

**CHAPTER THREE:  
JOHN CALVIN AND BEING EMBEDDED WITH CHRIST IN THE FATHER  
THROUGH THE ADVANCE INSTALLMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Chapter two has shown that the Scriptures give a firm biblical basis for cultivating a God-generated life of being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. It showed that the nature of this life is a covenantal life that is restored and deepened by the incarnation and embraced through repentance and faith. Moreover, illustrated that this life is enriched by the sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper and embraces every aspect of life. Furthermore, it demonstrated that this life is a mysterious life that transcends human understanding. In addition, it showed that the significance of being embedded with Christ in the Father through the Holy involves being identified with Christ, living in Christ and Christ living in the believer, being conformed to Christ and resting in Christ.

This chapter focuses on John Calvin's understanding of union with Christ. My reason for focusing on Calvin is because union with Christ through the Holy Spirit is a central motif in his theology. While my denomination is proud to trace its roots back to the teachings of Calvin, it appears that his teaching on union with Christ no longer appears to function as it ought. Thus, by removing the weeds and moss that have grown over and obscured this beautiful teaching over the centuries, I hope to learn from Calvin and recover a primary theological foundation for my own faith life and ministry as well as that of my congregation.<sup>1</sup> This, in turn, may be used by the Lord to encourage others to reconsider Calvin's primary theological premise.

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<sup>1</sup> The metaphor of weeds and moss is a slightly adapted version of a metaphor Gordon Smith used to summarize what I was planning to do in the historical chapter of my study when I discussed my dissertation project with him.

This chapter is not an exhaustive study of everything John Calvin taught on union with Christ, but builds on what has been discovered in the biblical foundations.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, after the historical setting has been sketched, it will use the same principle of division as used in the biblical foundations. It first explores what Calvin taught about union with Christ being a covenantal relationship made possible and deepened by the incarnation, is personally embraced by faith, is enriched by the sacraments, affects all of life and transcends human understanding. Then, it explores what Calvin taught about union with Christ involving identification with Christ, the experience of being in Christ and Christ being in the Christian, leading to conformity to Christ and resting in Christ.

## II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Calvin did not do his theological reflection in a vacuum, but was a child of his time like all of us.<sup>3</sup> Two main spiritualities that were of great influence on Calvin were the

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<sup>2</sup> The citations are not meant to be exhaustive, but illustrative.

<sup>3</sup> For further insight into the subjective or experiential dimensions of Calvin's spirituality, see John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, Vols. 1-3 in *Calvin's Commentaries*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989). See also James A. De Jong, "An Anatomy of All Parts of the Soul: Insights into Calvin's Spirituality from His Psalms Commentary" in Wilhelm H. Neuser (ed.), *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor: Calvin as Confessor of Holy Scripture: Die Referate des Congrès International des Recherches Calviniennes International Congress on Calvin Research Internationalen Kongress für Calvinforschung Vom 20. bis 23. August 1990 in Grand Rapids* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 1-14; Ford Lewis Battles, *Interpreting John Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 343-345. For insight into Calvin's personality, see William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). Bouwsma comes to the conclusion that there are "two Calvins": scholastic and humanist, rationalist and fideist, conservative and revolutionary. For a critique of this conclusion, see Richard A. Muller, "Beyond the Abyss and the Labyrinth: An *Ordo recte docendi*" in Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 79-98. For Calvin as a lover of Jesus Christ and his Gospel, see Bernard Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography*, trans. M. Wallace McDonald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 89-104. On Calvin and mysticism, see Dennis E. Tamburello, *Union with Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard in Columbia Series of Reformed Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994). For insight into Calvin's training in terminist logic, see T.H.L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1975), 9-12. For the *unio mystica* being the center of Calvin's living faith, see Howard G. Hageman, "Reformed Spirituality," in Kenneth J. Collins (ed.), *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 138-157. On Calvin and scholasticism, see Muller, "Scholasticism in Calvin: A Question of Relation and Disjunction" in Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 39-61. On Calvin and Bernard of Clairvaux, see Tamburello as well as Anthony N.S. Lane, *Calvin and Bernard of Clairvaux in Studies in Reformed Theology and History, new series 1* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1996), 1-22; On Calvin and the

*Devotio Moderna* that resulted in the organization of the Brethren of the Common Life and the French humanists.<sup>4</sup>

*Devotio Moderna* spirituality was, first of all, characterized by a desire for a simple Christian way of life. Gerhard Groote (1340-1384), the founder of this movement, for instance, gave away his fortune and became a popular preacher, urging people to penitence. Second, a Christocentric thrust characterized the movement. Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471), the most well known member of this movement, wrote a famous little booklet called *The Imitation of Christ* that urged people to imitate the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Third, the movement opposed external practices of religion by advocating a strong emphasis on the inner life of the soul. Groote, for instance, had a strong distaste for all empty formality. Thus, for him, service of God was not dependent on externals, but upon his knowledge of himself and his consciousness of the presence of the Spirit in him. Fourth, the movement was preoccupied with a constant ascent from the visible to the invisible. Geert Zerbolt van

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Church Fathers, see Anthony N. S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999). For Calvin and the radical Anabaptists, see Willem Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, trans. William J. Heynen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981). For Calvin and the rhetorical tradition, see Quirinus Breen, *Christianity and Humanism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 107-129. For Calvin and medieval theology, see Karl Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin*, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 13-68. For Calvin and classical philosophy, see Charles Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977). For Calvin and Aristotelian logic, see Christopher B. Kaiser, "Calvin's Understanding of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy: Its Extent and Possible Origins" in Robert V. Schnucker (ed.), *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin* (Kirksville, Mont.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1988), 77-92. For resources on French humanism, see footnote 7.

<sup>4</sup> I am indebted to Lucien Joseph Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974), 12-73 for the reconstruction of this historical context. For further reading on *Devotio Moderna*, see David C. Steinmetz, "Devotio Moderna" in Gordon S. Wakefield (ed.), *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), 113-14; Dom Jean Leclercq, et al., *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages in A History of Christian Spirituality, Volume 2* (New York: Seabury Press, 1968), 428-39; Otto Gründler, "Devotio Moderna" in Jill Riat (ed.), *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation in World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest, Volume 17* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 176-193; Ibid, "The Modern Devotion and Cathusian Spirituality" in E. Rozanne Elder (ed.), *The Roots of the Modern Christian Tradition in The Spirituality of Western Christendom, Volume 2* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 27-45. Nikolaus Staubach, "Memores pristinae perfectionis: The Importance of the Church Fathers for *Devotio Moderna*" in Irena Backus (ed.), *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, Vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2001), 405-469.

Zutphen (1367-1398), for instance, wrote *De Spiritualibus Ascensionibus* that outlined different methods of maintaining one's ascent in the spiritual life so that one could arrive at union with God.<sup>5</sup> Fifth, the movement had a fundamental concern with self-knowledge, insisting that self-knowledge was the basis for perfection. Sixth, the movement tended to minimize the importance of the mediatory role of the church in the spiritual life, on the one hand, while it accepted the authoritative teaching of the church on the other hand. Thomas à Kempis, for instance, tended to regard the visible symbols and formal acts of the church as mere externals without value unless accompanied by strong internal feeling.<sup>6</sup> Seventh, the movement fostered an individualistic spirit with its constant quest for immediacy with God through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Although the French humanists adopted many of the beliefs of *Devotio Moderna* spirituality, they also distanced themselves from some.<sup>7</sup> For instance, whereas the distrust

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<sup>5</sup> According to Zerbolt, the soul ascends to union with God from conversion through ordered love and sanctification of the faculties. The means of ascent from one level to the next are self-knowledge, repentance, combat of sin, mortification and the practice of humility and obedience through prayer, spiritual reading and meditation. The highest level is contemplation. See Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin*, 20. While Calvin taught that there are degrees of growth within the soul so that, as the Spirit opens up the soul to God, a believer moves from virtue to tranquility to contemplation, mystical union for Calvin is “not the end of a long road with progressive stages of growth.” Instead, “it is given to all Christians by faith. . . . Thus [for Calvin] every Christian is a ‘mystic,’ living in union with Christ, the way Paul speaks of being ‘in Christ’ in the New Testament.” See Bradley Holt, *Thirsty for God: A Brief History of Christian Spirituality*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 104.

<sup>6</sup> While beyond the scope of this study, it can be noted that proponents of the Emerging Church share some of the same concerns as Thomas à Kempis. See, e.g., Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I am a Missional, evangelical, Post/Protestant, Liberal/Conservative, Mystical/Poetic, Biblical, Charismatic/Contemplative, Fundamentalist/Calvinist, (Ana)Baptist/Anglican, Methodist, catholic, Green, Incarnational, Depressed-Yet-Hopeful, Emergent and Unfinished* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004); Doug Pagitt, *Reimagining Spiritual Formation: A week in the Life of an Experimental Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); Leonard Sweet (ed.), *The Church in Emerging Culture: Five Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> About Renaissance humanism, McGrath writes: “In the twentieth century the term ‘humanism’ has come to mean a philosophy or outlook on life which affirms the dignity of humanity without any reference to God. . . . Remarkably few—if any—humanists of the fourteenth, fifteenth or sixteenth centuries correspond to our modern understanding of ‘humanism’. Indeed, they were generally remarkably religious, if anything concerned with the *renewal* rather than the *abolition* of the Christian faith and the church.” See Alister McGrath, *The Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 52. For further insight into the nature of Renaissance and French legal humanism, see *Ibid.*, 52-59. See also Quirinus Breen, *John Calvin: A Study in French Humanism* (Hamdon, Conn.: Archon Books, 1968). For Calvin’s humanistic

many of the leading men of the *Devotio Moderna* movement had of speculative and arid theology led to a contempt for the intellectual life, this was not the case with French humanists. Jean Gerson (1363-1429), for instance, tried to bridge the gap between theology and piety with his experiential knowledge of God (*theologia mystica*). Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374) developed a wisdom that bridged both the spiritual and intellectual needs of men (*docta pietas*). Erasmus (1466-1536), a Dutchman living in France, developed a new method of theology emphasizing education rather than dogma in his *Enchiridion*. Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (1455-1536), influenced by Erasmus, also occupied himself with breaching the separation between theology and spirituality. In his *Theologia Vivificans* he assigned a preeminent role to the Scriptures and to exegesis of the Scriptures, arguing that the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, is the mystery of Christ Himself. Thus, since the meaning of the Scriptures was Christological, the goal of the Christian life was to become Christlike.

In this context, Calvin did his theological reflection; also, his theological reflection on union with Christ. Drawing on Wilhelm Niesel, Howard Hageman asserts, “Calvin begins with Jesus Christ and our union with him and makes that the starting point from which all his gifts and benefits come.”<sup>8</sup> For instance, commenting on what happens if Christ remains outside of us, Calvin writes:

. . . we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share

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education, see Battles, *Interpreting John Calvin*, 47-64. For Christianity as the true humanism, see Thomas Howard & J. I. Packer, *Christianity: The True Humanism* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1984).

<sup>8</sup> Howard G. Hageman, “Reformed Spirituality” in Kenneth J. Collins (ed.), *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 143.

with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, union with Christ appears to be the heart of Calvin's spirituality.<sup>10</sup>

Calvin uses quite a number of different expressions to communicate the idea of union with Christ. Dennis Tamburello has arranged them all topically or by concept.<sup>11</sup> They are: engrafting, communion, fellowship, in the Spirit, mysterious/incomprehensible, not a mixture of substances, one flesh/spiritual marriage, spiritual union, mystical union growing together/becoming one, union with God, adoption, regeneration and partakers of Christ.<sup>12</sup>

### III. THE NATURE OF BEING EMBEDDED WITH CHRIST IN THE FATHER THROUGH THE ADVANCE INSTALLMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT<sup>13</sup>

#### A. A covenantal relationship

Calvin understands a covenant as a relationship in which God adopts a people to Himself and promises to be their God. Thus, he writes, "This word [covenant or *berith*] is limited to those 'contracts' by which the Lord, who adopted his people, promised that he would be their God . . . the chief part of the word consists of promises by which he adopts

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<sup>9</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. John T. McNeill (ed.), trans. Ford Lewis Battles, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), III, 1, 1:537.

<sup>10</sup> Seng-Kong Tan, "Calvin's Doctrine of Our Union with Christ" *Quodlibet Journal*, Vol. 5 4 (October 2003): 1 at <http://www.quodlibet.net/tan-union.shtml>.

<sup>11</sup> **Engrafting [33 times]** (*insero, insitio*), **communion [19 times]** (*communio, communico*), **fellowship [11 times]** (*societas*), in the Spirit [13 times] **mysterious/incomprehensible [11 times]** (*arcanus, incomprehensibilis, mysterium*, French *secret*); not a mixture of substances [5 times], one flesh/spiritual marriage [8 times] (*caro in carum Christi, coniugium*), spiritual union [9 times] (*coniunctio spiritualis*), mystical union [2 times] (*unio mystica*), growing together/becoming one [8 times] (*coalesce*), union with God [8 times], adoption [3 times] (*adoption*), regeneration [9 times] (*regeneration*), **partakers of Christ [14 times]** (*participes*). See Tamburello, 111-113. **Bold** = expressions used more than 10 times.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Calvin does not use the formulation "being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit." He does, however, frequently use the words and phrases listed in the previous footnote. Since Calvin does teach that believers become partakers of the Trinitarian life by being united with Christ through the Holy Spirit, I consider the essence of this teaching to be articulated in "being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit."

and receives us as his own people.”<sup>14</sup> Christ is both the foundation and pledge of this covenant. Thus, Calvin writes, “Adoption then was the foundation of the covenant; and then Christ was the earnest and pledge of the covenant, as well as of gratuitous adoption.”<sup>15</sup> The new covenant does not destroy the old in substance, but only in form.<sup>16</sup>

Calvin compares this Christ-centered, covenantal relationship to a marriage. Thus, reflecting on Ephesians 5:30-32, he writes, “When Paul said that we are flesh of the flesh of Christ (Eph. 5:30-31), he adds at once: ‘This is a mystery’ (Eph. 5:32). For Paul did not mean to tell in what sense Adam uttered the words, but to set forth under the figure and likeness of marriage the holy union that makes us one with Christ.”<sup>17</sup> Likewise, reflecting on the meaning of the second commandment, Calvin writes, “God very commonly takes on the character of a husband to us. Indeed, the union by which he binds us to himself when he receives us into the bosom of the church is like sacred wedlock which must rest upon mutual

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<sup>14</sup> Calvin. *Commentary on the Book of Isaiah*, Vol. 2 in *Calvin’s Commentaries Volume VII*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 170.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah and The Lamentations*, Vol. 4 in *Calvin’s Commentaries Vol. 10*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1989), 250.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses*, Vol. 1 in *Calvin’s Commentaries Vol. II*, trans. Charles William Bingham (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 463.

<sup>17</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, II, 12.7: 473. Cf. Tamburello, 90. For a history and development of the Institutes, see Jean-Daniel Benoît, “The History and Development of the *Institutio*: How Calvin Worked” in G. E. Duffield (ed.), *John Calvin in Courtenay Studies in Reformation Theology* (Appleford, UK: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1996), 102-117. For Calvin as a theologian, see J.I. Packer, “Calvin the Theologian” in *Ibid.*, 149-175. About the Institutes, Packer writes, “The *Institutio*, which sets out and safeguards this knowledge [of God the Creator and Redeemer in Christ] should accordingly be read as a vast expository sermon with the whole Bible as its text, a systematic confession of divine mysteries learned from God’s own mouth.” *Ibid.*, 172. For the context and method of the Institutes, see Muller, “To Elaborate on the Topics: The context, method and organization of Calvin’s *Institutes*” and “Establishing the *ordo docendi*: The Organization of Calvin’s *Institutes*” in Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 101-117, 118-139. Muller makes the perceptive remark that “Calvin’s theology cannot simply be read out of the *Institutes*.” *Ibid.*, 186. For leading themes of Calvin’s theology, see B. A. Gerrish, “John Calvin” in B.A. Gerrish (ed.), *Reformers in Profile* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1967), 152-161. For viewing the Institutes as a work of art, see Serene Jones, *Calvin and the Rhetoric of Piety* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995). For the structure of Calvin’s theology, see Battles, *Interpreting John Calvin*, 139-246, 347-58.

faithfulness (Eph. 5:29-32).”<sup>18</sup> Noting that Christ benefits only those who have put Him on as their Head, he writes:

This union alone ensures that, as far as we are concerned, he has not unprofitably come with the name of Savior. The same purpose is served by that sacred wedlock through which we are made flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone (Eph. 5:30), and thus one with him. But he unites himself to us by the Spirit alone. By the grace and power of the same Spirit we are made his members, to keep us under himself and in turn to possess him.<sup>19</sup>

This covenantal marriage is meant to lead to the restoration and renewal of God’s image in us.<sup>20</sup> Thus, in his commentary on Colossians 3:10, Calvin writes, “Now, the *image of God* resides in the whole of the soul, inasmuch as it is not the reason merely that is rectified, but also the will. Hence, too, we learn on the one hand, what is the end of our regeneration, that is, that we may be made like God, and that his glory may shine forth in us.”<sup>21</sup> This shining forth of God’s glory is in some sense a “participation in God.”<sup>22</sup> Because the “whole order of creation was inverted”<sup>23</sup> when humankind fell into sin, for Calvin the renewal of God’s image is the same as the restoration of God’s good order for creation. Consequently, the “whole purpose of redemption, and of the process of sanctification especially, is the restoration of a lost order, of the image of God in man.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, Calvin, commenting on Ephesians 4:24 writes:

Adam was at first created after the image of God, and reflected, as in a mirror, the Divine righteousness; but that image, having been defaced by sin, must

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<sup>18</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, II, 8, 18: 385. Cf. Tamburello, 90.

<sup>19</sup> Calvin, III, 1,3:541. Cf. *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>20</sup> For Calvin on the image of God, see T. F. Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Man* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), 35-82; Luke Anderson, “The *Imago Dei* Theme in John Calvin and Bernard of Clairvaux” in Neuser, *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, 178-198; Susan Schreiner *The Theater of His Glory: Nature & the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1991), 55-72; Mary Potter Engel, *John Calvin’s Perceptual Anthropology* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 37-72.

<sup>21</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on The Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians in Calvin’s Commentaries Volume XXIII*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 211-212. For Calvin as a biblical expositor, see T.H.L. Parker, “Calvin the Biblical Expositor” in Duffield, 176-186.

<sup>22</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, II, 2, 1:256; cf. I, 15, 4:189.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, Sermon on Job 5:17-18 cited by Richard, 113.

<sup>24</sup> Richard, 113.

now be restored in Christ. The regeneration of the godly is indeed—as we have formerly explained—nothing else than the formation anew of the image of God in them.<sup>25</sup>

Restored in Christ also means restored to look like Christ, for regarding Christ's human nature, Calvin writes, "even in His human nature, which He has in common with us, the imprint (*effigies*) of the Father's glory has been engraved, that He might transform His members to it."<sup>26</sup> Thus, according to Calvin, "none is to be reckoned among Christ's disciples unless there is seen the Glory of God impressed on him by the likeness (*effigie*) of Christ as by the seal of a ring."<sup>27</sup> Thus, the intent of God entering into covenant with his covenant community is to have the image of God restored in her as fully as it is in Christ so that, like He, she participates in God and reflects his glory.<sup>28</sup> Only in this way is this covenant community able to represent or embody God on this earth.

This covenantal restoration and renewal of the image of God is nurtured in the church. Calvin considers the church to be the mother of believers. Thus, he writes, "For there is no other way to enter into life unless this mother conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly, unless she keep us under her care and guidance until, putting off mortal flesh, we become like the angels."<sup>29</sup> The restoration and renewal of the image of God is impossible without the church because this growth and renewal is nurtured in the communion of saints. Thus, Calvin writes that within the church believers "cleave to

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<sup>25</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on The Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, 296.

<sup>26</sup> Calvin, *The Gospel According to St. John: 11-21 and The First Epistle of John* in *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, trans. T. H. L. Parker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 149; see also Carl Mosser, "The greatest possible blessing: Calvin and deification" *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 55 1 (2002): 41-42.

<sup>27</sup> Calvin, *The Gospel According to St. John: 11-21 and The First Epistle of John*, 149.

<sup>28</sup> Carl Mosser, "The greatest possible blessing: Calvin and deification: *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 55 1 (2002): 42.

<sup>29</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 1, 4:1016.

each other in a mutual distribution of gifts.”<sup>30</sup> As the members of the church use their gifts in “symmetry and proportion” they are increasingly “being united in the one body of Christ” and grow toward “true completeness and perfection.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, union with Christ through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is not just an individual experience, but appreciated and enjoyed more fully in the community of faith.

This covenantal, nurturing role of the church is possible because Christ is the Mediator of the covenant. As such, Christ had the office of prophet, priest and king. As Calvin writes, “Therefore, in order that faith may find a firm basis for salvation in Christ, and thus rest in him, this principle must be laid down: the office enjoined upon Christ by the Father consists of three parts. For he was given to be prophet, king, and priest.”<sup>32</sup> Because Christians share in Christ’s anointing as prophet, priest and king, they, too, function as prophets, priests and kings.<sup>33</sup> Christ already exercised his office of prophet, priest and king in the Old Testament. Thus, reflecting on Habakkuk 3:13, Calvin writes:

When God, therefore, delivered his people from the hand of Pharaoh, when he made a way for them to pass through the Red Sea, when he redeemed them by doing wonders, when he subdued before them the most powerful nations, when he changed the laws of nature in their behalf—all these things he did through the Mediator. For God could not have been propitious either to Abraham himself or to his posterity, had it not been for the intervention of a Mediator.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on The Epistles of Paul, the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Vol. 1 in *Calvin’s Commentaries Volume XX* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1989), 404.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., *Commentaries on The Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* in *Calvin’s Commentaries Volume XXIII*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 281.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., *Institutes*, II, 15, 1:494. See also Robert A. Peterson, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Atonement* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1983), 27-39; John Frederick Jansen, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Work of Christ* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1956), 39-104.

<sup>33</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, II, 15, 24: 495-496, 498-499.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., *The Commentaries of John Calvin on the Prophet Habakkuk*, Vol. 4 in *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets* in *Calvin’s Commentaries Volume XV*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 163. See also Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of The Word and Sacrament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 9. For the trinitarian nature of this covenantal relationship with the Father in Christ through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit, see Philip Walker Butin, *Revelation, Redemption and Response*

Thus, when God's people live in union with Christ, the mediator of the covenant of grace, they live in a covenantal relationship with the Father.<sup>35</sup>

For Calvin, union with Christ is also a covenantal relationship because the unity of the Scriptures lies in the one covenant God made with his people. Thus, he can write, "The covenant made with all the patriarchs is so much like ours in substance and reality that the two are actually one and the same. Yet they differ in the mode of dispensation [*administratio*]." <sup>36</sup> Likewise, reflecting on the new covenant, Calvin writes:

And when [God] says, "I will establish a covenant," we may explain it as though he said "I will set it up again, or restore it afresh: for we say that the New Testament was so distinguished from the Old, that it was founded upon it . . . Since, therefore, Abraham is at this time the father of all the faithful, it follows that our safety is not to be sought otherwise than in that covenant which God establish with Abraham; but afterwards the same covenant was ratified by the hand of Moses. A difference must now be briefly remarked from a passage in Jeremiah (chap. 31:32) namely, because the ancient covenant was abolished through the fault of man, there was need of a better remedy, which is there shown to be twofold, namely, that God should bury men's sins, and inscribe his law on their hearts: that also was done in Abraham's time. Abraham believed in God: faith was always the gift of the Holy Spirit; therefore God inscribed his covenant in Abraham's heart . . . We see then that the difference which Jeremiah points out was really true; and yet the new covenant so flowed from the old, that it was almost the same in substance, while distinguished in form.<sup>37</sup>

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*Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>35</sup> See also Calvin on Gal. 3:19 where he writes, "Since the beginning of the world, God has held no intercourse with men, but through the agency of his eternal Wisdom or Son." Calvin, *Commentaries on The Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 102.

<sup>36</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, II, 10, 2:429. See also Wilhelm H. Neuser, "Calvin's Verständnis der Heiligen Schrift" in Neuser, 45-47; Wallace, 40-60. For Calvin's exegesis of the Old Testament, see David L. Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament in Columbia Series in Reformed Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995).

<sup>37</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Twenty Chapters of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, Vol. 2 in *Calvin's Commentaries*, trans. Thomas Myers (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 176-78. Cf. Neuser, 46. For the relationship between law and grace (or gospel) in Calvin's theology, see James B. Torrance, "The Concept of Federal Theology—Was Calvin a Federal Theologian?" in Neuser, 15-40. Torrance concludes: "Although the seeds of federal theology may be seen in his writings, the federal scheme constitutes at several decisive points such a shift in theology that the latter question must be answered in the negative. . . . Perhaps Calvin has a better understanding of the covenant of grace than do many of his successors in federal Calvinism." *Ibid.*, 16, 37. See also I. John Hesselink, "Law and Gospel or Gospel and Law? Calvin's Understanding of the Relationship" in Robert V. Schnucker (ed.), *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin* (Kirksville, Mont.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, Inc., 1988), 13-32. Hesselink concludes, "For Calvin, as for Luther, there is

### Excursus one: God's providence

According to Calvin, before the Fall into sin, the cosmos was precarious and needed the sustaining providence of God to uphold it. Accordingly, creation has never been independent from God's sustaining power, but always dependent upon it. Thus, God's original creation always contained the possibility of disorder and chaos.<sup>38</sup> With the Fall into sin, actual disorder and chaos entered into the realm of creation and history. Yet, the God who sustained the original order continues to sustain the present order that is invaded by disorder and chaos by bridling and restraining the disorder and chaos.<sup>39</sup>

For this bridling and restraining God uses so-called second causes such as the heavenly bodies, angels and human beings and institutions. Yet, God is never ontologically separated from these second causes, but always ontologically united to them by some sort of "secret influence" or "secret infusion."<sup>40</sup> God does this because God's very nature is to be providential. Moreover, God is more powerful than the powers of disorder and chaos. This power is not cruel and capricious, but loving and reliable.<sup>41</sup> Calvin defended this understanding of God's providence over against those who would merge God and creation in a pantheistic manner and those who separated God and creation in a deistic fashion.<sup>42</sup>

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something intrinsically different between the law and the gospel, and hence neither would probably agree with Barth's famous dictum that 'the law is nothing else than the necessary *form* of the gospel, whose content is grace.'" Ibid., 32. For Calvin's role in the development of covenant theology, see Peter Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology in Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001).

<sup>38</sup> Susan E. Shreiner, *The Theater of His Glory: Nature & Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1991), 22.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 28-30.

<sup>40</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, I. 16, 2:198-99. Schreiner, 31. For a graphic description of the need of the providence of God to curb the powers of disorder and chaos, see Calvin, *Institutes*, I. 17, 10:223; Cf. Schreiner, 32.

<sup>41</sup> Schreiner, 33-34.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 16-21.

This excursus on the providence of God is of importance for our study. Chapter two and three have both noted that being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is a covenantal relationship in which God enters into the life of his covenant community and enables her to participate in his Trinitarian life. This excursus has shown that God's covenant community is able to do this because God uses so-called second causes in the bridling and restraining of the forces of disorder and chaos in this world. This excursus on the providence of God is also important because the general hypothesis of this study deals with ontological dis-embeddedness and embeddedness. Calvin's understanding of the providence of God clearly shows us that God is not ontologically dis-embedded from his creation and the history of the world, but ontologically embedded in it.<sup>43</sup>

### **Excursus two: the soul and the image of God**

Chapter two noted that a human person consists of an immaterial or inner self and a material or outer self. The immaterial or inner self is often called the soul. The peculiar nature of the soul is that it is multidimensional and highly mobile. This manifests itself, for instance, in the fact that various words used for the soul in the Scriptures such as heart, mind, spirit and will. It was noted that this multidimensionality entails we should never reduce the soul to one particular function, but realize the soul functions in a variety of ways. Moreover, we should realize that when one function is dominating, the other functions of the soul operate along with this function.

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<sup>43</sup> Scriptural references for God and his covenant community being ontologically connected as God providentially sustains and governs the world and the history of the world can be found in chapter two dealing with being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit being a covenantal relationship. Also the same section in this chapter contains Scriptural references.

What is Calvin's understanding of the soul? Calvin does not want a difficult definition from the philosophers, but a simple and straightforward one. Thus, he defines the soul in this manner:

. . . the soul is an incorporeal substance . . . not spatially limited . . . set in the body . . . as in a house . . . that it may animate all its parts and render its organs fit and useful for their actions, but also that it may hold the first place in ruling man's life, not only with respect to the duties of his earthly life, but at the same time arouse him to honor God. . . But, without controversy, just as man was made for meditation upon the heavenly life, so it is certain that the knowledge of it was engraved upon his soul. And if human happiness, whose perfection it is to be united with God, were hidden from man, he would in fact be bereft of the principal use of his understanding.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, also according to Calvin, the soul is a person's immaterial self that animates and governs a person's life. Moreover, the knowledge of the heavenly life, as a supernatural gift, is engraved upon the soul. Furthermore, the principle use of the soul is to be united with God.

This supernatural gift of the knowledge of the heavenly life is an aspect of the image of God in human beings. Thus, Calvin writes, "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>45</sup> The true nature of this image is to be derived from what the Scriptures say about its renewal through Christ because "the end of regeneration is that Christ should reform us to God's image."<sup>46</sup> Drawing on what the Scriptures say in Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:24, Calvin sees the true nature of this image "in the light of the mind, in the uprightness of the heart and in the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., *Institutes*, 1, 15, 6:192. See also II, 1, 5 where Calvin writes, "As it was the spiritual life of Adam to remain united and bound to his Maker, so estrangement from him was the death of his soul." For Schreiner on Calvin on the image of God and the nature of the soul, see Schreiner, 55-72.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 1, 15, 3:186.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 1, 15, 4:189.

soundness [holiness] of all the parts.”<sup>47</sup> And he adds, ‘For although I confess that these forms of speaking are synecdoches [= figures of speech where the part is put for the whole or the whole for the part], yet this principle cannot be overthrown, that what was primary in the renewing of God’s image also held the highest place in the creation itself.’<sup>48</sup> Thus, according to Calvin, being recreated in the image of God includes receiving once again the supernatural gift of the heavenly life and having it embedded into us.

For Calvin, the soul is “the living core of the believer’s subjective feelings, attitudes, responses, and convictions.”<sup>49</sup> Calvin’s term of preference is “‘affections’ which includes our sentiments, emotions, feelings, and insights.”<sup>50</sup> The soul is to be kept close to God by directing its affections on God alone.<sup>51</sup>

The soul can direct its affections on God alone because the supernatural gift of the heavenly life is the very life of God Himself in the soul. In his *The Starting Point of Calvin’s Theology*, George Tavard summarizes what Calvin believes about God being the life of the soul of believers in the following manner.

It is through Christ that God has revealed himself to be the life of the faithful soul. By the gift of himself to the faithful as their life God has placed in us the principle of justification and of sanctification. Thus the soul can live the divine life already on earth as it enjoys a ‘residence’ or dwelling that is from God, and is comparable to a garment. This residence, inchoate [unclear, unformed, undeveloped, embryonic] in this life, is eternal in the heavens. When we are fully in God’s heavenly mansion we will no longer walk by faith but by sight. But since this divine residence is inchoate in faith, it is built in faith during the present life, only to be perfected after death. There, in the embodied soul of our earthly living, is where the enrichment begins that will lead to the vision of God.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>49</sup> De Jong, “An Anatomy of All Parts of the Soul”, 5

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> De Jong writes, “The closeness of the soul and the heart in [Calvin’s] thinking allows us to cite his heart-hand-motto, ‘Cor meum tibi offere Domine, promte et sincere,’ as closely paralleling his advice for keeping our souls.” Ibid..

<sup>52</sup> George H. Tavard, *The Starting Point of Calvin’s Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 77.

Thus, according to Calvin, the soul is immortal. The supernatural gift of the heavenly life is a sort of embedded eternal building a believer has today already. When he dies, he continues to have this eternal building in heaven (2 Cor. 5:2-4).<sup>53</sup>

According to Calvin, a Christian is called to nurture spiritual growth in this life. He teaches this truth using Augustine's analysis of the soul. Like Augustine, Calvin believes there are degrees of growth within the soul. Thus, he writes:

And it does not displease me that elsewhere, pedagogically, it is taught by him [Augustine], if at least he has a sane and modest interpreter, that there are many degrees of the soul: first, animation, second, sense; third, art; fourth, virtue, fifth, tranquility, sixth, entrance; seventh, contemplation.<sup>54</sup>

Because the soul is made for communion with God, it is constantly searching for God, first moving towards God and then resting in God. This structure of the soul's movement is not to be considered a law, but simply to teach that the soul is called to make progress in this life. This progress does not stop when a believer dies.

This excursus on the soul is important because chapter two noted that God is anthropologically able to enter into covenant with humankind since He created human being with a soul that can receive his Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. Calvin's teaching on the soul confirms this anthropological ability of human beings to

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<sup>53</sup> Tavad writes, "From Greek philosophy he [Calvin] has retained Plato's thesis that the soul is a stranger to the body that imprisons it during the present life." Cf. Ibid. Schreiner, however, writes, "Calvin's references to the body as a prison (as found in the *Psychopannychia*) find their balance in his comments on Psalm 139 and Job 10:7-15." See Schreiner, 70.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 97. Tavad notes: "This sevenfold division of the soul comes directly from the *De quantitate animae*, a philosophical dialogue with his friend Evodius which is one of Augustine's early works. The first three degrees correspond to the unfolding of natural capacities. . . . It's natural for the soul to animate its body, to organize its sensations, to develop a knowledge and practice of arts and sciences. At the fourth level the spiritual realm is opened, as the soul, understanding the ineluctability of death and realizing its own unworthiness before God, begins to strive for what is morally good. This marks a transition from the natural to the spiritual, from the function of the soul as psyche, related to the bodily senses, to its function as intellect, reflecting on itself and on God. The last three degrees are strictly spiritual, the soul entering into the contemplation of God, who is the ultimate Truth. Ibid., 97-98. It is beyond the scope of this study to compare Calvin's seven degrees of the soul to the degrees taught by the medieval mystics. Let it suffice that Tavad posits that there is a remarkable similarity. Cf., e.g., 79, 89-100.

receive the life of the Trinity in Christ through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, chapter two noted that when humankind fell into sin, something broke very deep within Adam and Eve's soul. It noted that the Fall into sin involved a dis-membering and dis-embedding from the orderly, gravitational center of life that led to a dis-orderly, dis-embedded of life. Consequently, God's covenant community could no longer glorify God by embodying his divine nature. Calvin's teaching on the soul confirms this ontological rupture that took place with the Fall into sin for the Fall into sin involved a loss of the image of God in the soul of humankind. This loss involved the loss of the supernatural gift of the heavenly knowledge engraved upon and embedded in the soul.<sup>55</sup>

This section also noted, Jesus, through his incarnation, life and death, re-members and re-embeds his covenant community into her gravitational center again. Jesus begins to heal what was broken by the Fall into sin because being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit involves being re-remembered and re-embedded in the divine life of the Trinity. As a re-remembered and re-embedded community, God's people are able to live out their creational goal of glorifying God by embodying his divine nature through the power of the Holy Spirit. Calvin's teaching on the restoration of the image of God confirms this because this restoration involves a restoration of the original order of the supernatural gift of knowledge, righteousness and holiness in the soul.

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<sup>55</sup> It is beyond the scope of this study to delve further into Calvin's understanding of the loss of the image of God. Let it suffice that Calvin also understood the image of God having a substantive, relational and functional aspect. When he speaks about the image of God being lost, he is referring the loss of the substantive, supernatural gift of the heavenly knowledge engraved upon the soul. Obviously, the loss of this substantive, supernatural gift of grace has consequences for the relational and functional aspects of the image of God. But Calvin consistently speaks about remnants of original order of creation engraved on the soul. These remnants of the divine image not only make humankind inexcusable on the Day of Judgment, but also bridle and restrain the forces of chaos and disorder in society. Moreover, since immortality also belongs to the divine image, this aspect of the divine image is not lost since all human beings have been given a soul that will never die.

### Excursus three: the knowledge of God and the knowledge of self

Calvin begins his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* by asserting that without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God. Thus, he writes:

Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern. In the first place, no one can look upon himself without immediately turning his thoughts to the contemplation of God, in whom he ‘lives and moves’ (Acts 17:28). . . . indeed, our very being is nothing but subsistence in the one God. . . [Yet] we cannot seriously aspire to [God] before we begin to become displeased with ourselves.<sup>56</sup>

After this initial thesis that without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God, Calvin posits that without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self. Thus, he writes, “Again, it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God’s face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinize himself.”<sup>57</sup>

He continues with:

For we always seem to ourselves righteous and upright and wise and holy—this pride is innate in all of us—unless by clear proofs we stand convinced of our own unrighteousness, foulness, folly, and impurity. Moreover, we are not thus convinced if we look merely to ourselves, and not also to the Lord who is the sole standard by which this judgment must be measured.<sup>58</sup>

Calvin begins his little work on the immortality of the soul—*Psychopannychia*<sup>59</sup>—with the same introductory words of the *Institutes*. He writes:

Nearly the whole sum of our wisdom, which must be held to be particularly true and solid, consists of two parts, the knowledge of God and of ourselves. Besides, since they are connected by a multitude of links, it is not easy to discern which precedes the other and gives birth.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 1, 1:35.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 1, 2:37.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> This booklet can be found at [http://www.lgmarshall.org/Calvin/calvin\\_psychopannychia.html](http://www.lgmarshall.org/Calvin/calvin_psychopannychia.html).

<sup>60</sup> Translated from Latin by Tavard, 5.

So, which one does come first? According to Tavad, for Augustine, knowledge of self seems to come before knowledge of God. Thus, Calvin summarizes Augustine's position as: "It is in myself, Augustine had noted, that I know God, and the better I know myself the better I will know God."<sup>61</sup> Calvin, however, reverses the order. The more he knows himself to be re-membered and re-embedded into the Father by being a member of Christ's body, the better he knows himself. "Nonetheless," Tavad suggests, "Calvin's approach is exactly that of Augustine insofar as both are eager to know nothing other than God and the soul, as Augustine had written: 'I want to know God and the soul. –Nothing more?—Nothing at all.'"<sup>62</sup> Tavad adds, "The chief difference in the starting point of the two theologians is that, unlike Calvin, Augustine does not seek to establish the nature of the soul on the basis of its immortality but rather on that of its potential for knowledge."<sup>63</sup>

This knowledge of God is a knowledge accommodated to our human capacity much like we accommodate ourselves to little children and speak to them at their level. Thus, Calvin writes, ". . . as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in a measure to 'lisp' in speaking to us . . . such forms of speaking do not so much express clearly what God is like as accommodate the knowledge of him to our slight capacity. To do this he must descend far beneath his loftiness."<sup>64</sup> Consequently, because we are creatures, we simply cannot know

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 13, 1:121.

God as He is, but only as He is “toward us” or in relation to us.<sup>65</sup> Thus, for Calvin, knowledge of God is relational or “existential” knowledge of God.<sup>66</sup>

This observation is important because the general hypothesis of this study is that it appears that many Reformed Christians not only do not experience what living a God-generated life of being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is, but also do not intentionally live this kind of life. Instead of intentionally living God-generated lives embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit, many Christians appear to live dis-embedded, self-generated lives. If my hypothesis is true, then part of the biblical-theological solution to this ontological dis-embeddedness between believers and God is a better knowledge of God and of themselves. More precisely, part of the biblical-theological solution is the more believers know themselves to be re-membered and re-embedded to the Father by being embedded into Christ’s body by faith, the better they know themselves. And this knowledge of themselves has everything to do with the nature of the soul.

### **B. A relationship re-membered, re-embedded and deepened through the incarnation**

Reflecting on humankind’s hopeless condition and the necessity of the incarnation, Calvin writes:

The situation would surely have been hopeless had the very majesty of God not descended to us, since it was not in our power to ascend to Him, Hence, it

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., I, 10, 2:97; cf. Murphy, 173. In this regard, T. H. L. Parker notes, “From its very beginning, the *Institutio* teaches and practices a theology of revelation.” See T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin* (London: Continuum, 2005), 14. Drawing on Parker, Murphy adds, “The question to be asked, according to Calvin, is not ‘What is God’ (*quid sit Deus*), but ‘What is God like?’ (*qualis sit Deus*).” Cf. Murphy, 173.

<sup>66</sup> See Edward Downey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 24. Cf. Murphy, 174. Murphy adds, “It is important to mention that Calvin’s full-orbed doctrine of the knowledge of God places a central premium upon *loving* God. To truly *know* God is to *love* God. Theological knowledge is not merely propositional in nature or a matter of mere intellectual assent (*assensus*); it must also be experiential.” Ibid.

was necessary for the Son of God to become for us, “Immanuel, that is God with us” (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23), and in such a way that his divinity and our human nature might by mutual connection grow together. Otherwise the nearness would not have been near enough, nor the affinity sufficiently firm, for us to hope that God might dwell with us.<sup>67</sup>

Accordingly, the Son of God became the Son of man “to impart what was his to us, and to make what was his by nature ours by grace”<sup>68</sup> so that He “might join us to God.”<sup>69</sup> Thus, in the person of Christ, God and humankind are re-membered and re-embedded. Re-membering and re-embedding God’s covenant community to God is the reason why Christ was given all authority. Thus, Calvin writes, “The Father has given all power to the Son that he may by the Son’s hand govern, nourish, sustain us, keep us in his care, and help us. Thus, while for the short time we wander away from God, Christ stands in our midst, to lead us little by little to a firm union with God.”<sup>70</sup>

For Calvin, this re-embedding in Christ appears to be a union of substance for in his commentary on Ephesians 4:31, he writes, “As Eve was formed out of the substance of her husband, and thus was a part of himself; so, if we are the true members of Christ, we share his substance, and by this intercourse unite into one body.”<sup>71</sup> However, commenting on the same verse he rejects a real mixture of substances when he writes, “Such is the union between us and Christ, who *in some sort* makes us partakers of his substance . . . so that from him we derive our life.”<sup>72</sup> What this partaking *in some sort* of Christ body means becomes

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<sup>67</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, II, 12, 1: 464-65. Cf. Seng-Kong Tan, 2. On the need or cause of the incarnation, see also Paul van Buren, *Christ in our Place: The Substitutionary Character of Calvin’s Doctrine of Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 3-10.

<sup>68</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, II, 12, 2: 465. Cf. Seng-Kong Tan, 2. In the Gospels the phrases Son of God and Son of Man both refer to divine being (cf. Daniel 7). It is later in Christian parlance that Son of Man comes to refer to Christ’s humanity. For Calvin’s refutation of Osiander who maintained that Christ would have become man even if Adam had not sinned, see *Institutes*, II, 12:464-474.

<sup>69</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 13, 24:151.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 15, 6: 500. Mosser, 43.

<sup>71</sup> Calvin., *Commentaries on The Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 323. Cf. Tamburello, 87.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 324 (emphasis added). Cf. Tamburello, 87. Tamburello mistakenly refers to Calvin commenting on verse 32 while in actual fact he is still commenting on verse 31.

clear when Calvin distances himself from Osiander's doctrine of essential righteousness.<sup>73</sup>

Then he writes, "For we hold ourselves to be united with Christ by the secret power of his Spirit. That gentleman [Osiander] conceived something bordering on Manichaeism, in his desire to transfuse the essence of God into man . . . He says that we are one with Christ. We agree. But we deny that Christ's essence is mixed with our own."<sup>74</sup> Thus, for Calvin, our being re-embedded into Christ is a spiritual union whereby He communicates Himself and all his blessings to us. This spiritual union, according to Calvin, is "closer than that of husband and wife."<sup>75</sup>

When Calvin, however, refers to our being re-embedded into Christ as a spiritual union, he does not mean a metaphorical union, but a real one. Commenting about our being re-embedded into Christ being the ground of our certainty of faith, Calvin writes, "Christ is not outside us but dwells within us. Not only does he cleave to us by an indivisible bond of

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<sup>73</sup> Todd Billings gives helpful insight into Calvin's dispute with Osiander. He writes, "Calvin does not start writing against Osiander until he is accused of being Osiandrian in his theology by his Lutheran opponents after Osiander's death in 1552. Indeed, although Calvin seeks to downplay his common ground with Osiander, their teaching had similarities: Osiander, like Calvin, appropriated the Johannine language of indwelling; he emphasized the importance of a growth in holiness as one receives the gift of faith; and he wanted to appropriate Augustine's theology of grace." Billings continues, "In addition, like Calvin, Osiander was fond of the language of 'participation,' seeing justification as participation in Christ's righteousness. But for Osiander this meant that justification could not be forensic. For Osiander, a person is called righteous when Christ, as God's righteousness, indwells the believer. Thus, the divine nature of Christ is possessed by the believer—Osiander's notion of 'essential righteousness.' The original goodness of humanity is restored through this union with Christ by partaking of Christ's divine nature. Justification does not mean forensic pardon of a sinner by grace, but rather the possession of Jesus Christ's divine righteousness by the infusion of the divine to the believer. And, holding so much in common with Osiander, Calvin was condemned by some of the same Lutherans as being 'Osiandrian.' J. Todd Billings, "United with God through Christ: Assessing Calvin on the Question of Deification," *Harvard Theological Review*, 98:3 (2005): 325-26.

<sup>74</sup> Calvin., *Institutes*, III, 3, 11: 730. Cf. Tamburello, 87-88.

<sup>75</sup> Calvin, *Commentary on The Epistles of Paul, the Apostle to the Corinthians*, 219. Cf. Tamburello, 88. Billings notes, "In emphasizing that the Spirit is the bond for our union with God in Christ, Calvin has several concerns. First, he wants to keep a Nicene trinitarian theology; Calvin fears that Osiander's account of 'participation in Christ' leaves out the essential role of the Spirit. But Calvin is also expressing a concern to maintain a creature-creator distinction amidst our union with Christ. Because Osiander denies a role to the human nature of Christ in justification, Christ's own human nature becomes dangerously de-emphasized. Not only does this raise concerns related to Chalcedonian orthodoxy (with a 'union' without 'confusion' between divinity and humanity), but if believers participate solely in the divine nature, their perfected humanity in redemption seems to disappear. Billings, 327.

fellowship, but with a wonderful communion, day by day, he grows more and more into one body with us, until he becomes completely one with us.”<sup>76</sup>

Through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit this real union is an ontological union. In order to understand this we need to have some insight into a methodological principle operating in Calvin’s theological anthropology. Alister McGrath finds that the Chalcedonian axiom of *distinctio sed non separatio* underlies Calvin’s anthropology.

McGrath writes:

It is however, evident that throughout his discussion of the relation of God and humanity Calvin regards a single paradigm as normative. The paradigm in question is that made available by the incarnation, specifically the union without fusion of divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. Time and time again, Calvin appeals to the Christologically grounded formula, *distinctio sed non separatio*; at this point, two ideas may be *distinguished* but not *separated*.<sup>77</sup>

This explains Calvin’s distinction of essence and quality. Commenting on 2 Peter 1:4, he writes, “But the word *nature* here is not essence but quality.”<sup>78</sup> Thus, when we partake of God’s divine nature, we are not partaking of his essence, but qualities. Lewis Smedes summarizes Calvin’s position well when he writes:

When he [Calvin] speaks of getting the very *substance of the life* of Christ, we must understand that for him the *moral qualities* of righteousness and holiness *are* the substance of personal life. For a man’s authentic self is expressed in action, in moral and religious relationships. . . . *Righteousness* is the substance of human life. To be a man is to be obedient. And to be obedient is to be righteous. Only by means of a Christology of personal atonement can one conceive of true manhood in principle restored. Only by means of a union with Christ is true manhood, which is to say, obedience and gratitude, in fact regained.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., *Institutes*, III, 2, 24: 570-571. Cf. Ibid., 89.

<sup>77</sup> McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 149. Cf. Seng-Kong Tan, 1.

<sup>78</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, in *Calvin’s Commentaries Volume XXII*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 371. Cf. Seng-Kong Tan, 5

<sup>79</sup> Lewis B. Smedes, *All Things Made New: A Theology of Man’s Union with Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 26-27; see also his *Union with Christ: A Biblical View of the New Life in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 12.

Thus, our being re-embedded into Christ is “not substantial, but nonetheless, it is still ontological as participation in the nature involves a sharing in the properties of the essence.”<sup>80</sup>

Becoming a partaker of God’s divine nature or sharing in the properties of God’s essence is a great honour that our minds can never fully grasp. Thus, still commenting on 2 Peter 1:4, Calvin writes, “For we must consider from whence it is that God raises us up to such a height of honour. We know how abject is the condition of our nature; that God, then, should make himself ours, so that all his things should in a manner become our things, the greatness of his grace cannot be sufficiently conceived in our minds.”<sup>81</sup> All the more, since this is nothing short of a sort of deification, as Calvin continues. “Let us then mark” he writes, “that the end of the gospel is, to render us eventually conformable to God, and, if we may so speak, to deify us [*quasi deificari*].”<sup>82</sup> Consequently, Calvin considers participation in God’s divine nature to be the greatest possible blessing.<sup>83</sup>

This is understandable because, according to Calvin, this is what glorification of those who are live embedded in Christ through faith involves. Commenting on 2 Thessalonians 1:10, Calvin writes that Christ may be glorified in those who live in union with Him means “that he may irradiate [= shine upon] them with his glory, that they may be partakers of it.”<sup>84</sup> Accordingly, “Christ will not have this glory for himself individually; but it will be common

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<sup>80</sup> Seng-Kong Tan, 5.

<sup>81</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, 371.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 371; cf. Mosser, 41. Billings writes, “Gregory [of Nyssa], like Calvin thinks that it is hyperbole to say that ‘humans become God,’ because a distinction between the creator and creature always remains. Thus, Calvin affirms ‘a kind of deification’ (*quasi deificari*), rather than a literal deification.” Billings adds, “While many other theologians with a doctrine of deification share the commitment to maintain the creator-creature distinction, Gregory and Calvin are cautious with terminology of deification because of the misunderstanding that takes place when the terms are understood literally rather than hyperbolically.” Billings, 333.

<sup>83</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles* 370. “. . . nothing can be conceived better.” Cf. Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, 318; Cf. Mosser, 45.

to all the saints . . . gather[ing] them into the same fellowship with himself.”<sup>85</sup> Commenting on 2 Thessalonians 1:12, Calvin writes in the same manner:

What he adds, however, is more especially worthy of our notice, that those who have advanced the glory of Christ will also in their turn be glorified in him. For in this, first of all, the wonderful goodness of God shines forth—that he will have his glory be conspicuous in us who are covered with ignominy. This, however, is a twofold miracle, that he afterwards irradiates [= shines upon] us with his glory, as though he would do the same to us in return.<sup>86</sup>

This eschatological glorification begins already in this life as through the Spirit we are increasingly transformed to the image of God. Commenting on 2 Corinthians 3:18, Calvin writes:

. . . we must constantly be making progress both in the knowledge of God, and in conformity to His image, for this is the meaning of the expression—from glory to glory . . . that the advancement of this restoration may be continually going forward in us during our whole life, because God makes his glory shine forth in us by little and little.<sup>87</sup>

In his commentary on Romans 5:2, Calvin explicitly links glorification to partaking of the divine nature. He writes, “The hope of the glory of God has shone upon us through the gospel, which testifies that we shall be participators of the Divine nature; for when we shall see God face to face, we shall be like him (2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Jn 3:2).”<sup>88</sup> In his *Institutes*, Calvin links glorification, participation in the divine nature and union with Christ. There he writes, “Indeed, Peter declares that believers are called in this to become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 2:1). How is this? Because ‘he will be . . . glorified in all his saints, and will be marveled at in all who have believed.’” (2 Thess. 1:10).<sup>89</sup> And he adds, “If the Lord will

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<sup>85</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians* 318; Cf. *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, *Commentaries on the Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians* 321; cf. *Ibid.*.

<sup>87</sup> Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Vol. 2, in *Calvin’s Commentaries XX*, trans. John Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 187.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans in Calvin’s Commentaries Volume XIX*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 189; Cf. Mosser, 45.

<sup>89</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 25, 10:1005; cf. Mosser, 45.

share his glory, power, and righteousness with the elect—nay, will give himself to be enjoyed by them and, what is more excellent, will somehow make them to become one with himself, let us remember that every sort of happiness is included under this benefit.”<sup>90</sup>

Participating in God’s divine nature and the glorification of our humanity occurs though our being embedded in the humanity of Jesus that is infused with the divine life of the Logos. Thus, commenting on Jesus saying that He is the bread of life that has come down from heaven that will nourish a person with eternal life (Jn 6:48, 50, 51), Calvin writes, “By these words he teaches not only that he is life since he is the eternal Word of God, who came down from heaven to us, but also that by coming down he poured that power upon the flesh, which he took in order that from it participation in life might flow unto us.”<sup>91</sup> This did not cease when Christ ascended into heaven. Calvin writes:

Carried up into heaven, therefore, he withdrew his bodily presence from our sight (Acts 1:9), not to cease to be present with believers still on their earthly pilgrimage, but to rule heaven and earth with a more immediate power. But by his ascension he fulfilled what he had promised: that he would be with us even to the end of the world. As his body was raised up above all the heavens, so his power and energy were diffused and spread beyond all the bounds of heaven and earth.<sup>92</sup>

Thus, according to Calvin, “the flesh of Christ is like a rich and inexhaustible fountain that pours into us the life springing forth from the Godhead itself.”<sup>93</sup> It is “‘the channel’ by which the divine life flows into us.”<sup>94</sup> Consequently, Jesus is both the end and the means of our faith. As “God, he [Jesus] is the destination to which we move, as man, the path by which we go.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 1005; cf. Ibid., 46.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., *Institutes*, IV, 17, 8: 1368. Seng-Kong Tan, 6.

<sup>92</sup> Calvin., *Institutes*, II, 16, 14: 523.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., IV, 17, 9: 1369.

<sup>94</sup> Tamburello, 93.

<sup>95</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 2, 1: 544. Cf. Tamburello, 92 and Kevin Dixon Kennedy, *Union with Christ and the Extent of the Atonement in Studies in Biblical Literature 48* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 122-131.

Yet, in order for Jesus' flesh to function as an inexhaustible fountain of life from the Godhead, Jesus needs to be obedient. The incarnation itself is not sufficient to transform his flesh into such a fountain. Thus, the incarnation functions as the foundation for this obedience.<sup>96</sup> Consequently, Christ redeemed us through the obedience He practised throughout his life.<sup>97</sup> Reflecting on Galatians 4:4, Calvin writes:

Christ the Son of God, who might have claimed to be exempt from every kind of subjection, became subject to the law. Why? He did so in our room, that he might obtain freedom for us. A man who was free, by constituting himself a surety, redeems a slave: by putting on himself the chains, he takes them off from the other. So Christ chose to become liable to keep the law, that exemption from it might be obtained for us; otherwise it would have been to no purpose that he should come under the yoke of the law, for it certainly was not on his own account that he did so.<sup>98</sup>

This obedience of Christ, offered up during his whole life, finds its final proof in his death. Commenting on the effect of Christ's death, Calvin writes:

The principal office of Christ is briefly but clearly stated; that he takes away the sins of the world by the sacrifice of his death, and reconciles men to God. There are other favours, indeed, which Christ bestows upon us, but this is the chief favour, and the rest depend on it; that, by appeasing the wrath of God, he makes us to be reckoned holy and righteous. For from this source flow all the streams of blessings . . . .<sup>99</sup>

Thus, Jesus' resurrected flesh is like a rich and inexhaustible fountain that pours into us the life springing forth from the Godhead itself because from it we receive the grace of his obedience. It is through Jesus' resurrected flesh that we become a member of Christ and embedded into Him.

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<sup>96</sup> van Buren, *Christ in our Place*, 29. For Calvin, although the incarnation functions as the foundation for obedience, it is technically the first step of Christ's obedience. See van Buren, 27-29.

<sup>97</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, II, 16, 5:507. Smedes asks, "Does it not fit the situation perfectly [i.e., Calvin's Christology slanted towards obedience] that Calvin should discuss in copious detail the significance of the moral law right after he has talked of human sin and just before he introduces Christology?" See Smedes, *All Things Made New*, 24.

<sup>98</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on The Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 118-19. Cf. van Burnen, *Christ in our Place*, 50.

<sup>99</sup> Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, Vol. 1, 63.

Becoming embedded in Christ through being a member of his resurrected flesh has a Trinitarian goal, i.e., those who live in union with Christ may share with Christ in the life of the Trinity. Commenting on John 15:9, Calvin writes, “We ought therefore to cast our eyes on Christ, in whom will be found the testimony and pledge of the love of God; for the love of God was fully poured out on him, that from him it might flow to his members.”<sup>100</sup> And he adds, “So, then, we may contemplate in him, as in a mirror, God’s paternal love towards us all; because he is not loved apart, or for his own private advantage, but that he may unite us with him to the Father.”<sup>101</sup> Commenting on John 17:26, Calvin writes, “It is an invaluable privilege of faith, that we know that Christ was loved by the Father on our account, that we might be made partakers of the same love, and might enjoy it for ever.”<sup>102</sup> Commenting on John 17:22, Calvin writes:

To comprehend aright what was intended by saying, that Christ and the Father are one, we must take care not to deprive Christ of his office as Mediator, but must rather view him as he is the Head of the Church, and unite him with his members. Thus will the chain of thought be preserved, that, in order to prevent the unity of the Son with the Father from being fruitless and unavailing, the power of that unity must be diffused through the whole body of believers.<sup>103</sup>

Thus, becoming a member of Christ’s resurrected body is meant to lead to being re-membered and re-embedded into the communal life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

#### **Excursus four: creation as the theater of God’s glory**

According to Calvin, because God embedded Himself in creation, it has a revelatory function. He uses a number of different metaphors to capture this revelatory function of

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, Vol. 2 in *Calvin’s Commentaries Volume XVIII*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 112; cf. Mosser, 46.

<sup>101</sup> Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, 112; cf. Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 189; cf. Ibid., 47.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, 184; cf. Ibid..

creation. First, he uses the metaphor of a painting. Having encouraged his readers not to rack their brains about God, but rather to contemplate Him in his works, Calvin writes, “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.”<sup>104</sup> Second, Calvin uses the image of creation being a mirror of divinity. Commenting on Hebrews 11:3, Calvin writes, “God has given us throughout the whole frame-work of this world, clear evidences of his eternal wisdom, goodness, and power; and though he is in himself invisible, he in a manner becomes <sup>105</sup> visible to us in his works. Correctly then is this world called the mirror of divinity.” Third, Calvin uses the metaphor creation being a garment. Commenting on Psalm 104:1, he writes:

In respect of his essence, God undoubtedly dwells in light that is inaccessible; but as he irradiates the whole world by his splendour, 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 to be seen by us, and not too curious and rash in searching into his secret essence.<sup>106</sup>

If creation as God’s macrocosm has a revelatory function, then human beings as God’s microcosm also have this revelatory function. Thus, Calvin writes, “Certain philosophers, accordingly, long ago not ineptly called man a microcosm because he is a rare example of God’s power, goodness, and wisdom, and contains within himself enough miracles to occupy our minds, if only we are not irked at paying attention to them.” And he

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., *Institutes*, I. 1, 10:63.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., *The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews*, 266. For creation as a theater of God’s glory, see also Cf. Randall C. Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian: The shape of His Writings and Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 231-242.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, Vol. 4 in *Calvin’s Commentaries Volume VI*, trans. James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 145. Cf. Randall C. Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian: The shape of His Writings and Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 231-242.

adds, “For each one undoubtedly feels within the heavenly grace that quickens him. Indeed, if there is no need to go outside ourselves to comprehend God, what pardon will the indolence of that man deserve who is loath to descend within himself to find God?”<sup>107</sup> Thus, as God’s macrocosm is a mirror of divinity, a painting that invites humankind to recognize God and a garment made of beautiful fabric that displays God’s glory, so God’s microcosm is the same. Then it too, like God’s macrocosm, is a theatre of God’s glory.

Chapter two noted that humankind was created in the image of God, i.e., it was to glorify God by embodying his divine nature. This chapter noted that as the image of God, humankind is a theater of God’s glory because it has the imprint (*effigies*) of the Father’s glory engraved on it. Furthermore, it noted that when Christ, as the image of God engraved with the imprint (*effigies*) of the Father’s glory, re-embeds the image of God in his covenant community, He makes this covenant community look like Himself. Thus, by becoming a member of the human race, Jesus re-members his covenant community to the Father by re-embedding the members of this covenant community into his body. In doing so, God’s covenant community once again becomes a mirror of divinity, a painting inviting people to behold God and a beautiful garment radiating the splendour of God. In short, Jesus restores and reestablishes the revelatory function of nature and enables his covenant community to once again be a theater of God’s glory that bridles and restrains the forces of disorder and chaos in this world by embodying the order of God’s divine nature.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, I. 5, 3:54.

<sup>108</sup> For sanctification as the restoration of order and the role of the church in this restoration of order, see Benjamin Charles Milner, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Church* (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

### Excursus five: deification and union with Christ

This chapter noted that for Calvin deification is the greatest possible blessing a believer can enjoy. For Calvin, deification involves sharing in the properties of God's divine essence. This is anthropologically possible because the imprint (*effigies*) of the Father's glory has been imprinted upon our human nature. Thus, to have the image of God re-embedded in Christ involves looking like Christ, for in his human nature the imprint (*effigies*) of the Father's glory has been engraved and embedded. Furthermore, in the incarnation God and humankind are re-membered and re-embedded. In addition, because Christ was obedient and fulfilled the law on our behalf in his human nature, it is through union with his human nature that the life of the Godhead flows into believers through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit since Christ in his humanity contains, as it were, the benefits of his obedience. Thus, when we are engrafted into Christ, not only do we draw the vigor and nourishment of life from Christ, but we also pass from our own to his nature. Moreover, glorification involves God irradiating or shining upon our humanity with his divine glory.

While Calvin calls deification the greatest possible blessing, he also gives to union with Christ the highest degree of importance. Thus, he writes, "Therefore, that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts—in short, that mystical union—are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed."<sup>109</sup>

In his "The greatest possible blessing," Mosser writes:

Mystical union' is very often a technical phrase for deification from at least the time of Pseudo-Dionysius. It was commonly used as such by medieval mystics, including Bernard of Clairvaux. Scholars have not failed to associate Calvin's mention of *mystica unio* to Bernard's influence. Etienne Gilson's classic study of Bernard did not fail to make the connection

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<sup>109</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 11, 10:737.

between Bernard's mystical union and the patristic doctrine of deification. Gilson especially noted the influence of Maximus Confessor on Bernard and cites passages in which Bernard unhesitatingly speaks of deification.<sup>110</sup>

On this basis Mosser concludes, “. . . it is reasonable to infer that Calvin too [when speaking about union with Christ or *mystica unio*] is referring to deification.”<sup>111</sup> In the light of the fact that what Calvin has written about deification and how what He has written about sharing in the properties of the divine essence is presupposed in what he teaches about the image of God, union with Christ, engrafting, glorification and the Trinitarian life, I have no reason to disagree with Mosser. Thus, union with Christ not only includes deification but also leads to it.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Mosser, 50. Mosser adds, “Oddly, however, the obvious connection between mystical union and deification is not made in recent comparisons of Bernard's and Calvin's understanding of mystical union.” He then notes that Tamburello in his comparative study between Bernard and Calvin on *unio mystica* failed to see this connection because he “focused so narrowly on comparing Calvin's thought with late medieval mysticism that he neglected the common stream upon which Calvin and the mystics drew, the patristic writers.”

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. Mosser discusses “one passage in the *Institutes* that *prima facie* [i.e. on its first appearance] looks like a clear counter example.” This counter example is found in the *Institutes*, IV, 16, 31: 1357 (not IV, 16, 15 as Mosser notes). There Calvin writes, “He [Servetus] says that we become gods by regeneration, but gods are those 'to whom the Word of God came' [John 10:34-35, Psalm 82:6]...It is one of his delusions **to imagine deity in believers**; but this is not the place to examine it. However, to twist a verse of a psalm [Psalm 82:6] into such an alien meaning is an act of abandoned shamelessness. Christ says that kings and magistrates are called 'gods' by the prophet because they bear an office divinely enjoined upon them.” (emphasis added). Mosser notes that this comment is directed against Servetus's and not the patristic doctrine of deification. He further notes that Calvin's objections—although he does not comment further—quite likely would have been similar to those he had against Osiander. This would mean that “(1) Servetus was inappropriately applying to the present life unfulfilled eschatological promises, thus making believers out to be more than what they actually are; (2) Servetus's teaching that ‘deity’ was in believers failed to make the all-important distinction between sharing in God's nature and possessing his essence.” Ibid. 53.

<sup>112</sup> Billings rightfully observes, “For some, the only sure thing that can be said about Calvin and deification is that he did not believe in it. How could someone who so emphasized the majesty of God and the sinfulness of humanity—and hence (presumably) the separation between the two—affirm deification? Moreover, some of the notions associated with Calvin—the bondage of the will to sin, an alleged tension between nature and grace—are cited as precisely the notions that a theology of deification allows one to escape.” Billings continues, “The problem is made worse by the fact that recent studies tend to look to late Byzantine theologians such as Gregory Palamas as the standard statement on deification, even when comparing western theologians who are unfamiliar with Palamas. However valuable this may be for ecumenical discussion, this approach tends to underestimate the possibility that there may be different, yet legitimate conceptions of deification in the West, arising from the common sources for theologies of deification: Scripture and the church fathers.” Billings draws the perceptive conclusion, “If late Byzantine theology is the paradigm for theologies of deification, there is a danger not only of making western theology look too much like late Byzantine theology, but also of dismissing western theology when it fails to meet the late Byzantine ‘standard.’” Billings, 315-16.

This is a deification, however, in which justification plays a foundational role. Whereas for Osiander believers participating in Christ and Christ dwelling in believers preclude notions of forensic pardon, this is not the case with Calvin. For Calvin forensic pardon and deification through participation and mutual indwelling go hand in hand. In fact, you cannot have the latter without the former. Trying to do so will inevitably lead to a lack of Christian assurance. Billings captures this well when he writes:

. . . if salvation is to be truly a gift from God—and sanctification a life of gratitude—a forensic notion of pardon is the necessary perquisite for such a life of sanctification. In the late medieval model of the believer as pilgrim (*viator*), the ‘assurance’ of salvation cannot be emphasized since it is dependent upon the continuing acts of sanctification by the believer. Calvin criticizes this soteriology as keeping the conscience in fear and anxiety, thus unable to fulfill the law of love with gratitude. Rather than being in ‘perpetual dread’ as to whether one has fulfilled God’s law, with imputation the believer is moved to ‘eager readiness to obey God’ in properly receiving this pardon from God. When ‘forensic’ pardon is received, the adoption of the believer is realized, for believers are freed from the ‘severe requirements’ of the law so that they can act like children: believers ‘hear themselves called with fatherly gentleness by God’ and ‘will cheerfully and with great eagerness answer and follow his leading.’

Billings concludes:

Calvin is clear that this grateful following of God’s leading is, in fact, a ‘participation’ in God through Christ, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Yet, theological emphasis upon the indwelling presence of God is not enough. For Calvin, if this indwelling presence is to be in concordance with a truly human gratitude, one must oppose Osiander’s denial of the forensic character of justification.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 326-27. Calvin holds the forensic and organic images close together in this theology. Billings writes, “In Calvin, the ‘forensic’ imputation of Christ’s righteousness and the mystical union with Christ are held in the closest possible relationship—one is unthinkable without the other. For Calvin, ‘forensic’ pardon is not an opposing category to the more ‘organic’ images of union, adoption, and ingrafting to speak of participation in Christ. The two belong together.” Ibid., 329. Calvin’s understanding of deification has much in common with the patristic doctrine of theosis. Billings observes, “While Calvin’s emphasis upon the forensic character of justification is distinct to his concerns as a Reformer, his instance upon a union without ‘confusion’ of the divine and human holds much in common with his conciliar and patristic sources. Calvin was not seeking to be ‘unique’ in this latter emphasis, but to uphold the concerns of the broader catholic tradition. On the one hand, Calvin sought to be ‘orthodox’ on justification in the terms of the Reformation, in response to the criticisms of his Lutheran opponents. On the other hand, he sought to be ‘orthodox’ on trinitarian and Christological issues in broader catholic terms, refuting Roman Catholic accusations that the Reformation is a ‘new’ movement leaving behind the church fathers and councils. Thus, Calvin’s teaching about participation, ingrafting, and union

### C. A relationship personally embraced through repentance and faith

But what if we remain dis-embedded from Christ? What good would He then be for the community of faith and the believer? Calvin has a classic answer to this question.

Commenting on the way in which we receive Christ, he writes:

. . . we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us.<sup>114</sup>

So, how does the Christ for us become the Christ in us? According to Calvin, this happens through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit who “is the bond by which Christ effectually binds us to himself.”<sup>115</sup>

The Holy Spirit does this through faith, which is “a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>116</sup> It is “the proper and entire work of the Holy Spirit” to work this faith.<sup>117</sup> Through this faith, Christ grafts us into his body and makes us participants not only in all his benefits, but also in himself.<sup>118</sup> Yet, “the Holy Spirit does not first of all bestow the capacity of faith; rather, he bestows this capacity even as he ‘inserts’ (*insero*)

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retains broadly a catholic character in affirming the union of divinity and humanity in Christology and in the final redemption of believers in Christ. Yet, as the debate with Osiander shows, Calvin’s theology is also shaped by his concern as a Reformer to uphold the free pardon of God in justification.” *Ibid.*, 328.

<sup>114</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 1, 1:537.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 1, 1:538. For Calvin on the relationship between Word and Spirit, see Richard Gamble, “Calvin’s Theological Method: Word and Spirit—A Case Study” in Robert V. Schnucker (ed.), *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin* (Kirksville, Mont.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1988), 63-76. See also Wallace, 123-132; cf. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 19-23.

<sup>116</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III:2, 7:551.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 14, 8:1284. For faith as a divine gift (the Holy Spirit as the Triune God in us) and a human response (the Holy Spirit as the triune God in us), see Butin, *Revelation, Redemption and Response*, 88-90.

<sup>118</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 2, 24:570

the believer in the new man.”<sup>119</sup> Consequently, “the Spirit’s illumination of the mind is always a consequence of man’s being incorporated into the Word; knowledge of the promise is a predicate of participating in the true Humanity.”<sup>120</sup> In other words, “faith yields *unio mystica* as an immediate result, and conversely, faith always remains dependent on *unio mystica*.”<sup>121</sup> Thus, “Christ cannot be known apart from the sanctification of his Spirit.”<sup>122</sup>

This faith, according to Calvin, is the fruit of election. Commenting on Acts 13:48, Calvin writes, “And this place teaches that faith dependeth upon God’s election.” Thus our union with Christ through faith, “in its temporal fulfillment, has its prior, eternal ground in the covenantal union God made with Himself.”<sup>123</sup> Since God does not elect everyone to salvation, some people are excluded from union with Christ. Consequently, “If he [God] willed all to be saved, he would set his Son over them, and would engraft all into his body with the sacred bond of faith.”<sup>124</sup> But God didn’t because the doctrine of salvation is not “effectually profitable” for all.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Victor A. Shepherd, *The Nature and Function of Faith in the Theology of John Calvin* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1983), 20. When I speak about re-embedding, I am rephrasing what Calvin means by “inserting.”

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>121</sup> S. P. Dee, [no title] cited by Tamburello, 85.

<sup>122</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 2, 8: 552-553. Cf. Shepherd, 21. For Calvin, even through conversion (repentance) does have a beginning, conversion (repentance) and sanctification are essentially the same for he defines conversion (repentance) as, “the true turning of our life to God, a turning that arises from a pure and earnest fear of him; and it consists in the mortification of our flesh and of the old man, and in the vivification of the Spirit. See, *Institutes*, III, 3, 5:596. About his own conversion, Calvin writes, “I was withdrawn from the study of philosophy, and was put to the study of law . . . But God, by the secret guidance of his providence, at length gave a different direction to my course. And first, since I was too obstinately devoted to the superstitions of Popery to be easily extricated from so profound an abyss of mire, God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame . . . .” John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, Vol. 1 in *Calvin’s Commentaries Volume IV*, trans. James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), xl.

<sup>123</sup> Seng-Kong Tan, 1. Cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 21, 5:926.

<sup>124</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 22, 10:946. Cf. Tamburello, 93-94.

<sup>125</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 22, 10: 944

It is noteworthy that when Calvin deals with the work of the Holy Spirit in Book 3 of his *Institutes*, you would think He would begin with predestination. But he doesn't. Instead of beginning with predestination, he ends with it. This is because predestination for Calvin is a mystery of divine revelation, not the product of speculation.<sup>126</sup> This mystery has been revealed in the context of the response to the preaching of the gospel: some believe and others do not. Beginning with the historical facts of belief and unbelief and not idle speculation, Calvin concludes that the source of these historical facts ultimately lie in God's decree of election and reprobation. McGrath sums up Calvin's position well when he writes:

It is an *ex post facto* explanation of the particularity of human responses to grace. Calvin's predestinarianism is to be regarded as *a posteriori* reflection upon the data of human experience, interpreted in the light of scripture, rather than something which is deduced *a priori* on the basis of preconceived ideas concerning divine omnipotence.<sup>127</sup>

Thus, only the elect can experience being re-embedded into Christ through faith worked by the Holy Spirit.<sup>128</sup>

For Calvin, faith is linked to repentance.<sup>129</sup> According to him, repentance always follows faith and is born of faith.<sup>130</sup> This repentance consists in "the true turning of our life to God, a turning that arises from a pure and earnest fear of him; and it consists in the mortification of our flesh and of the old man, and in the vivification of the Spirit."<sup>131</sup> The chief manifestation of a life of faith and repentance is a life of prayer.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., I, 2, 2:41-43; III, 21:1-2: 920:9-24. Cf. McGrath, 167.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., *Institutes*, 167-68. See also Fred H. Klooster, *Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination* (Grand Rapids: Calvin Theological Seminary, 1961), 10-12.

<sup>128</sup> Tamburello, 86.

<sup>129</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 3, 9:597.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., III, 3 1:593.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., III, 3, 5:597. See also Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 96-97.

<sup>132</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 20:850-920. See also Wallace, 271-295.

### Excursus six: faith and the mind

This section began by asking, “What if we remain dis-embedded from Christ? What good would He then be for the community of faith and the believer?” It continued and asked, “So, how does the Christ for us become the Christ in us?” According to Calvin, this happens through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit who does this does by renewing the mind through faith.

According to Calvin, the mind is the “most noble and excellent” part of the soul.<sup>133</sup> Yet, left to itself, the natural mind driven by “a sense of divinity” becomes a “labyrinth” or a “perpetual workshop of idols” or a “runaway horse” when it contemplates the natural world in its search for knowledge of God.<sup>134</sup> Thus, in order for the mind to be teachable, it must be bridled and restrained. And this bridling and restraining of the mind begins with submissively opening the mind to the Spirit of God. This submissive opening of the mind to the Spirit of God not only bridles and restrains the mind by emptying it of its own wisdom and desires, but also begins a process of gradual and continual renewal and advance of the mind because the Holy Spirit has made the mind teachable (*docilitas*). This Spirit-led teachable mind is gradually led to an increasingly deeper knowledge of God’s will. Yet, because the mind is still prone to wander and be filled with wild speculations, the “spectacles of Scripture” are needed to bridle and restrain the mind. With the use of the Scriptures, the Spirit becomes the

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid. *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 295. For what follows, see also Schreiner, 103-07.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., *Institutes*, I. 5, 12:64-66. With the term “labyrinth” Calvin is indicating that the natural mind is constantly frustrated and confused. See also Schreiner, 103.

“inner teacher.”<sup>135</sup> Essentially, Christ becomes the “inner teacher” because the Holy Spirit is the bond that embeds us into Christ through faith.<sup>136</sup>

### **Excursus seven: faith and knowledge**

Chapter two noted that receiving God’s Father-Son love into our soul through keeping our “noticer” on Jesus and remaining embedded in Him through faith involves receiving knowledge (*epignosis*) of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, Peter writes, “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us by his very great promises (*epangelmata*), so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Pet. 1:3-4). Consequently, receiving Jesus into our soul appears to find its entry point in the knowledge a person has of Him in his mind. This knowledge of Jesus through faith, in turn, is the human avenue that leads to becoming a partaker of God’s divine nature.

According to Calvin, faith is a “firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>137</sup> Yet, “the Holy Spirit does not first of all bestow the capacity of faith; rather, he bestows this capacity even as he ‘inserts’ (*insero*) the believer in the new man.”<sup>138</sup> Consequently, “the Spirit’s illumination of the mind is always a consequence of man’s being incorporated into the Word; knowledge of the promise is a predicate of participating in the true Humanity.”<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Schreiner, 103-04.

<sup>136</sup> For further insight how this ‘works,’ see “F: A mysterious relationship” and “Excursus eleven: the secret impulse of the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>137</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 2,7:551.

<sup>138</sup> Shepherd, 20.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

In other words, “faith yields *unio mystica* as an immediate result, and conversely, faith always remains dependent on *unio mystica*.”<sup>140</sup> Thus, “Christ cannot be known apart from the sanctification of his Spirit.”<sup>141</sup>

According to Alvin Plantinga, when Calvin understands faith as knowledge, he means that faith is not contrasted with knowledge, but *is* knowledge. According to Plantinga, this is true in at least two ways.

First, in its object: what is allegedly known is (if true) of stunning significance, certainly the most important thing a person could possibly know. But it is also unusual in the way in which that content is known; it is known by way of an extraordinary cognitive process or belief-producing mechanism. Christian belief is ‘revealed to our minds’ by way of the Holy Spirit’s inducing, in us, belief in the central message of Scripture. The belief-producing process is dual, involving both the divinely inspired Scripture (perhaps directly, or perhaps at the head of a testimonial chain) and the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit. Both involve the special activity of God.

Plantinga continues:

Thus, faith is a “belief producing *process* or activity, like perception or memory. It is a cognitive device, a means by which belief, and belief on a certain specific set of topics, is regularly produced in regular ways. In this it resembles memory, perception, reason, sympathy, induction, and other more standard belief-producing processes. It differs from them in that it also involves the direct action of the Holy Spirit, so that the immediate cause of belief is not to be found just in her natural epistemic equipment. There is the special and supernatural activity of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, faith is a belief-producing process.”<sup>142</sup>

This observation that faith is a belief producing process is important for this study for faith is not a psychological crutch that is the result of the projection of one’s thoughts and

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<sup>140</sup> S. P. Dee, [no title] cited by Tamburello, 85.

<sup>141</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 2, 8: 552-553. Cf. Shepherd, 21.

<sup>142</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 256. Plantinga continues and says, “Now as we saw in chapter 7, what is required for *knowledge* is that a belief be produced by cognitive faculties or process that are working properly, in an appropriate epistemic environment (both maxi and mini) according to a design plan that is aimed at truth, and is furthermore *successfully* aimed at truth.” He adds, “But according to this model, what one believes by faith (the beliefs that constitute faith) meets these four conditions.” Ibid.

desires.<sup>143</sup> Instead, faith is a cognitive process prompted by the secret working of the Holy Spirit whereby a person may know for sure that she is ontologically embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

### **Excursus eight: faith and contemplation**

Excursus two on the soul noted that, according to Calvin, a Christian is called to nurture spiritual growth in this life. Because the soul is made for communion with God, it is constantly searching for God, first moving towards God and then resting in God. Using Augustine's analysis of the soul, Calvin believed there are degrees of growth within the soul. Thus, as the Spirit opens up the soul to God, a believer moves from virtue to tranquility to contemplation.<sup>144</sup>

For Calvin, contemplation is closely linked to God manifesting Himself.<sup>145</sup> Thus, reflecting on Romans 1:19 that speaks about "what may be known about God is manifest (Gr. *phaneron*; Lat. *manifestum*) in<sup>146</sup> them for God manifested (Gr. *ephanerosen*; Lat. *manifestavit*) it in them," Calvin writes:

And he said, *in them* rather than *to them*, for the sake of greater emphasis: for through the Apostle adopts everywhere Hebrew phrases, and . . . *beth* is often redundant in that language, yet he seems here to have intended to

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<sup>143</sup> R.C. Sproul has given a penetrating analysis of this charge that faith is a matter of one's own projection. He has convincingly shown that not Christianity is a projected psychological crutch, but that atheism is. The shoe really is on the other foot when one seriously considers what Paul says about the psychology of atheism in Romans one when he writes about humankind suppressing (*katechontoon*) the truth in unrighteousness (*adikia*). Cf. R. C. Sproul, *If there is a God, Why are There Atheists?: A Surprising Look at the Psychology of Atheism* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1974). As Calvin would say, God's good order is suppressed in disorder with the result that humankind's noticing mind becomes a "runaway horse," a "labyrinth," and a "perpetual workshop of idols."

<sup>144</sup> My understanding is that these movements need not be sequential, but can occur concurrently.

<sup>145</sup> For what follows, see also Zachman, 191-98

<sup>146</sup> "en autois" is ambiguous for it can mean either "in" them and "to" them. The first is subjective; the second objective. Paul may have intended this ambiguity, letting the reader reflect upon the multiple senses possible without denying one or the other. God's manifestation of Himself in his works *to* humankind also lodges *in* their souls. But because humankind does not like what it sees, it suppresses this objective and subjective revelation in unrighteousness. Thus, I agree with Calvin in that humankind subjectively *feels* the weight of God's glory.

indicate a manifestation, by which they might be so closely pressed, that they could not evade; for every one of us undoubtedly finds it to be engraven on his own heart.

He then adds, “By saying that *God has made it manifest*, he means, that man was created to be a spectator of this formed world, and that eyes were given him, that he might, by looking on so beautiful a picture, be led up to the Author himself.”<sup>147</sup> Randall Zachman concludes, “According to Calvin’s reading of this passage, we were originally created to come to know the one true God not by hearing, reading, and applying the Word of God in Scripture, but rather by beholding and contemplating the self-manifestation of God in the universe.”<sup>148</sup> He adds, “[Thus] The original way we were to be led to God was by means of our visual contemplation of the image of God in the universe, an image in which the invisible God becomes somewhat visible, in order to lead us to Godself.”<sup>149</sup>

Yet, our visual contemplation of God was not just meant to lead us to God Himself, but also so that we would feel his powers, such as his wisdom, mercy, righteousness and goodness within ourselves. Accordingly, Calvin writes, “For the Lord manifests himself by his powers, the force of which we feel within ourselves and the benefits of which we enjoy.”<sup>150</sup> Thus, according to Calvin, “. . . the most perfect way of seeking God, and the most suitable order, is . . . for us to contemplate him in his works whereby he renders himself near and familiar to us, and in some manner communicates himself.”<sup>151</sup> Moreover, in feeling the powers of God through the contemplation of his works God “sweetly allures” us to Himself for the enjoyment of his benefits and the dedication of our hearts to Him in love. As Calvin

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<sup>147</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 71.

<sup>148</sup> Zachman, 192.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 1, 5, 9:62.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

writes, “So, invited by the great sweetness of his beneficence and goodness, let us study to love and serve him with all our heart.”<sup>152</sup> Zachman concludes:

If the understanding of faith related to proclamation emphasizes hearing, reading, and applying the true doctrine drawn from Scripture, the understanding of the knowledge of God related to manifestation emphasizes seeing, contemplating, feeling, and enjoying the powers of God portrayed before our eyes, in the realization that by such means God gently invites and sweetly attracts us to Godself.”<sup>153</sup>

Thus, for Calvin, faith is not only a new way of knowing; it is also a new way of seeing.<sup>154</sup>

This new way of knowing and seeing leads to a new way of feeling.

The previous excursus noted that the natural mind needs to be bridled and restrained by submissively opening itself to the Spirit and Word of God otherwise it will respond to God’s manifestation of Himself in his work with all sorts of idols of one’s own making. Thus, Calvin taught that humankind needs the Word of God in order to be led to its Creator. Thus, he writes, “Despite this [manifestation of Himself through creation], it is needful that another and better help be added to direct us aright to the very Creator of the universe. It was not in vain, then, that he added the light of his Word by which to become known unto salvation.”<sup>155</sup> And he adds, “Now, in order that true religion may shine upon us, we ought to hold that it must take its beginning from heavenly doctrine and that no one can get even the slightest taste of right and sound doctrine unless he be a pupil of Scripture.”<sup>156</sup> Zachman writes, “This turn to the Word appears to replace seeing and contemplation with teaching and hearing.”<sup>157</sup> And he adds, “It would seem, then, that the language of manifestation,

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., I, 14, 22:182.

<sup>153</sup> Zachman, 193.

<sup>154</sup> See Zachman, “Believing is Seeing: Proclamation and Manifestation in the Reformed Tradition,” at <http://reformedtheology.org/SiteFiles/PublicLectures/ZachmanPL.html>.

<sup>155</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 6, 1:69-70.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., I, 6, 2:72.

<sup>157</sup> Zachman, *John Calvin*, 193.

contemplation, feeling, and enjoyment describes a way of seeking God that only Adam and Eve could have enjoyed before the fall into sin.”<sup>158</sup>

Yet, this is not the case. On the one hand, Calvin taught that the manifestation of God does not benefit us without the Word of God in the Scriptures. On the other hand, “he turns to Scripture not to replace contemplation with teaching, but rather to lead us toward the true and fruitful contemplation of the works of God in the universe.”<sup>159</sup>

This observation is important for this study for it deals with ontological dis-embeddedness and embeddedness. The hypothesis of one of the lessons of the ten-week learning experience is that Christians sometimes or often feel detached or dis-embedded from God because they may tend to communicate more verbally with God than they do in mental pictures. This excursus on faith and contemplation has shown that seeing and contemplation is an intrinsic element of faith together with hearing and teaching. Zachman is also aware that when we downplay or ignore seeing and contemplation as an essential element in our knowledge of God our life of faith is impoverished. He writes:

The loss of manifestation and contemplation in our understanding of the Reformed tradition today has deprived us of an essential element of the knowledge of God according to Calvin and those who followed him, and has led to an unfortunate impoverishment of the life of piety, the experience of worship, and our relationship with the natural world.<sup>160</sup>

This excursus is also important for this study because indirectly it confirms what was noted about the twofold function of the mind. It noted that J. Behm writes that that original meaning of this word is “(inner) sense directed on an object,’ [it] embraces ‘sensation,’

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid. 194.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>160</sup> Zachman, 196.

‘power of spiritual perception,’ ‘capacity for intellectual apprehension.’”<sup>161</sup> It noted that Mathewes-Green builds on this definition when she writes, “The *nous* is a faculty of *perception*, analogous to your ears or eyes. After you perceive something you might have rational thoughts about it, and you might have emotions about it – but first of all, you just notice it. The *nous* is your ‘noticer.’”<sup>162</sup> It noted that therefore, when the Scriptures speak about the *mind*, they do not immediately refer to rational, intellectual activity, but the capacity for intellectual apprehension. They are referring first to the receptive, registering, noticing function of the *nous*. Rational, intellectual activity that follows is a *reaction* to what was received, registered and noticed.

While I have not encountered Calvin explicitly distinguishing this twofold function of the mind, what he teaches clearly presupposes it. In order to contemplate God in his works, we first need to see Him in his works. We need to direct our noticing mind towards his works. According to Calvin, God invites us to do this through his works because they are a theatre of his glory. Thus seeing God in his works by directing our noticing minds to his works enables us to perceive God in his works. This, in turn, will lead to the contemplation of God in his works and the feeling of the weight of this contemplation.

### **Excursus nine: faith and the will**

Excursus eight in chapter two noted that John Calvin observed, “Few have defined what free will is, although it repeatedly occurs in the writings of all.”<sup>163</sup> It noted that Calvin himself located the will in the mind and that Jonathan Edwards built on this by defining the

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<sup>161</sup> J. Behm, *nous* in Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 952.

<sup>162</sup> Frederica Mathewes-Green, “The Jesus Prayer” (Vancouver: Regent College Audio).

<sup>163</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, II, 2, 4:261.

will as “the mind choosing” or “that by which the mind chooses any thing.”<sup>164</sup> Yet, the mind always chooses according to its desires that are both in the body and the spirit. According to Edwards, “A man never in any instance, wills anything contrary to his desires.”<sup>165</sup> Thus, the will is never free in the sense that it is uncaused by something else.

Excursus nine in chapter two noted that though the will is never undetermined, uncaused and in this sense free, in another sense it is. It becomes free when God monergistically regenerates a person. What does Calvin teach about the will as it relates to being re-membered to the Father through being a member of Christ’s body by faith?

According to Schreiner:

Calvin doggedly maintained that the will, which is inseparable from human nature, remains and plays an active part in the renewal of [human] nature. Just as the will is not annihilated by sin, so, too, it is not suspended by the action of the Spirit in the life of regeneration. This inherent activity of the will is evident in the struggle that characterizes the gradual transformation or progress in holiness.<sup>166</sup>

Thus, according to Calvin, the will is inherently active.

Yet, even though the will is inherently active, when it concerns God’s regeneration of the will, Calvin insists that the Spirit must monergistically activate the will with his irresistible grace. Thus, he writes:

Therefore we are robbing the Lord if we claim for ourselves anything either in will or in accomplishment. If God were said to help our weak will, then something would be left to us. But when it is said that he makes the will, whatever of good is in it is now placed outside us. . . . It is the Lord’s doing that the will conceives the love of what is right, is zealously inclined toward it, is aroused and moved to pursue it. Then it is the Lord’s doing that the choice, zeal and the effort do not falter, but proceed even to

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<sup>164</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Freedom of the Will*, i.1.2 (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000), 2.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, I.,2, 5:3.

<sup>166</sup> Schreiner, 101.

accomplishment; lastly, that man goes forward in these things with constancy, and perseveres to the very end.<sup>167</sup>

Yet, this monergistic activating of the will does not eliminate the activity of the will. Thus, Calvin writes:

Now, in the calumny [slander] brought forward by them against us—that we make men to be like stones, when we teach that they have nothing good, except from pure grace, they act a shameless part. For we acknowledge that we have from nature an inclination, but as it is depraved through the corruption of sin, it begins to be good only when it has been renewed by God. Nor do we say that a man does anything good without willing it, but that it is only when his inclination is regulated by the Spirit of God.<sup>168</sup>

Elsewhere, Calvin writes, “. . . man’s action is not taken away by the movement of the Holy Spirit, because the will, which is directed to aspire to good, is of nature.”<sup>169</sup> Schreiner rightly concludes, “Calvin was careful to maintain that the Spirit does not remove, cancel, or suspend the inherently active nature of the human will.”<sup>170</sup> Thus, God does not change the structure of the will, but its direction.<sup>171</sup> Quoting Augustine, Calvin summarizes his position as follows: “To will is of nature, but to will aright is of grace.”<sup>172</sup>

This confirms what was discovered in chapter two on the will. This confirmation is important because being re-membered and re-embedded in the Father by being a member of Christ’s body involves the will. It is the mind acting upon the desires. To be sure, God monergistically prepares the will. Yet, in preparing the will, the will itself begins to will what is right. Thus, while the work of regeneration has a monergistic beginning, it has a

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<sup>167</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, II, 3, 9:302-03.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, *Commentaries on the Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and the Thessalonians*, 66.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, *Institutes*, II, 5, 14:334.

<sup>170</sup> Schreiner, 102. For what follows, see also Schreiner, 101-03.

<sup>171</sup> For more on structure and direction in creation, see Albert W. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985). Calvin’s view on redemption is basically summed up with the title of this book.

<sup>172</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, II, 5, 14:335.

synergistic continuation. God and human beings are indeed working together in remaining re-embedded in the Father by being a member of Christ's body by faith.<sup>173</sup>

This being fellow workers (*sunergoi*) with is part of God's providence. In the upholding and governing of all of life, God is never ontologically separated from his covenant community, but always ontologically united to her by some sort of "secret influence" or "secret infusion."<sup>174</sup> Thus, ontological dis-embeddeness and embeddedness is a matter of God's energy (*energeia*) and our energy (*energeia*). Prepared and begun by God's *energeia*, yet maintained and enjoyed together through each other's energy (*sunergeia*) for the bridling and restraining of the forces of chaos and disorder and the restoration and reintegration into the Trinitarian life.

#### **D. A relationship enriched by the sacraments**

Union with Christ is not only a covenantal relationship re-embedded and deepened by the incarnation and personally embraced by faith. It is also a relationship enriched through the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. According to Calvin, the world is a mirror of God's divinity. Thus, he writes, "God has given us throughout the whole frame-work of this world, clear evidences of his eternal wisdom, goodness, and power; and though he is in himself invisible, he in a manner becomes visible to us in his works. Correctly then is this

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<sup>173</sup> Commenting on Calvin's discussion with Pighius, Billings writes, "Thus, citing Irenaeus in his favor, Calvin affirms that redemption heals and restores the original 'good will' and 'good nature' of Adam. The created nature is good, and the created nature is restored in redemption. This is not a nature conceived of as an autonomous possession apart from God. Rather, as with Adam—even more fully with Christ—this 'good nature' is activated in the human only when the human is united to God by the Spirit." Billings adds, "It is Calvin's strong insistence, then, that **God and humanity are properly united in a fundamental way** that makes him oppose Pighius, who seeks to honor human effort by dividing the agency and credit between God and humanity. For Calvin, since God is the fountain of all life and goodness, Pighius's partitive solution is unacceptable. In sanctification, all of the human faculties are, in fact, utilized, but **if one views humanity as fundamentally related to God—indeed, as truly flourishing only in union with God**—then one must not speak of a good human action in separation from God's action." (emphasis added) Billings, 320-21 with a reference to Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, 193-200.

<sup>174</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, I. 16, 2:198-99. Schreiner, 31.

world called the mirror of divinity.”<sup>175</sup> According, if the world as such is a mirror of God’s divinity, so are the elements of water, bread and wine.

According to Calvin, Christ is the substance of all sacraments. Thus, he writes, “I say that Christ is the matter or (if you prefer) the substance of all the sacraments; for in him they have all their firmness, and they do not promise anything apart from him.”<sup>176</sup> Tamburello writes that “Calvin speaks explicitly of their [the sacraments] and their relation to *unio* with great frequency.”<sup>177</sup> For Calvin, just like the preaching, sacraments are “aids to our faith.”<sup>178</sup>

Thus, he defines a sacrament as:

an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith; and we in turn attest our piety toward him in the presence of the Lord and of his angels and before men . . . [It is] a testimony of divine grace toward us, confirmed by an outward sign, with mutual attestation of our piety toward him.<sup>179</sup>

Reflecting on the relationship between Word and sacrament, Calvin writes:

a sacrament is never without a preceding promise but is joined to it as a sort of appendix, with the purpose of confirming and sealing the promise itself, and of making it more evident to us and in sense ratifying it. By this means God provides first for our ignorance and dullness, then for our weakness.<sup>180</sup>

”Yet,” Calvin adds, “properly speaking, it is not so much needed to confirm his Sacred Word as to establish us in faith in it.” For “as our faith is slight and feeble unless it be propped on

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., *The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989) 266.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., *Institutes*, IV, 14, 16: 1291.

<sup>177</sup> Tamburello, 98-99. See also Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and Sacraments*, 143-181; 197-216.

<sup>178</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 14, 1:1276. See also Wallace, 133-142.

<sup>179</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 14, 1:1277. For sacraments as the visibility of grace, see Butin, *Revelation, Redemption and Response*, 103-05.

<sup>180</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 14, 3:1278. For Calvin on Word and sacrament, see also Dawn DeVries, *Jesus Christ in the Preaching of Calvin and Schleiermacher* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 14-25.

all sides and sustained by every means, it trembles, wavers, totters, and at last gives way.”<sup>181</sup>  
As such, sacraments are “tokens” of the covenants God has made with men.<sup>182</sup>

Commenting on the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the sacraments, Calvin writes that “the sacraments properly fulfill their office only when the Spirit, that inward teacher, comes to them by whose power alone hearts are penetrated and affections moved and our souls opened for the sacraments to enter in.”<sup>183</sup>

Sacraments of themselves do not impart grace, but, like the Word, they hold forth Jesus Christ. Thus, “Christ is the matter or (if you prefer) firmness, and they do not promise anything apart from him.”<sup>184</sup> Consequently, “the sacraments have the same office as the Word of God: to offer and set forth Christ to us, and in him the treasures of heavenly grace.” “But,” Calvin adds, “they avail and profit nothing unless received in faith.”<sup>185</sup>

## 1. Baptism

Reflecting on the meaning of the sacrament of baptism, Calvin writes that it “is the sign of the initiation by which we are received into the society of the church, in order that, engrafted in Christ, we may be reckoned among God’s children.”<sup>186</sup>

Baptism contributes three benefits to our faith. First, it is a token and proof of our cleansing for “baptism promises us no other purification than through the sprinkling of Christ’s blood, which is represented by means of water from the resemblance to cleansing and washing.”<sup>187</sup> This promise of having been cleansed is good for our whole life.<sup>188</sup> Second,

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<sup>181</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 14, 3:1278.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 14, 5: 1281.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 14, 9:1284.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 14, 16:1291.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 14, 17:1292. See also Wallace, 175-183.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 15, 1:1303. Cf. Tamburello, 99. See also Butin, 107-113.

<sup>187</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 15, 2:1305.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 15, 3:1305.

it is a token of our mortification and renewal in Christ, for when the apostle Paul talks about our being baptized into Christ's death (Rom. 6:3-4), "he not only exhorts us to follow Christ as if he had said that we are admonished through baptism to die to our desires by an example of Christ's death, and to be aroused to righteousness by an example of his resurrection."

"But," Calvin adds,

he also takes hold of something far higher, namely, that through baptism Christ makes us sharers in his death, that we may be engrafted in it (Rom. 6:5). And just as the twig draws substance and nourishment from the root to which it is grafted, so those who receive baptism with right faith truly feel the effective working of Christ's death in the mortification of their flesh, together with the working of his resurrection in the vivification of the Spirit (Rom. 6:8).<sup>189</sup>

Consequently, baptism is called "the washing of regeneration and renewal (Titus 3:5).<sup>190</sup>

Third, baptism is a token of our union with Christ, for "we are not only engrafted into the death and life of Christ, but so united to Christ himself that we become sharers of all his blessings . . . for all the gifts of God proffered in baptism are found in Christ alone."<sup>191</sup>

These benefits or blessings also apply to children for they are participants in the covenant. "If they are participants in the thing signified," Calvin asks, "why shall they be debarred from the sign?"<sup>192</sup> Moreover, "if it is right for infants to be brought to Christ, why not also to be received into baptism, the symbol of our communion and fellowship with Christ?" And, "If the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them, why is the sign denied which, so to speak, opens to them a door into the church that, adopted into it, they may be enrolled among the heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven?"<sup>193</sup> Furthermore, "because infants are not excluded when mention is made of a family's being baptized, who in his senses can reason

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., IV, 15, 5:1307. Cf. Tamburello, *Union with Christ*, 99.

<sup>190</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 15,5:1307. Cf. Ibid., 99.

<sup>191</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 15, 6:1307-08.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., IV, 16, 5, 1328.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., IV, 16, 7, 1330.

from this that they were not baptized?”<sup>194</sup> In addition, infants can be “regenerated by God’s power, which is as easy and ready to him as it is incomprehensible and wonderful to us.”<sup>195</sup> Thus, “infants are baptized into future repentance and faith, and even though these have not yet been formed in them, the seed of both lies hidden within them by the secret working of the Spirit.”<sup>196</sup>

Thus the sacrament of baptism enriches our union with Christ. It visibly portrays and guarantees to us our covenantal embeddedness with Christ in his death and resurrection and our complete forgiveness and new life in Him.<sup>197</sup> The more we behold and contemplate the glory of this visible sign in faith, the more we will feel the weight of its glory.

## 2. The Lord’s Supper

Reflecting on the meaning of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, Calvin writes that “Godly souls can gather great assurance and delight from this Sacrament; in it they have witness of our growth into one body with Christ such that whatever is his may be called ours.”<sup>198</sup> He adds, “In this Sacrament we have such full witness of all these things that we must certainly consider them as if Christ here present were himself set before our eyes and

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., IV, 16, 8:1331.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., IV, 16, 18:1341.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., IV, 16, 20:1343. See also Wallace, 184-196. I disagree with Calvin that baptism is a sign and seal of some dormant potential within the child because baptism does not signify and seal something either actually in or potentially in a child, but the promises or declarations God has made to this child. For a discussion of how this issue played a role in my own ecclesiastical tradition, see J. Kamphuis, *An Everlasting Covenant*, trans. G. van Rongen (Launceston: Publication Organization of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, 1985).

<sup>197</sup> Baptism is a sign and seal of the church’s union with Christ; it does not produce it. Chapter two noted that I would refer to this union as the objective union or union with Christ by virtue of the promise. It is unclear to me whether Calvin would technically use this distinction in this manner since he speaks about infants who can be regenerated by God’s power as well as infants who have the seed of faith and repentance hidden within them by the secret working of the Spirit. Moreover, commenting on Rom. 6:5, Calvin writes, “But there is no reason why we should seek to apply the metaphor or comparison [engrafting] in every particular; for between the grafting of trees, and this which is spiritual, a disparity will soon meet us: in the former the graft draws its aliment from the root, but retains its own nature in the fruit; but in the latter not only we derive the vigour and nourishment of life from Christ, but we also pass from our own to his nature.” See Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 223; cf. Mosser, 44.

<sup>198</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 17, 2:1361-62. For Calvin on the Lord’s Supper, see G.S. M. Walker, “The Lord’s Supper in the Theology and Practice of Calvin” in Duffied, 131-148.

touched by our hands.”<sup>199</sup> Thus, for Calvin, the “chief function of the Sacrament simply and without higher consideration [is not] to extend to us the body of Christ. Rather, it is to seal and confirm that promise by which he testifies that his flesh is food indeed and his blood is drink (John 6:56), which feed us unto eternal life (John 6:55).”<sup>200</sup> Thus, when we partake of the Lord’s Supper in faith, we partake of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and “just as bread when taken as food imparts vigor to the body,” so the life of Jesus Christ Himself passes into us.<sup>201</sup> This is because “the flesh of Christ is like a rich and inexhaustible fountain that pours into us the life springing forth from the Godhead itself.”<sup>202</sup>

The Holy Spirit is the One who brings about this life-giving fellowship.<sup>203</sup> He does this “if we are lifted up to heaven with our eyes and minds, to seek Christ there in the glory of his Kingdom, as the symbols invite us to him in his wholeness.” Then, “under the symbol of bread we shall be fed by his body, under the symbol of wine we shall separately drink his blood, to enjoy him at last in his wholeness.”<sup>204</sup> Consequently, Christ is not [physically] brought down to us, but we are lifted up to Him.<sup>205</sup> Thus, the Lord’s Supper “is a help whereby we may be engrafted into Christ’s body, or, engrafted, may grow more and more together with him, until he perfectly joins us with him in the heavenly life.”<sup>206</sup>

Because the Lord’s Supper depicts our being embedded in Christ as the fruit of Christ’s incarnation, life and death so well, Calvin writes:

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<sup>199</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 17, 3:1362.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 17, 4:1363.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 17, 5:1364-65.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 17, 9:1369. Lewis Smedes paraphrases this as “the life of God being siphoned into the humanity of Christ and from there tapped into ours.” See Smedes, *All Things Made New*, 23; *ibid.*, *Union with Christ*, 10. Smedes adds, “Calvin was indignant with anyone who insisted on a union with Christ’s divine nature. We must be united with His humanity, for it was in His humanity that he fulfilled obedience on our behalf, and in His humanity that He ‘contained’ the benefits of His obedience.” *Ibid.*, 26; *Ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>203</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 17, 12:1373.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 17, 18:1381.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 17, 31:1404.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 17, 33:1407-08. Cf. Tamburello, 99. See also Butin, 114-121.

Godly souls can gather great assurance and delight from this Sacrament; in it they have a witness of our growth into one body with Christ such that whatever is his may be called ours; As a consequence, we may dare assure ourselves that eternal life, of which he is the heir, is ours; and that the Kingdom of Heaven into which he has already entered, can no more be cut off from us than from him; again, that we cannot be condemned for our sins, from whose guilt he has absolved us, since he willed to take them upon himself as if they were his own.<sup>207</sup>

He continues:

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>208</sup>

Accordingly, Christ called Himself “‘the bread of life’ [because when] being made sharer of our human mortality, he made us partakers of his divine immortality.”<sup>209</sup>

Yet, the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper not only symbolizes our vertical union with Christ; it also depicts our horizontal union with one another God’s covenant community. In fact, the Lord’s Supper symbolizes that Christ unites us to Himself *in order* that we may be united to one another. Commenting on 1 Corinthians 10:17, Calvin writes:

But whence, I pray you, comes that *κοινωνία* (*communion*) between us, but from this, that we are united to Christ in such a way, that we are flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bones? (Eph. 5:30). For we must first of all be incorporated (so to speak) into Christ, that we may be united to each other. In addition to this, Paul is not disputing at present merely in reference to a mutual fellowship among men, but as to the spiritual union between Christ and believers, with the view of drawing from this, that it is an intolerable sacrilege for them to be polluted by fellowship with idols. From the connection of the passage, therefore, we may conclude, that (*κοινωνία*) the communion of the blood is that connection which we have with the blood

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<sup>207</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 17, 2:1361-62; Cf. Mosser, 44.

<sup>208</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 17, 4:1362; Cf. *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>209</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 17, 4:1363-64.

of Christ, when he ingrafts all of us together into his body, that he may live in us, and we in him.<sup>210</sup>

Because the sacrament of the Lord's Supper symbolizes our vertical and horizontal union with Christ and one another, they enrich our union with Christ.<sup>211</sup>

### **Excursus ten: contemplation of Christ in the Word and the sacraments**

Excursus seven noted that for Calvin contemplation is closely linked to God manifesting Himself. It also noted that our visual contemplation of God is not just meant to lead us to God Himself, but also so that we would feel the weight of his glorious powers, such as his wisdom, mercy, righteousness and goodness within ourselves. In feeling the weight of his glorious powers through contemplating his works, God wants to sweetly allure us to Himself through the enjoyment of his benefits and the dedication of our hearts to Him in love.

In contemplating God the Creator, Calvin begins with the language of manifestation and contemplation and adds the teaching and hearing of his Word so that our contemplation may be fruitful. In contemplating God the Son, Calvin begins with the language of proclamation and adds the language of manifestation and contemplation so that our hearing and seeing may be fruitful.<sup>212</sup>

In the Word of God the crucified Christ is proclaimed. Yet, the crucified Christ is foolishness and a stumbling block because the manifestation of God in Christ is hidden under

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul, the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Vols. 1, 335.

<sup>211</sup> Wilhelm Kolfaus sums up the significance of the sacraments for our union with Christ when he writes, "The sacraments do not have any meaning of their own; they serve the goal of sealing an already existing *unio mystica cum Christo*, of making it more emphatic and clear, of strengthening communion with the Head, and of nourishing the soul as living food." Wilhelm Kolfaus, *Christusgemeinschaft bei Johannes Calvin* (Neukirchen: Buchhandlung Erziehungsvereins, 1938), 121 cited by Tamburello, 100. This summary description would have been stronger if it had included the horizontal dimension of union with Christ. See also Wallace on union with Christ and the sacraments, 197-216.

<sup>212</sup> Zachman, 199. For what follows, see also Zachman, 199-208.

an appearance that contradicts it (1 Cor. 1:18). Thus, in order to see God manifested in the flesh of Christ, members of God's covenant community must move from the crucified Christ to the resurrected Christ. There they will openly see God manifested in the flesh. Then having seen God manifested in the flesh of the resurrected Christ, they will in turn also see God manifested in the flesh of the crucified Christ. For Calvin, this manifestation of God in the works of his redemption is far more glorious and beautiful than the manifestation of God in the works of his creation. Thus, reflecting on Jesus saying that God is glorified in his death, Calvin writes:

For in the cross of Christ, as in a magnificent theatre, the inestimable goodness of God is displayed before the whole world. In all the creatures, indeed, both high and low, the glory of god shines, but nowhere has it shone more brightly than in the cross, in which there has been an astonishing change of things, the condemnation of all men has been manifested, sin has been blotted out, salvation has been restored to men; and, in short, the whole world has been renewed, and everything restored to good order.<sup>213</sup>

Contemplating God in his work of redemption is not done directly as done when contemplating God in his work of creation for Christ comes to us clothed in the gospel. Thus, Calvin writes, "This, then, is the true knowledge of Christ, if we receive him as he is offered by the Father; namely, clothed with his gospel . . . [For] we say that the Word itself, however it be imparted to us, is like a mirror in which faith may contemplate God."<sup>214</sup> Thus, the Word functions like a mirror in which we behold Christ.<sup>215</sup> Moreover, the preaching of the gospel is also a portrayal of Christ. Reflecting on Galatians 3:1, Calvin writes, "The meaning therefore

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<sup>213</sup> Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, Vol. 2, 73.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, *Institutes*, III, 2, 6:548-49.

<sup>215</sup> Zachman, 203.

is, that Paul's doctrine had instructed them concerning Christ in such a manner as if he had been exhibited to them in a picture, nay 'crucified among them'”<sup>216</sup>

Yet, because of our weakness and infirmity to be able to grasp and comprehend spiritual truths, God accommodates Himself to our weakness and enables us to contemplate Him in the sacraments that, along with the gospel, also function as mirrors in which to contemplate Christ. Reflecting on now looking in a mirror dimly, Calvin writes:

The ministry of the word, I say, is like a looking-glass [mirror]. For the angels have no need of preaching, or other inferior helps, nor of sacraments, for they enjoy a vision of God of another kind; and God does not give them a view of his face merely in a mirror, but openly manifests himself as present with them. We, who have not as yet reached that great height, behold the image of God as it is presented before us in the word, in the sacraments, and, in fine, in the whole of the service of the Church.<sup>217</sup>

Thus, no other images should obscure the image of Christ in the Word and sacraments and the service of the church.<sup>218</sup>

In addition to the contemplation of Christ in the Word and sacraments being a greater manifestation of God's goodness, this contemplation of Christ in the Word and sacraments also has the power to transform us into *itself*. Thus, reflecting on 2 Corinthians 3:18, Calvin writes:

He points out, however, at the same time, both the strength of the revelation, and our daily progress. For he has employed such a similitude to denote three things: first, that we have no occasion to fear obscurity, when we approach the gospel, for God there clearly discovers to us His face; secondly, that it is not befitting, that it should be a dead contemplation, but that we should be transformed by means of it into the image of God; and, thirdly, that the one and the other are not accomplished in us in one moment, but must be constantly making progress both in the knowledge of

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<sup>216</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 80.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Vol. 1, 430.

<sup>218</sup> Zachman, 204.

God, an in conformity to His image, for this is the meaning of the expression—from glory to glory.<sup>219</sup>

In this way our visual contemplation of Christ in the Word, sacraments and ceremonies of the church invite and allure God’s covenant community to Christ and transforms her into Christ so that she is a mirror in which to behold Christ. Zachman concludes, “When the church does not attend to the vivid representation of Christ in its preaching, sacraments, and ceremonies, she is hindering genuine Christian transformation, no matter how much it may be preaching and teaching sound doctrine.”<sup>220</sup>

This excursus is important for our study because one of the causes of ontological dis-embeddedness could be a lack of inviting and alluring one another to Christ either from the pulpit or from the pew. Moreover, it could be that that intentionally beholding and contemplating Christ in the Word, sacraments and ceremonies of the church has become a forgotten spiritual exercise.

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<sup>219</sup> Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Vol. 2, 187.

<sup>220</sup> Zachman, 205-06. Zachman adds an interesting two pages on how Jonathan Edwards continued in this tradition of Calvin. He writes, “Like Calvin, Edwards preached sermons that were expositions and applications of Scripture, leading one to think that he, like Calvin, saw the church more as a school than as the mirror in which to behold Christ. However, in those sermons and in other writings, Edwards leads his congregations to an understanding of faith in which faith is the new perception or contemplation of the glory and beauty of God in all his works, and not only the knowledge of doctrine drawn from Scripture. For Edwards knows that one may know and memorize the whole of Scripture, and even use it in discussion to convince others of the correctness of one’s faith, without ever beholding or contemplating the beauty and glory of the truths spoken of in Scripture. The true knowledge of Scripture is therefore to be given eyes to see the beauty and glory in all the works of God attested in Scripture.” He continues, “The saints who are given the ability to behold the beauty of God’s holiness in all of God’s works will, for Edwards as for Calvin, be gently invited and sweetly allured to God by the object of their contemplation. . . . As in Calvin, Edwards describes the godly as ravished by the beauty of the one they behold and contemplate, so that they forget all about themselves for the sake of the one they behold by faith.” Zachman, 206-07.

### **E. A relationship that affects every aspect of life**

In Book 3 of his *Institutes*, Calvin has four classic chapters on the Christian life.<sup>221</sup> He begins these chapters by writing that “The object of regeneration . . . is to manifest in the life of believers a harmony and agreement between God’s righteousness and their obedience, and thus to confirm the adoption they have received as sons (Gal. 4:5; cf. II Peter 1:10).”<sup>222</sup> Thus, we are to be holy because God is holy. “When we hear mention of our union with God,” Calvin continues, “let us remember that holiness must be its bond; not because we come into communion with him by virtue of our holiness! Rather, we ought first to cleave unto him so that, infused with his holiness, we may follow whither he calls.”<sup>223</sup>

Union with Christ will not only enable us to be infused with God’s own holiness. It will also lead to a true knowledge of God. About this true knowledge, Calvin writes, “For it is a doctrine not of the tongue but of life. It is not apprehended by the understanding and memory alone, as other disciplines are, but it is received only when it possesses the whole soul, and finds a seat and resting place in the inmost affection of the heart.” Thus, this doctrine “must enter our heart and pass into our daily living, and so transform us into itself that it may not be unfruitful for us.” Consequently, we should not be “content to roll the gospel on the tips of [our] tongues when its efficacy ought to penetrate the inmost affections of the heart, take its seat in the soul, and affect the whole man a hundred times more deeply than the cold exhortations of the philosophers!”<sup>224</sup>

When union with Christ leads to a true knowledge of God and Christ, this true knowledge will enable us to thankfully deny ourselves so that we can have a right attitude of

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<sup>221</sup> For Calvin’s doctrine of the Christian life, see John H. Leith, *John Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989) and Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life*.

<sup>222</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 10, 1:684.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 6, 2: 686.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 6, 4: 688.

love towards our fellow men and devotion to God's will trusting in God's blessing alone.<sup>225</sup> Furthermore, God's infused holiness will enable us to patiently and obediently take up our cross and follow Christ where He calls to go.<sup>226</sup> The tribulations and vanities of this transient present life, should lead us to meditate on the life to come,<sup>227</sup> because "*It is the hope of the life to come that gives meaning and purpose to the life in which we presently are.*"<sup>228</sup>

In this life we are allowed to use all of God's blessings out of necessity or for our delight,<sup>229</sup> because all God's gifts were created for our good, not our ruin.<sup>230</sup> We are not to use these gifts indulgently,<sup>231</sup> but to consider these gifts to be held in trust as God's stewards who will one day have to render an account of what we have done with his gifts.<sup>232</sup> Thus, ultimately our vocation or calling is foundational for our way of life because "each individual has his own kind of living [or calling] assigned to him by the Lord as a sort of sentry post so that he may not heedlessly wander about throughout life."<sup>233</sup> Thus, infused with God's life, God's sons and daughters embody and represent Him in the various spheres of life God calls them to go. In doing so, they will work together with God in combating the forces of chaos and disorder while at the same time work together with Him for the redemption of society.

In the light of Calvin's view on the Christian life, it should not surprise us that he considers the monastic life of his own day to be a distortion of the gospel. "Our present day monks," he writes, "find in idleness the chief part of their sanctity. For if you take idleness away from them, where will that contemplative life be, in which they boast they excel all

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., III, 7, 1-9:689-700.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., III, 8, 1-11:701-12

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., III, 9:1-6:712-19.

<sup>228</sup> Ford Lewis Battles, "The Piety of John Calvin," 8, at [http://www.the-highway.com/piety1\\_Battles.html](http://www.the-highway.com/piety1_Battles.html) (emphasis original).

<sup>229</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 10, 1: 719.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., III, 10, 2:720.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., III, 10, 3-4:721-23. For Calvin on Christian moderation, see Wallace, 170-192.

<sup>232</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 10, 5:723. See also Wallace, 130-140.

<sup>233</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 10, 6:724.

others and draw nigh to the angels?”<sup>234</sup> To be sure, Calvin does acknowledge that the work ethic of monks of the ancient church was better, for during that time “pious men prepared themselves by monastic discipline to govern the church, that thus they might be fitter and better trained to undertake so great an office.”<sup>235</sup> Yet, Calvin has a problem with monasticism as such, because it sets up “a double Christianity,” with some being more holy than others and having higher callings to fulfill than other Christians,<sup>236</sup> because union with Christ is a relationship that affects every area of life.<sup>237</sup>

The Chalcedonian axiom of *distinction sed non separatio* underlying Calvin’s anthropology also underlies his sociology. McGrath sums this up well when he writes:

Calvin’s impressively world-affirming theology may be said to rest upon asserting the utter ontological distinction between God and the world, while denying the possibility of separating the two. The theme *distinction sed non separation*, which underlies so many aspects of Calvin’s theology, reappears in his understanding of the Christian’s relationship to society. A knowledge of God the Creator cannot be isolated from knowledge of his creation. Christians are expected to show respect, concern and commitment to the world on account of a loyalty, obedience and love for God its creator. The world does not have a direct claim to a Christian’s loyalty; it is an indirect claim, resting on a recognition of the unique relation of origin which exists between God and his creation. In revering nature as God’s creation, one is worshipping God, not worshipping nature.

McGrath adds:

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid., IV, 13, 10:1264. Cf. Tamburello, 94.

<sup>235</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 13, 8:1262.. Cf. Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, 13:14:1268. See also II, 8, 56-57::419-421. Cf. Tamburello, 95; For Calvin on the monastic ideal, see David Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 187-198.

<sup>237</sup> For Calvin’s socio-economic impact, see W. Fred Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary: John Calvin and his Socio-Economic Impact* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1971); Keith Randell, *John Calvin and the Later Reformation* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), 61-78. For Calvinism as a cultural force, see Robert D. Knudsen, “Calvinism as a Cultural Force” in W. Stanford Reid (ed.), *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 11-29; H. Henry Meeter, *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., rev. by Paul A. Marshall (Grand Rapids: Baker Books House, 1990). 50-67. For Calvin and politics, see Meeter, 71-200; C. Gregg Singer, “Calvin and the Social Order” in Jacob T. Hoogstra, *John Calvin Contemporary Prophet: A Symposium* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1959), 227-241. For the Calvinistic concept of culture, see Henry R. Van Til, *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1972). For Calvin and the Political Order, see W. Stanford Reid, “Calvin and the Political Order,” in Hoogstra, *John Calvin Contemporary Prophet*, 243-257.

To be a Christian thus does not—indeed, *cannot*—mean renouncing the world; for to renounce the world is to renounce the God who so wondrously created it. The world, though fallen, is not evil. The Christian is called to work in the world, in order to redeem the world. Commitment to the world is a vital aspect of the working out of the Christian doctrine of redemption. A failure to commit oneself to and work in the world is tantamount to declaring that it cannot, and should not, be redeemed.<sup>238</sup>

Thus, being re-membered to the Father by being embedded into Christ through being a member of his body leads to being embedded with Christ in society.

### F. A mysterious relationship

For Calvin, being embedded in Christ is ultimately a mysterious relationship. For instance, in his letter to Peter Martyr, he writes, “How this happens far exceeds the limits of my understanding, I must confess; thus I have more of an impression of this mystery than I strive to comprehend it.”<sup>239</sup> Reflecting on being bone of Jesus’ bone and flesh of his flesh (Eph. 5:32), Calvin writes that this is a supernatural reality “clearly beyond our own comprehension.” Thus, he adds, “Let us therefore labour more to feel Christ living in us, than to discover the nature of that intercourse.”<sup>240</sup> Moreover, he refers to “the secret power of the Spirit” that unites us with Christ,<sup>241</sup> our souls feeding on the immortality of Jesus when we celebrate the Lord’s Supper as a “high mystery,”<sup>242</sup> and the “incomprehensible power” of the Holy Spirit that unites us to Christ in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.<sup>243</sup> Reflecting on why the mystery of godliness is Jesus Christ manifest in the flesh, Calvin writes:

Why doth St. Paul call this a mystery of faith, that Jesus Christ, who is God everlasting, was manifest in the flesh? It is as much as if he should say,

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<sup>238</sup> Alister McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 221-22.

<sup>239</sup> John Calvin, “Letter to Peter Martyr,” 8 Aug. 1555, cited by Tamburello, 101.

<sup>240</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 325. Cf. Tamburello, 99.

<sup>241</sup> Calvin., *Institutes*, III, 11, 5:730.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 17,1:1360.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 17, 33:1405.

when we are gathered to God, and made one body with the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall behold the end for which we were made; to wit, that we might know that God is joined and made one with us in the person of His Son.

Calvin adds, “Thus, we must conclude that no man can be a Christian, unless he know this secret which is spoken of by St. Paul.”<sup>244</sup> Thus, the mystery of godliness involves Christ becoming a member of humanity and being embedded in humanity that He might re-member us to the Father by being a member of his body and being embedded in Him.

### **Excursus eleven: the secret impulse of the Spirit**

Calvin often speaks about the “secret impulse of the Spirit” or uses a variation of this phrase.<sup>245</sup> Sometimes he uses this phrase in a general way. For instance, reflecting on how God told Moses in advance what would happen when He would deliver his people out of Egypt, Calvin writes that “men’s hearts are controlled, and guided by the secret inspiration of God.”<sup>246</sup> Reflecting on why the crowds honour Christ, Calvin writes, “. . . it would seem to have been by a sudden movement of the Spirit that this honour was rendered to Christ, when nothing of this nature had been intended by the disciples . . .”<sup>247</sup> Reflecting on why Joseph of Arimathea exposed himself to scorn and danger by burying Jesus, Calvin writes, “. . . there can be no doubt that this singular courage arose from the secret movement of the Spirit.”<sup>248</sup>

In addition to the use of this technical expression for the work of the Spirit in a general way, Calvin also uses this phrase when extraordinary revelation takes the place outside the ordinary means of revelation. Reflecting, for instance, on how Joseph was able to interpret Pharaoh’s dream, Calvin writes that he is able to do this because by “the revelation

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., *The Mystery of Godliness and other Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 13.

<sup>245</sup> For what follows, see also Milner, 197-203

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses arranged in the Form of a Harmony in Calvin’s Commentaries Volume II*, trans. Charles William Bingham (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 81.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., *Commentaries on the Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, Vol.2, 451.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on the Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, Vol. 3, 331.

of the Spirit . . . by a special impulse above nature.”<sup>249</sup> Reflecting on God’s leading in the lives of prophets, Calvin writes, “The Prophet again affirms what we have formerly seen, that God had worked upon his mind by the secret instinct of his own Spirit.”<sup>250</sup>

What is true for dreams and prophecies is also true for prayers and miracles.

Reflecting on Moses’ prayer for Pharaoh, Calvin writes, “Nor is there any question that he prayed under the special impulse of the Spirit.”<sup>251</sup> Because by nature we do not pray with godly aspirations, Calvin writes, “Hence the manner of praying aright must be suggested by the Spirit: and he calls those groanings unutterable, into which we break forth by the impulse of the Spirit, for this reason—because they far exceed the capability of our own minds.”<sup>252</sup>

Reflecting on the assurance Peter had to be able to perform a miracle, Calvin writes, “Therefore, before such time as Peter commandeth the lame man to arise, he did cast and fasten his eyes upon him; this steadfast looking upon him was not without some peculiar motion of the Spirit.”<sup>253</sup> Milner concludes:

In general, then, Calvin adduces this “secret impulse of the Spirit” to authenticate any thought, speech or action of the godly which lacks objective warrant, *i.e.*, objective expression of the divine will—*ordinatio Dei*. In all of the foregoing cases there is no such, and in some of them *ordinatio* to the contrary. Such instances would ordinarily be reckoned *disorderly* by Calvin, for order depends jointly upon the *ordinatio Dei* and the work of the Spirit. The “secret impulse of the Spirit,” however, seems to be proof against his, assuring us that such speech, thought or action is not disorderly but extraordinary, that it is correlated with the secret counsel, if not the revealed will, of God.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on the First Book of Moses called Genesis*, Vol. 2., 309.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., *Commentaries on the First Twenty Chapters of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, Vol. 2 in *Calvin’s Commentaries Volume XI*, trans. Thomas Myers (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 141.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, 205.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., *Commentaries of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 313.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., *Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles*, Vol. 1 in *Calvin’s Commentaries XVIII*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 138.

<sup>254</sup> Milner, 119-200. Since the secret counsel of God is unknowable, Milner goes on to address the issue of the noetic [intellectual] content of the “secret impulse” of the Holy Spirit. He concludes that while knowledge in the strict sense of the word is excluded, this noetic content does include inner certainty of the will of God. He proceeds with that this is not true for the ungodly who are also led by the “secret impulse” of the Spirit. He

This excursus is important for this study because ontological dis-embeddedness and embeddedness has everything to do with the knowledge of God and the knowledge of self. The less we experientially know that we are always ontologically embedded in Christ through the secret impulse of the Holy Spirit through faith, the less we will intentionally live an ontologically embedded life with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The more, however, we experientially know that we are always ontologically embedded in Christ through the secret impulse of the Holy Spirit through faith, the more we will intentionally live an ontologically embedded life with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

#### **IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BEING EMBEDDED WITH CHRIST IN THE FATHER THROUGH THE ADVANCE INSTALLMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

According to the Calvin, being embedded in Christ is covenantal relationship, re-embedded and deepened through the incarnation, personally embraced by repentance and faith, enriched by the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, a relationship that affects every aspect of life and transcends human understanding. What, however, is the significance of this relationship according to Calvin?

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advances Pilate as a classic example to prove his point. Milner writes, "Whereas the godly person 'perceives' that he acts under the influence of the Spirit, the ungodly person is ignorant of the impulse—and thus, the compulsion—under which he acts. The one is, for this reason, 'extraordinary,' the other 'disorderly.'" Ibid. 201. Regarding the preaching to the godly and ungodly, Milner refers to Calvin's reflections on Isa. 8:18. There Calvin writes, "For Isaiah taught publicly, admonished every person, and invited all without exception to come to God; but his doctrine is of advantage to those only who have been given to him by God. By *given* he means those whom God drew by an inward and secret operation of his Spirit, when the sound of the external voice fell on the ears of the multitude without producing any good effect. See Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, Vol. 1, 285. Elsewhere Milner writes, ". . . we must conclude that Calvin contrasts two operations of the Spirit—a governing of the elect and a bridling of the reprobate. That Calvin thinks systematically of such a work of the Spirit, moreover, is corroborated by his teaching concerning the 'secret impulse.' In both cases, his reticence to pronounce the Spirit's name in connection with this work [i.e., restraining the reprobate] derives, first from his intention to make it clear that this is not a sanctifying work of the Spirit, and secondly from his refusal to acknowledge, or appear to acknowledge, God as the author of evil." Ibid., 42.

## A. Identification with Christ

According to Calvin, a believer is ontologically embedded in Christ. Since the humanity of Christ is infused with the divine life of the Logos, members of God's covenant community share in the properties of the divine essence through faith. Consequently, the flesh of Christ is like a rich and inexhaustible fountain that pours into them the life springing forth from the Godhead. In this light, it should not surprise us that where Christians are Christ is too. After all, as Jesus embodied and represented his Father, so they embody and represent Jesus. Thus, reflecting on Mt. 10:40, Calvin writes, "Yet here is another consolation tending to excite a very great number of persons to treat them [Jesus' disciples] with kindness. Whatever is done to them, Christ does not hesitate to reckon as done to himself."<sup>255</sup> Likewise, reflecting on Matthew 25:40, Calvin writes, "Christ has just now told us . . . how highly he values deeds of charity, so now he openly declares, that he will reckon as done to himself whatever we have bestowed on his people." And he adds, "We must be prodigiously sluggish, if compassion be not drawn from our bowels by this statement, that Christ is either neglected or honoured in the person of those who need our assistance."<sup>256</sup> Similarly, reflecting on Matthew 18:8, Calvin writes, "This is added by way of consolation, that we may not account it troublesome or disagreeable to exercise humility, by means of which Christ not only receives us under his protection, but likewise recommends us to the favour of men."<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, Vol. 1, in *Calvin's Commentaries Volume XVI*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 475.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, Vol. 3, in *Calvin's Commentaries Volume XVII*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 181.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, Vol. 2, in *Calvin's Commentaries Volume XVI*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 34.

## **B. The experience of being embedded in Christ and Christ being embedded in his body**

The significance of being embedded in Christ through faith not only entails identification between Christ and his covenant community. It also involves being embedded in Christ. Calvin already sees this foreshadowed in the fact that the Old Testament priests entered the Tabernacle or Temple with the names of the twelve tribes engraved on two stones of the shoulder of the ephod and the twelve jewels representing the twelve tribes in the breastplate. Thus, he writes, “in the person of one man, all entered into the sanctuary together.”<sup>258</sup> Consequently, when Christ fulfills his office of prophet, priest and king, He does this as the Head of his church or covenant people. Thus, Calvin can write, “language which is exclusively appropriate to him [Christ], is transferred to us in consequence of the intimate communion existing between the head and the members.”<sup>259</sup> Consequently, it should not surprise us that when Calvin reflects on Ephesians 2:6, he writes,

The resurrection and the sitting in heaven, which are here mentioned, are not yet seen by mortal eyes. Yet, as if those blessings were presently in our possession, he states that we have received them; . . . in Christ we already possess a blessed immortality and glory; . . . Hitherto it does not appear in the members, but only in the head; yet, in consequence of the secret union, it belongs truly to the members.<sup>260</sup>

Yet, being embedded in Christ through faith also entails Christ being embedded in his body so that members of his body actually experience Christ living in them with his Holy Spirit. Thus, reflecting on Jesus being in the Father and Jesus’ disciples being in Him (Jn. 14:20), Calvin writes, “For the object of these words is, to show that we cannot, by indolent speculation, *know* what is the sacred and mystical union between us and him, and again, between him and *the Father*; but that the only way of knowing it is, when he diffuses his life

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, 184. Cf. Wallace, 11.

<sup>259</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel in Calvin’s Commentaries Volume XIII*, trans. Thomas Myers (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 76. Cf. Wallace, 12.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 225.

in us by the secret efficacy of the Spirit.” And he adds, “As *the Father* has laid up in the Son all fullness of blessings, so, on the other hand, the Son has conveyed himself entirely into us.”<sup>261</sup>

Reflecting on Christians being one spirit with the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:17), Calvin writes, “. . . the whole of this passage would tend to magnify the efficacy and dignity of the spiritual marriage which subsists between us and Christ.” This spiritual marriage “is closer than that of a husband and wife.”<sup>262</sup>

Reflecting on Paul having been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20), Calvin writes, “. . . let us remember, that we are delivered from the yoke of the law, only by becoming one with Christ, as the twig draws its sap from the root, only by growing into one nature.” And he adds, “He [Paul] does not live by his own life, but is animated by the secret power of Christ; so that Christ may be said to live and grow in him; for as the soul enlivens the body, so Christ imparts life to his members.”<sup>263</sup> According to Calvin, Christ lives in his body in two ways. “The one life,” he says, “consists in governing us by his Spirit and directing all our actions; the other, in making us partakers of his righteousness; so that, while we can do nothing of ourselves, we are accepted in the sight of God.”<sup>264</sup> When members of Christ’s body are governed by the Spirit of Christ, his life will be characterized by self-denial and meditation on the future life.<sup>265</sup>

Reflecting on Paul’s immense desire to make known the glorious riches of Christ in the church (Col. 1:27), Calvin writes, “He says, therefore, *which is Christ*, meaning by this, that all that secret [i.e., mystery of the gospel] is contained in Christ, and that all the riches of

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, Vol. 2, 95.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul, the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Vol. 1, 218-19.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 74.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., *Institutes*, III, 8-9:702-719.

heavenly wisdom are obtained by them when they have Christ. . . . He adds, *in you*, because they now possess Christ . . . .”<sup>266</sup>

Reflecting on Christ dwelling in members of his body through faith (Eph. 3:17), Calvin writes, “Justly . . . does Paul affirm that the persons who are endowed by God with spiritual vigour are those in whom *Christ dwells*.” This happens through faith, which according to Calvin “is not a distant view, but a warm embrace, of Christ, by which he dwells in us, and we are filled with the Divine Spirit.”<sup>267</sup> Reflecting on 2 Corinthians 13:5, Calvin writes, “. . . as there is but one Christ, it must be of necessity, that the same Christ must dwell alike in minister and people. Now dwelling in the people, how will he deny himself in the minister.”<sup>268</sup>

Reflecting on Christians being grafted into Christ, the Vine (Jn. 15:1-8), Calvin writes, “The general meaning of this comparison is, that we are, by nature, barren and dry, except in so far as we have been engrafted into Christ, and draw from him a power which is new, and which does not proceed from ourselves.” And he adds, “So long as we are separate from him, we bear no fruit that is good and acceptable to God, for we are unable to do anything good.”<sup>269</sup>

Thus, according to Calvin, the church lives an eschatological existence in this present age. When the Holy Spirit unites members of Christ’s body to the Lord Jesus Christ through faith, they experience in time already what they will experience in a much fuller sense in eternity when they will see Christ face to face.

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid., *Commentaries on the Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, 170.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 262.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul, the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Vol 2, 396.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, Vol. 2, 106, 109.

### C. Conformity to Christ

When we are identified with Christ, are embedded in Christ and Christ embedded in us, we will conform unto the Lord Jesus Christ through the Spirit of sonship.<sup>270</sup> Thus, reflecting on those whose life is “hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3) “being renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator” (Col. 3:10), Calvin writes that “the end of our regeneration, . . . is that we may be made like God, and that his glory may shine forth in us . . . so that [we] reflect[s], like a mirror, the wisdom, righteousness, and goodness of God.”<sup>271</sup>

Reflecting on Paul increasingly wanting to personally get to know the Lord Jesus Christ better in the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming like Him in his death (Phil. 3:9, 10), Calvin writes, “Christ therefore is rightly known, when we feel how powerful his death and resurrection are, and how efficacious they are in us.” And he adds, “Christ crucified is set before us, that we may follow him through tribulations and distresses; and hence the resurrection of the dead is expressly made mention of, that we may know that we must die before we live.”<sup>272</sup>

Reflecting on why Paul labours with all the energy God has given him to bring each person to maturity in Christ (Col. 1:28, 29), Calvin writes, “Now, what better thing can be desired than what confers upon us the highest perfection? He again repeats *in Christ*, that they may not desire to know anything but Christ alone.”<sup>273</sup>

Reflecting on how Paul so often feels like a mother in the pain of childbirth till Christ’s life becomes visible in the life of the members of the congregation (Gal. 4:19), Calvin writes, “That Christ should be formed in us is the same thing with our being formed in

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<sup>270</sup> For the pattern of conformity to Christ, see Wallace, *Calvin*, 41-48.

<sup>271</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, 211-12.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 98-99.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

Christ; for we are born so as to become new creatures in him; and he, on the other hand, is born in us, so that we live his life.” And he adds, “If ministers wish to do anything, let them labour to form Christ, not to form themselves, in their hearers.”<sup>274</sup>

For Calvin, the church is of vital importance to nurture this conformity into Christ. Thus, he writes, “I shall start, then, with the church, into whose bosom God is pleased to gather his sons, not only that they may be nourished by her help and ministry as long as they are infants and children, but also that they may be guided by her motherly care until they mature and at last reach the goal of faith.” And he adds, “. . . so that, for those to whom he [= God] is Father the church may also be Mother.”<sup>275</sup>

#### **D. Resting in Christ**

Conformity to Christ is all God’s work because the church or God’s covenant community has her complete salvation in Christ. Thus, reflecting on John 17:19, Calvin writes:

By these words he explains more clearly from what source that sanctification flows, which is completed in us by the doctrine of the Gospel. It is, because he consecrated himself to the Father, that his holiness might come to us; for as the blessing on the first-fruits is spread over the whole harvest, so the Spirit of God cleanses us by the holiness of Christ, and makes us partakers of it.<sup>276</sup>

Likewise, reflecting on Christ being our righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30), Calvin writes, “. . . of all the blessings that are here enumerated we must seek in Christ not the half, or merely a part, but the entire completion. For Paul does not say that

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid., *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 132-33.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., *Institutes*, IV, 1, 1:1012. For the church as mother of learning, see Breen, *Christianity and Humanism*, 201-268.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, Vol. 1, 180-81.

he has been given to us by way of filling up, or eking out righteousness, holiness, wisdom, and redemption, but assigns to him exclusively the entire accomplishment of the whole.”<sup>277</sup>

Having our complete salvation in Christ transforms the Christian life into a Sabbath. According to Calvin, this was one of the main reasons why God gave his Old Testament covenant people the Sabbath. “First, under the repose of the seventh day,” Calvin writes, “the heavenly Lawgiver meant to represent to the people of Israel spiritual rest, in which believers ought to lay aside their own works to allow God to work in them.”<sup>278</sup> Likewise, reflecting the Sabbath being a sign that God was the sanctifier of his people (Ezek. 20:12), Calvin writes:

But the Prophet means that something else was intended by the Sabbath, that the Israelites might acknowledge themselves separated by God, so as to experience him for their Father in all things. . . . then that they were not adopted in vain, but were sought by God, that he should renew them by his Spirit, and rule the whole course of their life. It was then the greatest ingratitude to break the Sabbath . . .<sup>279</sup>

In order to enter into this rest we must cease from our own works. Thus, commenting on Hebrews 4:10, Calvin writes:

The chief good of man is nothing else but union with God; this is attained when we are formed according to him as our exemplar. Now this conformation the Apostle teaches us takes place when we rest from our works. It hence at length follows, that man becomes happy by self-denial. For what else is to cease from our works, but to mortify our flesh, when a man renounces himself and may live to God? For here we must always begin, when we speak of a godly and holy life, that man being in a manner dead to himself, should allow God to live in him, that he should abstain from his own works, so as to give place to God to work.<sup>280</sup>

Consequently, according to Calvin, the Christian life begins by resting with Christ in the Father. This is how God’s covenant community attains her ultimate goal of glorification

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul, the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Vol 1, 94.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., *Institutes*, II, 7, 28:395.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid. *Commentaries on the First Twenty Five Chapters of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, Vol. 2, in *Calvin’s Commentaries Volume XII*, trans. Thomas Myers (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 300.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., *Commentaries of the Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews*, 98.

through being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

### **Excursus twelve: contemplation and the Sabbath**

This chapter noted that, according to Calvin, a Christian is called to nurture spiritual growth in this life. Because the soul is made for communion with God, it is constantly searching for God, first moving towards God and then resting in God. As the Spirit opens up the soul to God, a believer moves from virtue to tranquility to contemplation. This chapter further noted that for Calvin contemplation is closely linked to God manifesting Himself. By manifesting Himself in the works of creation as in a painting, mirror or garment, God invites and allures humankind to behold Himself and feel the weight of his glory. This chapter further noted that as God invites and allures humankind to behold Himself in the manifestation of Himself in the work of his creation and feel the weight of his glory, so God invites and allures his covenant community to behold and contemplate his Son in the proclamation of Jesus Christ in the gospel and sacrament and ceremonies of the church and feel the weight of his glory. By being invited in and allured to behold and contemplate the glory of God in Christ, both humankind in general and God's covenant community in particular are in a position to be transformed into what they are beholding and contemplating.

Calvin wanted the members of God's covenant community to contemplate every day.<sup>281</sup> He was of the opinion that the reason God did not create in a moment but in six days was to facilitate daily contemplation this work. Thus, he writes, "For<sup>282</sup> by this circumstance we are drawn away from all fictions to the one God who distributed his work into six days that we might not find it irksome to occupy our whole life with contemplating it." This

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<sup>281</sup> For what follows, see also Zachman, 196-99

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., *Institutes*, I, 14, 2:161.

contemplation of God in his work of creation should not be done in a hurry. Thus, Calvin writes:

There is no doubt that the Lord would have us uninterruptedly occupied in this holy meditation; that, while we contemplate in all creatures, as in mirrors, those immense riches of his wisdom, justice, goodness, and power, we should not merely run over them cursorily, and, so to speak, 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>283</sup>

According to Calvin, humankind would do well to begin with the contemplation of God in the heavens and move from there to the contemplation of God on the earth. Thus, he writes, “When a man, from beholding and contemplating the heavens, has been brought to acknowledge God, he will learn also to reflect upon and to admire his wisdom and power as displayed on the face of the earth, not only in general, but even in the minutest plants.”<sup>284</sup>

Once we have beheld and contemplated the manifestation of God in his works in the heavens and on the earth and felt the weight of his glory in these works, we should descend into ourselves, behold and contemplate his work in ourselves and feel and enjoy the weight of God’s glory in ourselves. Thus, Calvin writes, “There remains the second part of the rule, more closely related to faith. It is to recognize that God has destined all things for our good and salvation but at the same time to feel his power and grace in ourselves and in the great benefits he has conferred upon us, and so bestir ourselves to trust, invoke, praise, and love him.”<sup>285</sup> This beholding and contemplation of the manifestation of God in his work of creation to lead us to be ravished with wonder at the weight of God’s glory. Thus, Calvin writes, “As soon as we acknowledge God to be the supreme Architect, who has erected the

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid., *Institutes*, I, 14, 180.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, Vol. 1, 308-09.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., I, 14, 22:181.

beauteous fabric of the universe, our minds must necessarily be ravished with wonder at his infinite goodness, wisdom, and power.”<sup>286</sup>

Calvin taught that one of the purposes of the Sabbath was to make up for the lack of daily meditation. Thus, he writes,

This is, indeed the proper business of the whole life, in which men should daily exercise themselves, to consider the infinite goodness, justice, power, and wisdom of God, in this magnificent theatre of heaven and earth. But, lest men should prove less sedulously [diligent] attentive to it than they ought, every seventh day has been especially selected for the purpose of supplying what was wanting in daily meditation. . . that they, being released from all other business, might the more readily apply their minds to the Creator of the world.<sup>287</sup>

Chapter two noted that that the Sabbath points back to the Sabbath rest God enjoyed after six days of creation and looks forward to the Sabbath rest that will be enjoyed at the consummation of history. Moreover, it noted that Jesus pulled this eschatological Sabbath rest forward into time with his life, death and resurrection. In doing so, He re-membered his covenant community to the Father by making her a member of his body through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. Consequently Christ draws God’s covenant community into his own life and work, enabling her to participates in a new movement that is rolling towards the new heaven and new earth where all things will be made right and where Christ is all in all. This is the eschatological reality of God’s covenant community in Christ.

By especially using the Sabbath as a day of beholding and contemplating God’s work in creation and redemption, God’s covenant community is invited and allured to rest from her own works and to enter into this eschatological Sabbath rest and feel the weight of its glory. In doing so, she is increasingly transformed into the image of God in Christ and becomes a

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid., *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, Vol. 1, 309.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses called Genesis*, Vol. 1, 106.

willing participant through faith in this new movement that is rolling towards the new heaven and the new earth by being a painting that invites and allures others to behold and contemplate the manifestation of God's glory and feel the weight of this glory.

The Sabbath is a constant reminder that when God finished his six days of creation, He said that everything was very good. Moreover, it is a constant reminder that when Jesus had borne the full burden of the wrath of God against the whole human race, He said, "It is finished!" Being increasingly transformed into the image of God in Christ and becoming a willing participant through faith in God's new movement that is rolling towards the new heaven and the new earth begins by resting in what has been declared to be very good and finished. There is no better way to rest than by beholding and contemplating what has been declared to be very good and finished and to be transformed in the process. This is where a God-generated life begins: resting with Christ in God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

### **Excursus thirteen: *Distinctio sed non separatio***

When this chapter dealt with being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit being a relationship that is re-membered, re-embedded and deepened through the incarnation, it noted that being ontologically embedded with Christ through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit can only be understood through the Chalcedonian axiom of *distinctio sed non separatio* underlying Calvin's anthropology. It noted:

It is however, evident that throughout his discussion of the relation of God and humanity Calvin regards a single paradigm as normative. The paradigm in question is that made available by the incarnation, specifically the union without fusion of divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. Time and time again,

Calvin appeals to the Christologically grounded formula, *distinctio sed non separatio*; at this point, two ideas may be *distinguished* but not *separated*.<sup>288</sup>

When this chapter dealt with being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit being a relationship that affects every aspect of life, it noted:

Calvin's impressively world-affirming theology may be said to rest upon asserting the utter ontological distinction between God and the world, while denying the possibility of separating the two. The theme *distinctio sed non separation*, which underlies so many aspects of Calvin's theology, reappears in his understanding of the Christian's relationship to society. A knowledge of God the Creator cannot be isolated from knowledge of his creation. Christians are expected to show respect, concern and commitment to the world on account of a loyalty, obedience and love for God its creator. The world does not have a direct claim to a Christian's loyalty; it is an indirect claim, resting on a recognition of the unique relation of origin which exists between God and his creation. In revering nature as God's creation, one is worshipping God, not worshipping nature.<sup>289</sup>

What was noted with regard to Calvin's Christology, anthropology and sociology, can also be noted with regard to his understanding of creation and providence. On the one hand, God is not deistically dis-embedded from creation, but embedded in it by the secret impulse of the Spirit. On the other hand, God is not ontologically merged or fused with creation in a pantheistic manner.

The same is true with regard to Calvin's understanding of the Word and the preaching of the Word. On the one hand, God is not deistically dis-embedded from the Word and preaching of the Word, but ontologically embedded in them by the secret impulse of the Spirit. On the other hand, God does not ontologically merge Himself with the Word and preaching of the Word in a pantheistic way.

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<sup>288</sup> McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 149.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 221-22.

What is true for the presence of Christ in the Word and preaching of the Word, is also true with regard to the real presence of Christ in the sacraments. With regard to baptism: on the one hand, water and Christ are ontologically distinguished; on the other hand, they are not ontologically separated. With regard to the Lord's Supper: on the one hand, bread and wine are ontologically distinguished; on the other hand, they are not ontologically separated. Christ is ontologically embedded in the water, bread and wine, yet He is not ontologically fused or merged with the elements of water, bread and wine.<sup>290</sup>

This has immense implications for living the life of faith. Faith is a belief producing process. It is putting one's full weight on God's promise or declaration and feeling the weight of the glory of God in this promise or declaration. Humankind is anthropologically able to put its full weight on God because it has been created with an immaterial self or soul that has a structural "openness to the world." This gives the soul the "unique freedom . . . to inquire and to move beyond every regulation of his existence."<sup>291</sup> This created "plasticity and adaptability" to move beyond our existence enables the soul to have God ontologically embed Himself in it with his Spirit giving it the same immortality that He Himself enjoys. Once created, a soul never dies, just like God never dies, but lives forever.

Moreover, this created "plasticity and adaptability" enables the soul to zone in on the manifestation of God in the works of creation and redemption with its "noticer" or noticing

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<sup>290</sup> Harald Knudsen sums up Calvin's position of the Lord's Supper well when he writes: "*Calvin* hat sich sowohl gegen Zwingli wie gegen Luther abgegrenzt. Realpräsenz in den Elementen und manducatio oralis verwarf er, betonte aber den exhibitiven Charakter des Sakraments, in dem zugleich mit dem Genuß der Symbole die himmlische Gabe dargeboten wird. Der Grundsatz **distinctio sed non separatio**, der für seine Gnadenmittellehre wie für seine Christologie kennzeichnend ist, und das finitum non capax infiniti bestimmen auch sein Abendmahlsverständnis. Eigentümlich ist Calvin die Anschauung, dass die Gläubigen sich im Geist zu dem im Himmel befindlichen Christus erheben sollen (sursum corda), mit ihm in seinem mystischen Leibe geeinigt werden und durch denselben Geist mit den Lebenskräften des Fleisches Christi gespeist werden. Die Ungläubigen und Gottlosen können dieser sakramentalen Gabe nicht teilhaftig werden. See Harald Knudsen, "Thematischer Überblick zur Übung: Realpräsenz Christi in der Eucharistie" at: <http://amor.cms.hu-berlin.de/~h1394ad2/ThematUeberbl1a.htm>. Bold added

<sup>291</sup> Wolhart Pannenberg, *What is Man?* trans. Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 3.

mind—“most noble and excellent” part of the soul—<sup>292</sup>and be allured and captivated by the glory of God’s manifestation. Allured and impacted by the weight of God’s glory in his works of creation and redemption, the noticing mind begins to think and feel and act upon these thoughts and feelings.<sup>293</sup> When the soul responds to the weight of God’s glory in a positive manner, it becomes a mirror that cooperates (*sunergos*) with God’s own God-given energy (*energeia*), becoming a mirror of the divinity of God or a painting that invites other to behold and contemplate the beauty of God.

This is a profound mystery that is more felt than understood. Yet, it is the epistemological secret to understand being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

## V. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has shown that being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit or union with Christ through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is a central motif in Calvin’s theology. Furthermore, it has shown that what Calvin teaches is consistent with what was discovered in the previous chapter regarding the Scriptural foundations for the nature and significance of living in union with Christ.

At the same time, however, what Calvin taught has enriched our understanding of what was discovered in the previous chapter. Of particular interest is what Calvin taught regarding believers becoming partakers of God’s divine nature. According to Calvin, this is an ontological union with God that is a sort of deification (*quasi deificari*). Not that believers

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<sup>292</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 295.

<sup>293</sup> This is a description of the will.

share in the essence of God, but they share in the properties of this essence. For Calvin, this is the greatest possible blessing a believer can receive.

Of particular note is also how this deification or sharing in the properties of the divine essence is presupposed in what Calvin teaches about the image of God, union with Christ, engrafting, glorification and the Trinitarian life. To have the image of God restored in Christ, according to Calvin, involves looking like Christ, for in his human nature, which He has in common with us, the imprint (*effigies*) of the Father's glory has been engraved, so that He might transform his members to it. In the incarnation of the Son of God, according to Calvin, God and humankind are united and re-membered. Furthermore, because Christ was obedient and fulfilled the law on our behalf in his human nature, it is through union with his human nature that the life of the Godhead flows into believers through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit since Christ in his humanity contains, as it were, the benefits of his obedience. When we are engrafted into Christ, according to Calvin, not only do we draw the vigor and nourishment of life from Christ, but we also pass from our own to his nature. Glorification, according to Calvin, involves God irradiating or shining upon our humanity with his divine glory. For Calvin, union with God is fundamentally Trinitarian. It is union with the Father in Christ through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit. The goal of our union with the Father in Christ through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is that through faith we may share in the inner life of the Trinity. More precisely, the goal of this union is that we may participate in and enjoy forever the same love that the Father and the Son have enjoyed from all eternity in and through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

Excursus one on God's providence showed that God is not ontologically dis-embedded from creation in a deistic fashion, but ontologically embedded in it. Excursus two

on the soul and the image of God showed that part of the image of God is the supernatural gift of the knowledge of God that is embedded in the soul through the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, this excursus showed that the soul is immortal. Excursus three on the knowledge of God and the knowledge of self showed that the better we know God, the better we know ourselves and the better we know ourselves, the better we know God. Excursus four on creation as the theater of God's glory showed that because God has embedded Himself in creation, including humankind as his microcosm, creation and humankind irradiate and shine forth the weight of God's glory. Excursus five on deification and union with Christ showed that union with Christ both includes deification and leads to deification. This is a deification, however, in which justification plays a foundational role. Excursus six on faith and the mind showed that when the mind is emptied of its own wisdom and idols and made teachable by the Holy Spirit, it will gradually be lead to an increasingly deeper knowledge of God's will. Excursus seven on faith and knowledge showed that faith is a belief producing process that gives us reliable knowledge about God. Excursus eight on faith and contemplation showed that because Christians are called to spiritual growth in this life, they should behold and contemplate the manifestation of himself in his work of creation and feel the weight of the glory of God in this manifestation. Excursus nine on faith and the will showed that because the will is inherently active God does not remove, cancel or suspend the will in his work of regeneration, but prepares the will to will what is good. Thus, God does not change the structure of the will, but its direction. Excursus ten on contemplation of Christ in the Word and the sacraments showed that the proclamation of Christ in the Word and sacraments is meant to lead to the contemplation of Christ in the Word and the Sacraments. Excursus eleven on the secret impulse of the Spirit showed that

the Spirit is the one who mysteriously embeds us with Christ into the Father and who mysteriously opens our eyes to this ontological embeddedness with Christ in the Father.

Excursus twelve on contemplation and the Sabbath showed that it is not only good to contemplate God in the works of his creation and redemption every day, but especially on the Sabbath to remind ourselves of our ontological origin, structure, direction and destination.

Excursus thirteen on *distinctio sed non separatio* showed that this Chalcedonian axiom is the epistemological secret to experiencing being ontologically embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit.

The enrichment Calvin has given our understanding of being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit has removed some of the moss and weeds that have that have grown over and obscured this beautiful teaching over the centuries. Thus, it can function as a primary theological foundation for my own faith life and ministry as well as that of my congregation. This is important because the overall hypothesis of this study is that it appears that many Reformed Christians not only do not experience what being embedded with Christ in the Father through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit is, but also do not intentionally live this kind of life.

Listening to the voice of the Spirit in the tradition of the church alerts us to potential dangers and points out promising possibilities. Yet, my own tradition is not the only tradition the Spirit of God has worked in. Thus, it is always beneficial to listen to the voice of the Spirit as that comes to us in and through other ecclesiastical traditions. This, too, will alert us to potential dangers and point out promising possibilities. It is to this task that this study now turns.