Reformed Worship*, 38.

<sup>223</sup> Robert M. Stevenson, *Patterns of Protestant Church Music* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1953), 21.

theological presuppositions, for nowhere in the New Testament is this an express or definitive goal for public worship. While the shape and activities of worship must be protected from idolatrous, hypocritical and superstitious uses, as Calvin rightly believed, there is no necessary injunction in the gospels or epistles that it be materially, let alone aesthetically, simple. In fact, John's gospel may invite just the opposite conclusion. From the outset it is clear that God's self-revelation in Christ involves "fullness" (1:14). What sort of fullness? John tells *and* shows the reader. At Cana Jesus turns water into an excessive amount of wine, approximately 680 liters (2:1-11). When Jesus could have spoken a mere word to the man born blind (9:1-7), he indulges in an extravagant drama of mud and water. When he feeds people, he feeds an extraordinary number, roughly 5000 excluding women and children (6:6-13). He raises a dead body from the grave (11:1-44) and he authorizes a large catch of fish (21:1-11). These are not the sign of a parsimonious regard for the material creation. Nor do they signal a bias for soul over body. These are the sign of a *pleroma* of life which Jesus bestows on his disciples (1:16).

More succinctly, in John we discover no disparagement of material space; we discover no "sacred space"; we discover no secularizing of space.<sup>224</sup> We discover instead the possibility of an opening out of the possibility of space significantly imbued with "Spirit and Truth"; we discover a way in which the material creation has been reconfigured by the triune God; we discover a vision in which materiality has been freed by the Spirit to extend beyond the designs of the Jerusalem temple in order to take full advantage of the

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<sup>224</sup> Cf. H. Wayne Johnson, "John 4:19-24: Exegetical Implications for Worship and Place," an unpublished paper presented at ETS, Baltimore, MD, Nov. 2013. Johnson worries that the exclusive use of such language will lead to confusion regarding the true place of God's presence. He reckons that any place which Christians occupy could in principle be called "sacred space." I find this phrasing largely ambiguous and therefore unhelpful.



“stuff” of creation to give a christomorphic expression to worship rendered in a new covenantal key.<sup>225</sup> It is therefore a sympathetic extension of John’s presentation of worship, rather than a contravention of it, for the church in due time and under the right conditions to explore a broad range of artistic and architectural possibilities for the material and symbolic shape of worship which occurs in the Son, by the Spirit, to the Father’s glory.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have argued that while Calvin employs the language and conceptuality of “simple” in diverse settings, a common thread runs throughout. Consistent with his application of the idea to the language of ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ, Calvin insists that anything which intruded upon the “simple” exchange between and the faithful in public worship should be removed. From his exegesis of John 4, he believes that this demands a reduced role for materiality in a liturgical context. To the extent that his understanding of “simple” worship was seen to derive logically and liturgically from his understanding of John’s gospel, I offered a close reading of his analysis of 4:23-24. Questioning his conclusions regarding simplicity and the material shape of worship, I then engaged a careful investigation of the passage and suggested that materiality itself obtained neither a negative nor a positive judgment in Jesus’ oblique statement to the woman at the well. Without an explicit statement in 4:23-24 regarding the material shape of worship, it was thus necessary to examine patterns of thought in the Johannine narrative which might orient an answer one way or another, offering us thereby a picture of materiality in the

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<sup>225</sup> This over against Urban C. von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, vol. 2, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 183.

sphere of “Spirit and Truth.” Three patterns of thought in John led me to believe that a positive view of materiality might be discovered, not a merely ambivalent one nor an expressly one. In conversation with Calvin, I considered John’s presentation of Jesus as the new holy place, the Spirit’s new creational activities, and the mutually determinative relation between *semeia* and materiality.

I argued that if all of creation is renewed through Jesus’ *sarx*, as John’s gospel implies, and as Calvin’s reading of John 6 might suggest, then the material shape of worship cannot be excluded from this renewing work. The good news of Jesus was seen to hold good news for materiality in a liturgical context. I argued that the material particulars of public worship could not be seen to stand outside of the work of the Spirit. As the Executor of the new creation, the Spirit effects a Spirit-ual renewal not only of invisible matters, as Calvin might stress, but also of visible matters too, as John’s gospel seems to allow. I argued that the language of “Spirit and Truth” pointed to a symbolical instantiation of worship in a new covenantal era, with implications for the material shape of actual liturgies. To worship in the sphere of Christ and the Spirit, I suggested, pointed to a material reality in which the glory of God is *expressed*, much like the *semeia* throughout John expressed Jesus’ identity. In this vein, whatever else worship “in Spirit and Truth” were seen to be, whether simple or fulsome, in a Johannine perspective it would be a materially and symbolically mediated worship, rooted in the activity of the triune God. Though Calvin inferred the notion of “simple” worship from his reading of the gospel, I proposed that a materially simple worship was not the necessary or even the

most persuasive inference of a narrative which recounted incident after incident where Jesus was seen to engage in “excessive” uses of the material realm.

If the logic of Scripture were to open up a way for the arts to feed and form the faithful in the context of public worship, and if Calvin’s theology of materiality were to include potential trajectories for the flourishing of the liturgical arts, then this would be something which in this project we would only be able to glimpse rather than fully realize. It is to this possibility for the liturgical arts that we now turn in the conclusion to this dissertation.

# CONCLUSION

“Just what is it that we expect a work of art to *do* in liturgical space?” – **Trevor Hart**<sup>1</sup>

“If it is the Christian God who comes to be revealed in the ‘re-enchanted’ world, then material forms will no longer be encountered as brute or threatening presences but will instead speak to us in the accents of love.” – **Mark Wynn**<sup>2</sup>

“But love will best judge what may hurt or edify; and if we let love be our guide, all will be safe.” – **John Calvin**<sup>3</sup>

## 6.1 Summary of dissertation

This project began as an examination of Calvin’s ideas about musical instruments in public worship. What was discovered in this initial investigation was a far more complicated but also far more interesting terrain than had originally been imagined. While commentators have often observed that Calvin excluded musical instruments because they belonged to the era of “figures and shadows,” they usually failed to observe critical emphases in Calvin’s thinking. As Calvin reasoned, not only did musical instruments belong to the era of “shadows,” characteristic of an old covenantal worship, they also failed to meet the requirements of new covenantal worship, that it be “spiritual,” “simple” and “articulate.” Two things were observed in a brief examination of these four emphases. First, it was noted that a consistent anxiety arose in Calvin over the capacity of materiality to distort the actual public worship of God and to mislead the worship of the

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<sup>1</sup> Hart, “Unseemly Representations,” 184, emphasis original.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Wynn, “Re-enchanted the World: The Possibility of Materially-Mediated Religious Experience,” in *Theology, Aesthetics, and Culture: Responses to the Work of David Brown*, eds., Robert McSwain and Taylor Worley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 127.

<sup>3</sup> IV.10.30.

faithful in idolatrous or superstitious ways. Second, it was noted that Calvin's language of "shadow," "spiritual," "simple" and "articulate" was far from straightforward. What was needed, then, was a more comprehensive investigation of each of these ideas. Setting aside his concern for "articulate" worship as an issue more directly related to questions of language (i.e., metaphor, parables, poetry, analogy) rather than of materiality, this project focused on the first three emphases: "shadows" (chapters two and three), "spiritual" (chapter four), and "simple" (chapter five).

With the presumption that we would discover the fate of the liturgical arts downstream to the fate of materiality in public worship, this dissertation engaged a concentrated investigation of Calvin's ideas about the material creation (viz. "shadows"), the resurrected body of Christ (viz. "spiritual"), and the material character of worship (viz. "simple"). In addition to an analysis of Calvin's theological ideas, this project undertook three exegetical exercises, focused on 1) the relation between temple, creation and worship in Scripture, 2) the relation of the physical body to the *imago Dei* in Genesis 1, and 3) the relation of John 4:23-24 to the kinaesthetic shape of worship. The result of our exposition of Calvin disclosed two basic patterns of thought. When considered within a liturgical context, Calvin's theology of materiality was marked by a patalogical line of thought, accenting the invisible, immaterial nature of God, and by an emphasis on the interior domain of the human creature, focused on the internal activities of the soul; here also was discovered a negative or ambivalent regard for materiality in public worship. When considered outside of a liturgical context, however, a more explicitly trinitarian pattern of thought marked Calvin's theological frame of mind. Here was discovered a

distinctly christological and pneumatological reading of materiality; here also was discovered a more positive regard for the material creation, for physical bodies, and for material symbols in God's economy.

Turning to the constructive proposals of this dissertation, several conclusions were drawn. While parting with Calvin where we believed that he had failed to take the logical implications of his trinitarian theology far enough, we nonetheless discovered a theology of materiality that offered itself, perhaps surprisingly, as a rich resource for thinking about the nature of Christian worship, while also opening up a trinitarian grammar by which to understand the theological purposes of the liturgical arts. It was discovered that Calvin's "creaturely pessimism" was unwarranted on his own terms; that what the Spirit accomplished in Christ's whole humanity, to which the faithful were made partakers by that same Spirit, augured a much more positive outcome for human bodies in public worship; that the material condition of public worship was not to "get out of the way" but rather to be caught up in the work of the Two Hands of God; that a more integral role for materiality and therefore also the arts was possible on Calvinian terms; and that a trinitarian grammar of thought opened up a fruitful way for understanding the mutual relationship between the logic of public worship and the logic of the arts, where the arts could be seen to serve the purposes of worship in their own way, though not on their own terms. Under this light, even as Calvin perceived that God appropriated material things, such as Eucharistic bread or the "sweetness" of creation, to form and feed the church, so this project has suggested that God may take the liturgical arts to form and feed the church too, and in this way enable them to flourish in the public worship of the faithful.

## 6.2 The flourishing of the liturgical arts on Calvinian terms

The question that our project has left outstanding is this: How may the liturgical arts be said to flourish on Calvinian terms? For some, of course, it may be presumed that there is nothing interesting to discover in Calvin's liturgical theology, so the answer to this question is moot. Others may feel that nothing more *should* be said. Calvin has already said everything that could be said about the liturgical arts in light of his biblical arguments or that his social location pre-determines the sorts of things that might have been said.<sup>4</sup> Still others may dismiss his views as theologically problematic (dualistic, pessimistic, platonic) and therefore inimical to a fruitful investigation of the arts in worship. The wager of this dissertation is that there is in fact something interesting to discover in Calvin's theology. Yet before we can discover what that is, we need to define what is meant by "flourishing." Two senses can be suggested. The first sense of flourishing envisions an increase in the number, kind and uses of the arts in public worship. The second sense of flourishing points to the right conditions in which any kind of liturgical art, whether few or many, whether "high" or "low," will effectively serve the purposes of public worship. In this conclusion, I focus on the second sense.

Hewing closely to Calvin's explicit theological and exegetical concerns, the flourishing of the liturgical arts might look something like this: *As products of human making,*

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<sup>4</sup> On this point it seems to me that Richard Muller, in "Historiography in the Service of Theology and Worship: Toward Dialogue with John Frame," *Westminster Theological Journal* 59 (1997), 309, has confused a pastoral rationale for the liturgical arts with a theological rationale: "In a historical context where musical instruments do not appear as the trappings of ecclesiastical abuse, the theological reasons for excluding them no longer apply. They fall into the realm of *adiaphora* and are permitted as means to glorify God."

*arising out of the stuff of creation, the arts flourish in a liturgical context if they are inextricably linked to Word and Spirit, promote order, exhibit beauty, render pious joy, and prompt the faithful to “lift their hearts” to God together, rather than remain entrapped in self-absorbed concerns, and “return” with God to earth, rather than remain unmoved by the ethical and missional realities which awaited them in the world at large.*

While this represents one way to render Calvin’s liturgical vision, I wish to propose a more synthetic view that extends beyond what Calvin himself imagined but which remains faithful to his trinitarian theology and to his fundamental vision for ecclesial life. I propose the following: *that the liturgical arts flourish on Calvinian terms 1) when they are regarded as creaturely media that 2) participate in the work of the triune God to establish right worship for the church, and that 3) fittingly serve the activities and purposes of public worship.*

### ***6.2.1 The liturgical arts as creaturely media***

While there is no such thing as a theologically neutral understanding of creation, I place this criterion first in order to follow the basic movement of the dissertation: from a consideration of the material creation in general to a consideration of materiality in the specific context of public worship. I argue that the liturgical arts should be seen chiefly as creaturely media, which possess a God-given integrity to be particularly “themselves,” through which the glory of the triune God is disclosed and expressed.

From Calvin’s perspective, creation represents the “hands and feet” of Christ and the abundant provision of God, which the human creature is invited to enjoy for both



“useful” (practical and biological) and “non-useful” (aesthetic) reasons. In this view, creation is a place *for* something: for goodness, for discovery, for beauty, for vitality and fruitfulness, for action, for the worship of God, and for the mediation of God’s presence to humanity. Though sin vitiates humanity’s capacity to enjoy God in and through creation, sin does not rob creation of its capacity to stage a spectacle of God’s powers. And while it is only with the help of the Law, faith in Christ, and the internal witness of the Holy Spirit that the faithful are able to enjoy creation fully, for Calvin the faithful are in fact capable of discerning, and indeed of becoming ravished by, the glory of God *through* creation. If the church’s praise, then, can be said to be ontologically inseparable from creation’s own praise, then I suggest that the purpose of the liturgical arts will not be to “get out of the way” but rather to serve the purposes of the liturgy on behalf of creation. The purpose of liturgical artists will be to offer “articulate” voice to creation’s praise, while never seeking to replace creation’s own praise.<sup>5</sup> Their work will be to welcome the familiar and strange voice of creation into the liturgical sphere in response to the familiar and strange voice of God.

Calvin rightly stresses that the triune God has distinguished an innumerable variety of things in creation and has “endowed each kind with its own nature, assigned functions, appointed places and stations.”<sup>6</sup> This is another way of saying that God has endowed the things of creation with their own integrity that demands careful, respectful and loving attention. One task for liturgical artists, on this view, would be to understand the logics and powers of the material stuff of creation. This would involve asking how color, stone,

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Begbie, “Christ, Creation, and Creativity,” in *Voicing Creation’s Praise*, 169-185.

<sup>6</sup> I.14.20.

wood, metal, fabric, glass, wind “work.” If a combination of empirical and sanctified sight afford the faithful right understanding of creation, as Calvin believes, what then might we observe about the dynamics of creation: its patterns and spontaneity, its simplicity and extravagance, its order and non-order, its spare and ornate quality? Liturgical artists would also want to pay close attention to how human bodies work — how they relate to both material and social environments, how they connect to mind and emotions, how they acquire a “feel for the game” in a liturgical context.<sup>7</sup> They would further want to discern carefully how spaces and dwellings work?<sup>8</sup> How do they “learn” its inhabitants over time and thereby form a *habitus*?

If the liturgical arts function as a vehicle of God’s glory through creation, however, it is only because the triune God enables creation to be *fit for* such a task. The liturgical arts are *capax Dei*: capacitated by God to serve the praise of God on earth as it is in heaven.<sup>9</sup>

### ***6.2.2 The liturgical arts participate in the triune activity***

For conversations revolving around the “disenchantment” of the late modern era, decried by theologians across the ecclesial aisles,<sup>10</sup> Calvin’s trinitarian instincts on the material

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<sup>7</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 66.

<sup>8</sup> Ellen F. Davis, “The Tabernacle is Not a Storehouse: Building Sacred Spaces,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 49 (2006), 306: “a sanctuary has a kind of creative capacity of its own.”

<sup>9</sup> I.15.5. Cf. Leithart, “Embracing Ritual: Sacraments as Rites,” 9: “Grace is not a thing or energy but God’s attitude of favor toward us, manifested in his coming near to us through his Spirit to form and renew covenant friendship, to have personal communion with us, and to offer us the gifts and blessings of Word and Sacrament.”

<sup>10</sup> As representative of this discussion, see, for example, Catherine Pickstock, “Liturgy and the Senses,” in *Paul’s New Moment: Continental Philosophy and the Future of Christian Theology*, eds. John Milbank, Slavoj Žižek, Creston Davis, with Catherine Pickstock (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010), 125-145; *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, eds. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (New York: Routledge, 1999); James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); John Milbank, Graham Ward and Edith Wyschogrod,

creation have much to commend. Over against tendencies to view the liturgical arts as a neutral or negative force, as is often the case in Biblicist or Reformed circles, or as inherently charged with a divine force, as might be the case in Radical Orthodox or Catholic circles, Calvin's account of materiality offers a way to construe the material media of worship in "relational" terms. On this account, it is not that architecture or bodies or choral songs are intrinsically endowed with "spiritual power," but rather that they are caught up in the dynamic activities of the Two Hands of God. With a view to the thesis of this project, it is not so much that the liturgical arts mediate a "transcendent" experience for the faithful; nor is it that they possess automatic capacities to mediate divine grace. Instead it is that the Holy Spirit capacitates these very creaturely things to serve the activities of public worship in order to conform God's people to the image of his Son. The issue at hand here is the *telos* of the liturgical arts: as christologically oriented, pneumatologically ordered, aimed to the glory of the Father. To argue this is to argue, with Trevor Hart, against a "free-for-all in which any and every material form may be appealed to as a likely site of encounter with" God, and instead emphasize what God chooses to do—and indeed *wishes* to do.<sup>11</sup> While Calvin may not articulate this idea himself, it is not unwarranted to say that it remains faithful to the logic of his own trinitarian sensibilities.

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*Theological Perspectives on God and Beauty* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003); Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011); and Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 2007); for Taylor there is a particular blame that Calvin bears for expunging the world of "good" magic, "a world shorn of the sacred" (79-80). For a possible rebuttal of this view, see Laura Smit, "The Depth behind Things': Toward a Calvinist Sacramental Theology," in *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant and Participation*, eds. James K. A. Smith and James H. Olthuis (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 205-227.

<sup>11</sup> Hart, "Unseemly Representations," 178.

*A christological reading of the liturgical arts.*

Because Christ stands at the center of the cosmic order, the created realm can be properly regarded as the beloved world of God. Because Christ is the mediator of “the whole world,”<sup>12</sup> “the lawful heir of heaven and earth, by whom the faithful recover what they had lost in Adam,”<sup>13</sup> and the one who cares and keeps “all of creation in its proper state,”<sup>14</sup> creation discovers itself in motion: from the Father who has caught up the cosmos in the beloved life of his Son by the power of his Spirit. As the incarnate temple of God, Christ also grounds, orients, and gathers up all of creation’s praise in a gift of love to the Father. Christ’s praise, transposed in the church’s praise, under this light, becomes an actual and symbolic prelude to the restoration of creation’s perfect praise. The liturgical arts function hereby as a *partner* of Christ’s praise and a *poet* to creation’s praise: on the one hand, joining Christ’s praise for the Father’s marvelous works as well as offering praise *of* Christ, *through* the Spirit, while, on the other, joining the praise of the cosmos but also translating and transposing that praise through metaphorical and material language. From our study we have also noted that God’s self-revelation in Christ involves a “fullness.” If such “fullness” or “excess” were applied to the liturgical arts, I offer that they would not need to be seen as hindrances but rather as helps to the worship which the Father seeks and which the Spirit makes possible in Jesus’ disciples. I offer also that we might discover ways that seeing and sensing, not just hearing and speaking, adequately reflect Christ’s life, freedom, and mystery.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Comm.* Col. 1:17.

<sup>13</sup> *Comm.* Ps. 8:6.

<sup>14</sup> *Comm.* Heb. 1:3.

<sup>15</sup> Butin, “Constructive Iconoclasm,” 138. Butin summarizes what he believes are Calvin’s own views on this issue in “Calvin’s Humanist Image of Popular Late-Medieval Piety,” 429-430.

*A pneumatological reading of the liturgical arts*

For Calvin, at his best, there is never *mere* materiality. There is always materiality *headed somewhere*, following the gravitational pull of the Spirit's work to bring all things into fellowship with God in Christ. Three things may be suggested for the liturgical arts in light of this. First, if the Spirit is responsible for creation's order, then it is important not to think of this order like that of a military or factory assembly line. It is instead a creative order, capable of surprising and enthralling. The liturgical arts, on this view, may contribute to a dynamic order, yielding new configurations of life and prompting praise to a God whose goodness is revealed through such fecundity. Two, if the Spirit is the one who gifts each thing in creation with a "space to be itself," in the same way that the Spirit enables the Son to occupy a particular space in the triune life, then the church may be encouraged to welcome the particular gifts that a given art medium may offer to public worship, trusting that the Spirit will incorporate all things in Christ and enable each thing to find its place in the kind of worship which the Father seeks. Three, if the Spirit is the one who corrects "the inordinate desires of the flesh," conforming the lives of the faithful to the ordinate life of Christ, then it is with such a confidence in the Spirit's work that the faithful are freed both from undue anxiety over artistic "excesses" and for righteous pleasure in this theater of artistic abundance. To welcome this work of the eschatological Spirit in the liturgical arts is to welcome the work of the one who offers a foretaste of the age to come.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Comm.* Acts 2:2.

### ***6.2.3. The liturgical arts serve the purposes and activities of the liturgy***

To argue that the liturgical arts should be seen as servants of the purposes and activities of public worship (whatever those may be in any given ecclesial context) is to argue against the presumption that the arts should be allowed to do their own thing on their own terms, on the one hand, and against the presumption that the arts have nothing unique to contribute, on the other hand. Positively, it is to argue that the primary purpose of public worship is conformity to Christ by his Spirit, out of which arises communion with God and an intimate commitment to God's purposes for the world, and that the various activities of worship contribute to this purpose in a broad range of ways.

At a fundamental level, the christomorphic orientation to the liturgical arts means that they are caught up in the movement of Christ and the Spirit to enable creation to become a dynamic theater of God's praise. It means that the liturgical arts are caught up in the movement of Christ himself: downward to earth by symbol and the Spirit, as Calvin might put it, outward for the life of the world, and upward in glorious ascent to fellowship with the Father.<sup>17</sup> It means that the liturgical arts do not merely exist but are rather caught up in a network of forces: if left to themselves, disintegrating on account of sin ("the world, the flesh and the devil"), if submitted to God in Christ, re-integrated on account of the healing powers of the Spirit. Against Calvin's worries over the power of the arts to arouse errant passions, I contend that the liturgical arts contribute to the sanctification of the church: to counter the idols of the mind, the forgetfulness of memories, a will that is bent against God, and the disorder of bodies and affections.

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. IV.17.24.

Against Calvin, again, I suggest that the liturgical arts, as sensory attestations of God's holiness, contribute to a distinctly Christian cosmology. As indispensable rather than dispensable material media which liturgically symbolize the new life in Christ, the liturgical arts form the church in a holy imagination, enabling the faithful to live "in Christ," "as Christ," in the rest of their lives.<sup>18</sup>

If the liturgical arts fulfill their purpose by serving the actions of public worship, such as praise and prayer, thanksgiving and confession, then the following may hold, to paraphrase Nicholas Wolterstorff: the liturgy calls for art; any action of the liturgy can be enhanced by art; all art used should enhance one or another action of the liturgy; the character of the action must fit the liturgical action it serves; and fittingness, not style, should primarily govern our decisions about the art used. It will also be true that liturgical arts will serve public worship in their own way, giving a broad range of artistic expression or concentration to liturgical activities.<sup>19</sup> The aim of the liturgical arts, however, is not to take creation's own praise onto some higher plane, but rather to invite the church to delight in creation's "endlessly remarkable quiddity," on behalf of the fundamental purposes of public worship.<sup>20</sup> Anything that risks distracting the faithful from these purposes of public worship requires careful scrutiny.<sup>21</sup> This would include unnecessary multiplication (aesthetic engorgement), hypocrisy (engagement of body without heart and mind), idolatry (confusing Creator and creature), superstition

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<sup>18</sup> Leithart, "Embracing Ritual," 14-15.

<sup>19</sup> Contra: Terry Johnson, *Reformed Worship*, 60-61: "Ostentatious displays of zeal, whether by shouting, by raising hands, by leaping about, or by other physical manifestations, have been restrained in Reformed circles by a sense of what is appropriate in a public worship service, as well as the desire not to draw attention to oneself or to claim too much for oneself."

<sup>20</sup> Bauckham, "Joining Creation's Praise of God," 52.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Abraham Kuyper, "Calvinism and Art," in *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931), 143.

(confusing the Source of power), and the disassociation of Word from any given liturgical art, thereby robbing it of its upward or Godward inertia.

#### **6.2.4 The liturgical arts feed and form the church**

All of this, of course, is simply another way of saying what was proposed at the outset of this project: that the liturgical arts are a means for feeding and forming the church. On Calvinian terms, I offer that the language of feeding is interchangeable with the language of “life-giving.” To be fed by the liturgical arts is to be nourished with new life.

Inasmuch as Calvin believed that God gave attestations of his grace by outward aids, or that the similitude of smell and sound (by way of the bells and pomegranates of the Jerusalem temple) “naturally leads us to the honoring of grace,”<sup>22</sup> it remains sympathetic to Calvin’s trinitarian instincts on the material creation to propose that the liturgical arts also contribute, in some fashion, to a grace-filled life. While caution is needed to move too quickly from Calvin’s Eucharistic theology, with its rich regard for material media, to a theology of the liturgical arts, as material artifacts, it is not unreasonable to suppose that his trinitarian theology opens up a way to perceive the arts in worship as media capable of feeding the faithful in God’s grace, precisely because the Spirit of Christ makes this possible.

On Calvinian terms, the liturgical arts serve the purposes of Christian formation into a holy and hale life.<sup>23</sup> Such a formative view of the liturgical arts would mean that it is never impossible, only perhaps difficult, for a congregation to learn a new medium of

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<sup>22</sup> *Comm.* Exod. 28:31; cf. *Comm.* Ps. 132:7; IV.17.24.

<sup>23</sup> *Comm.* 1 Cor. 14:40.



liturgical art. This would require right training, patience, and a willingness to learn. The case of children and the psalms in Geneva provides a paradigm for sound experiences of growth in a new liturgical art. New liturgical arts *can* be learned and therefore become intelligible over time, and in this way serve to edify the church. Sympathetic to Calvin's belief that the "affluence, sweetness, variety and beauty" of creation could train men and women to choose the good and to reject the evil and thereby to honor the Creator, I argue that the liturgical arts may disclose the knowledge of God, train the church in the "school of beasts," awaken desire for God through the beauty of the cosmos, foster obedience and love, chide ingratitude and pride in humanity's failure to acknowledge God's abundant provision, and summon the faithful to the praise of God in the common life of worship.

### **6.3 For Further Study**

This dissertation certainly raises plenty of questions which we have not been able to adequately address. One future study could explore the historical circumstances of worship in Geneva in relation to the material and artistic character of that worship. Another future study might engage a cross-comparison on the four features identified in Calvin's liturgical theology ("shadows," "spiritual," "simple," "articulate") with both Calvin's contemporaries (fellow Reformers and humanists) and with the received tradition (medieval and patristic). This project surely also invites a focused examination of Calvin's concern for "articulate" worship vis-à-vis the liturgical arts. Here consideration of "rational" and "irrational" language, metaphoric and analogical language will require careful study. In what way, according to Calvin, does the Spirit summon praise from "irrational creatures," prompt edifying adoration from the disciples at

Pentecost who spoke in “unknown tongues,” empower the teaching of Jesus through parables, inspire the writers of Holy Scripture through poetic media? How might the liturgical arts, as largely metaphoric media, promote the “articulate” and therefore edifying worship for the church? How might the idea of accommodated language cohere with ideas of language which fittingly corresponds to human creaturely capacity? Much more could also be said about the liturgical arts by investigating other key exegetical loci in Calvin’s trinitarian theology in general and in his liturgical theology in particular.

An entire study could be generated by a more focused treatment of these questions with respect to religious imagery. Rather distinctive theoretical, rhetorical and practical concerns characterize Calvin’s polemical arguments against visual media in public worship. Might his trinitarian theology open up different ways to conceive of liturgical architecture or liturgical imagery? Whereas intermittent attention has been given in the Reformed tradition to Calvin’s pneumatology in relation to creation, the Eucharist, and liturgical activities such as preaching and praying, no attempt has yet been made to suggest a coherent relationship between Calvin’s doctrine of the Spirit and the liturgical arts. Such a study could be profitably engaged in conversation with three Reformed theologians in particular: John Williamson Nevin (with respect to the Spirit’s role in the material elements of the Eucharist), J. J. von Allmen (with respect to a recovery of the Spirit’s role in the material forms of public worship), and Colin Gunton (with respect to the Spirit’s work in the material creation). This project might also invite an investigation of theological and practical models for the increased variety of arts in public worship, specifically on Calvinian terms. This dissertation, finally, invites a more thoroughly

trinitarian examination of ideas of order, simplicity, togetherness or intelligibility with respect to the liturgical arts than they have often been accorded in the Reformed tradition.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

If the liturgical arts are viewed through the work of the Spirit in the light of Christ, as this dissertation has argued, then the church in public worship is looking not at an escape from the material creation but rather at the preservation, healing and liberation of the material creation so that the liturgical arts, as intensively material media, can be what the Father has eternally purposed for them. In this light, our project has raised the possibility that the liturgical arts might function, on Calvinian terms, as a portrait of God's glory and goodness in and through the elements of the world. By them, the faithful are assisted in their praise of God by "congruous and apt means." Rather than being seen as accommodations to human weakness, the liturgical arts can be seen as media which fittingly symbolize the church's worship in light of the resurrection. Instead of being regarded as concessions to corporeal life this side of the eschaton, they can be regarded as physical media which remain commensurate with the creaturely condition and which function as foretastes of the age to come. In this sense the liturgical arts do not diminish or endanger corporate worship but rather ably serve the economy of God in the public praise of God. They are not incidental but normative to the church's vision of the good, ordered and beautiful world that the Father has remade in his Son by the power of his Spirit. The liturgical arts do not merely illustrate discursive or verbal activities of public worship but rather complement and enhance them in acts of holistic praise. The proper response of the faithful to God's gift of the liturgical arts, finally, is gratitude in the form

of receiving, understanding, stewarding, engaging, making, judging and then offering them back to God.

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