STROMATA

THE GRADUATE JOURNAL OF
CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

...A VEHICLE OF SCHOLARLY EXPRESSION!

VOLUME 60 | NUMBER 1
YEAR 2018-2019
Anchored in the Reformed tradition, Stromata is a publication that seeks to promote critical thinking into theology and religious studies, and aims to be a vehicle for scholarly expression. Stromata was founded in 1956 in the 80th year of Calvin Theological Seminary, and is currently managed, edited, and reviewed by graduate (doctoral and master-level) students.

Digital issues of Stromata from 2001 to the present are available online at our website: www.calvinseminary.edu/stromata.

All printed issues of Stromata are held at the Hekman Library of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, MI.

ISSN 2476-1095: Print
ISSN 2476-1109: Online
STROMATA

Edited and Proofread for the

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EDITORIAL

VOLUME SIXTY AND STILL RUNNING!

As an English as Second Language student, the 2018-2019 academic year has been very significant for me: this is the third year I serve as the lead editor of the Stromata. But the good news does not stop there. With the current edition, I have the pleasure, along with the Student Senate, to present our Seminary community the sixtieth volume of this graduate journal. This is definitely something to celebrate: The Stromata was founded in 1956 and is still running! In March 2016 we celebrated the 60th anniversary; now we are celebrating the publication of our volume number 60.

As many of you have noticed, I presented a new design and layout of the publication in 2016. There were many challenges during these three years. I reprinted and replaced the lost issues that the Hekman Library needed to complete their collection. I started the process to acquire ISSN numbers for our print and online publication—having our own ISNNs has helped the Stromata to be identified correctly from other publications with the same name. Besides the new look and the processes mentioned above, the Stromata team has worked hard to improve the quality of the submissions received in order to publish good articles and essays written by our students. To that end, we have updated the “Instructions for Authors” located at the end of the issue for those interested in reading the submission guidelines. Last but not least, I am glad to know more women, racial-ethnic diverse, and ESL students within our community are supporting us and sending us their papers. What a blessing!

As you read, I hope this issue may serve to develop your knowledge on the topics discussed.

Happy reading!

Isaias D’Oleo-Ochoa
Editor-in-Chief
Guest Editorial

Let's Live The Words

Abigail DeZeeuw

“The whole purpose of the Bible, it seems to me, is to convince people to set the written word down in order to become living words in the world for God’s sake.”

– Barbara Brown Taylor

One of my favorite word plays in the Hebrew language is the connection between the noun, yad (יָד), and the verb, yada (יָדַע). You can hear the similarities. The words share the same Hebrew root yet are not immediately recognizable as relatives in the English language. The noun yad refers to the hand and, in some cases, the whole arm. The verb, yada, means “to know.” The implication in the Hebrew language is that knowledge is closely related to touch. It seems that knowledge has less to do with the information held in the mind and is more intimately connected with experience.

I spent much of seminary studying the intersection of disability and ministry. I listened to lectures and read books that explained how we are all created in the image of God, how our faith communities often exclude people with disabilities, and how to create more inclusive communities. Even with many classroom hours, that information had not become a part of me yet. I had not metabolized it and allowed it to shape my habits; instead, the knowledge lived in my mind until I began working at Renew Therapeutic Riding Center in Holland, Michigan. At that time, I was a volunteer, a “side-walker,” who walked next to people with disabilities while they were learning how to ride a horse. I remember a particular student who I often felt anxious around. Sherri was in her 50s. She had been blind and deaf all her life and had some intellectual disabilities as well. She would try to bite and headbutt us while we helped her onto the back of a horse, and I was always worried that she might decide to dismount mid-lesson. Working with her was frustrating because I did not know what she was thinking or feeling, but also because my comforting words were useless to her. I found myself dreading those lessons. I knew, thanks to my coursework, that Sherri was made in the image of God just as much as I
was, however, that did not mean that I wanted to spend time with her. I knew I could assume Sherri and her family were likely excluded from their church and community. The truth is that my head-knowledge did not eradicate my own desires to forgo relationship based on my own discomfort with her. I had learned enough to be aware of my sins, but I still did not know how to have a relationship with Sherri. I had to learn that lesson outside of the classroom through tangible experience.

One Spring day, the riding instructor decided that we would go for a trail ride. I walked alongside Sherri while she was on her horse. She was supposed to hold her reins. Instead, she held my right hand tightly in her left as we walked out of the barn and onto the trail. I walked in step with the beat of horse hooves and the grass swayed with the soft, warm wind. Sherri felt the breeze and loosened her grip. She slowly began to tap my open palm with hers, matching the rhythm of the horse. When the wind sped up, her tempo and force of clapping my hand would intensify. After a few minutes on the trail, I realized Sherri was telling me something. I looked up at her and saw her relaxed shoulders and her giant smile. The rhythmic claps told me she was relaxed, and the intense claps communicated sheer delight. In that moment, my physical contact with Sherri taught me what my head-knowledge about Sherri could not. All those lectures and readings were finally making their way into my body through the grace of Sherri’s touch. Sherri taught me that in order to really yada, I had to use my yad—to not just hold information in my mind, but to experience it in my body.

Seminary can feel like a very cerebral experience. The primary mode of information transfer in adult education is generally through lecture and/or readings. These things are important in graduate level study, and yet true knowledge will always be lacking without embodied experience. We know this, of course. If one wants to become a good preacher, it is not enough to only read about how to preach. People who want to become a preacher must practice preaching, much like they would practice anything else that they want to become skilled at. Learning how to follow Christ well is no different. It requires embodied practice. My classroom experiences in seminary were invaluable to me, although they were woefully incomplete without embodying the information. I had to put my books down and step into an embodied learning environment in order to grasp what I had studied. Places like the therapy barn helped me put my head knowledge to the test and allowed me to start creating new habits of
inclusivity and welcome toward people with disabilities. People like Sherri taught me that relationship is always worth the effort.

God’s call to all of us is to love God and love our neighbor by living fully into the gifts He has given us. This involves discerning what gifts we have, cultivating them, and then serving this broken world in a way that radiates the steadfast love of the Lord. A seminary community facilitates a unique opportunity to discern, cultivate, and serve. We have access to a plethora of helpful resources (including the Stromata!) that begin the process of formation. Classroom study is rich as students and faculty engage topics and learn from one another. The diversity of the community challenges our worldviews and encourages us to learn more about one another in order to live well together. Yet in all this, there is an inevitable temptation to remain in our comfort zones and to hold what we have learned in our brains without allowing that information to shape the way we live as embodied creatures in God’s world. We are called to resist that temptation and engage the discomfort of transformation. Let’s steep ourselves in all the words of the Scriptures, participate in lectures and readings, and then let the yada that lives in our minds get into our heart and our yad as we seek to join the Living Word in the redemption of this world.
TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF ACCOMMODATION:  
GOD’S GIFT TO ALL HIS BELOVED

Abigail DeZeeuw

The Christian Reformed Church in North America has changed since its early beginnings. What first began as a Dutch immigrant church is now also “a Korean church, a Navajo church, a Southeast Asia church, a French-Canadian church, a Hispanic-American church, an African-American church, a mosaic church.” Though the CRCNA has diversified in beautiful ways, it has yet to fully mirror the entire body of Christ that it is called to be.

One of the largest, most diverse groups that it marginalizes is people with disabilities — specifically those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The CRC’s Office of Disability Concerns has brought the church closer to realizing that these people are missing from its faith communities. They provide practical ways and resources to better welcome people with disabilities, reminding the church that it is not the full body of Christ unless all God’s image bearers are present. This essay briefly addresses how the cultural worldviews of North America can easily overtake the theological worldviews of the CRCNA and allow the church to marginalize people with IDD. The essay also reorients its readers to a familiar reformed theology and invites the church to join the Office of Disability Concerns in creating congregations more welcoming to people with disabilities.

The CRC has a series of theologies that lead its congregations into a reformed identity. One of these theologies, which is pertinent to disability conversations, is that all people are made in the image of God. All bear God’s image and so the worth of each and every human is inherent — regardless of what they are, able to do, or comprehend. While church members might intellectually believe this, research shows that the church struggles to embody this doctrine. Eric Carter, Associate professor of

https://www.crcna.org/welcome/history.
special education at Vanderbilt University, focuses his research and teaching on effective strategies for including people with disabilities in school, work, and community of faith. In his book, *Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities*, he writes that a 2004 survey showed that “44% of adults with severe disabilities reported attending a church, synagogue, or other place of worship at least once a month, compared with 57% of people without disabilities.” This gap of 13% might not seem very big, however, other statistics indicate that while people with disabilities are sometimes participating in worship, most are not welcomed into any other part of faith communities. Dr. Carter writes that “although almost half of young adults with intellectual disabilities attend church services, only 14% participated in other congregational activities, such as youth groups and choirs.”

The church’s ability to extend a welcome to all people, including people with IDD, directly connects to our intellectual understanding of what it means to be made in the image of God along with other reformed theologies. While faith communities such as churches and seminaries might hold certain beliefs, they can often struggle to fully embody the belief that all people have inherent worth to God, are capable of relationship with God, and should have space to develop that relationship within the faith community.

Thankfully, reformed believers are invited to test those beliefs, holding them up to what is in the Scriptures and asking the Spirit to illuminate hurtful practices along with the way toward Christ and the flourishing of all God’s people. Wondering how to include people with IDD in the faith communities of the CRC invites faith leaders to consider the practices of the church, identifying what theologies are getting stuck in their minds and not making it into their bodies, into the religious practices of the community. Humans are embodied creatures who learn theology through experience and teach theology through action. With this in mind, it is important to ask ourselves: What faith practices marginalize people with disabilities, specifically people with IDD? What theologies or doctrines are taught to the community acutely affected by IDD when they are excluded from faith practices in the CRC?

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Faith communities exclude people with IDD in many ways. Churches are often not physically accessible to people with disabilities. Unfortunately, churches have been allowed to ignore the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, part of which requires infrastructure to be accessible to people with disabilities. More commonly, churches tend to exclude people with disabilities because of attitudinal barriers. Church practices that marginalize people with IDD often grow out of unhealthy societal practices and fears in dominant cultures. In North America, for example, both Christians and non-Christians tend to value intellect and individualism over many other qualities. We North-Americans give more weight to the words of a person with a plethora of degrees and certifications than they would to the words of a person with Down Syndrome. We also tend to be afraid or uncomfortable interacting with people with disabilities who have very little independence, perhaps due to a strong cultural distaste for expressing vulnerability.

Preference for the highly able-minded (and able-bodied) is also prevalent in the church. Carter writes that “people of faith have not always transcended the attitudinal barriers that persist throughout society; they often share many of the same prejudices and fears.” Church members might say hurtful things like, I heard your son was born. I'm so sorry, when speaking to a parent about their child born with a disability instead of congratulating them on the birth. A parent of a child with IDD who is also in a wheelchair may ask the council about adding an elevator so their child can go to Sunday school in the basement, but the suggestion is rarely considered because most assume a child with IDD would not understand anything of the lessons and so making Sunday school physically accessible would be pointless. Even seminary curriculum can fall victim to the societal prejudice and fear that create attitudinal barriers as it has not often been created with people with IDD in mind. It can be slanted toward intellectualism and accidentally enforce systems that require a follower of Christ to comprehend certain things and act certain ways before being called a Christian. Earning a Master of Divinity at many seminaries does not guarantee that graduates will be able to foster belonging for the 19% of North-Americans who have a disability, especially not those with IDD.

3 Carter, Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities, 10.

4 Carter, Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities, 6.
This bias for intellect and independence encourages the church to marginalize people with IDD and their families from congregations. Unfortunately, marginalizing them can communicate that they are not capable of relationship with Christ and so, perhaps, are incapable of salvation through Christ. The absence of people with IDD in worship, or even in faith community events, indicates that they are not as valued as people without IDD.

Amos Yong, a prominent disability theologian who writes from the Pentecostal tradition, states, “whatever else disability is, it is also the experience of discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion from the social, cultural, political, and economic domains of human life.” The church marginalizes these people in part because they are uncomfortable around people with IDD, but also because of false assumptions. As Wayne Morris writes, “[W]hat is assumed… is that in order to be saved, a person will normally have language and the intellectual capacities to learn a set of beliefs and make choices and decisions about them; what is assumed is able-bodied normativity.” Current embodied practices of the church seem to communicate that people with IDD are unable to commune with God and experience salvation because of their own deficits. Any church program that does not create space for people with IDD is in danger of believing that relationship with God is dependent on a certain level of intellect and perhaps a certain level of individual faith. John Swinton, a practical theologian whose is in disability theology, writes this: “The assumption that our relationship with God is in any way dependent on the presence or absence of human capabilities is a theological mistake.” To believe that relationship with God hinges on a human’s ability to reach out for or comprehend God goes against core theologies of the reformed faith. Thankfully, the CRCNA holds fast to a reformed theology, drawn from

5 Amos Yong, *Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 99.


7 John Swinton, ‘Known by God’ in *The Paradox of Disability: Responses to Jean Vanier and L’Arche Communities from Theology and the Sciences*, ed. Hans Reinders (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 144.
God’s word, that calls the church to attend to unfaithful practices and strive to embody the theology of accommodation—a theology which states that God is always fully able to accommodate an incapable humanity. The emphasis is on God’s ability to reach humanity, not on humanity’s ability to reach God.

Jill Harshaw, a Reformed Theologian from Queen’s University Belfast, calls believers to remember that God’s desire is always for relationship with humanity and so God accommodates humans by “[choosing] to tailor his revelation to fit the needs of those to whom he is revealing himself.”8 Harshaw gently and firmly reminds her readers that their theological starting place cannot be a person’s inability to reach God, but with God’s ability to reach a person. When talking about people with IDD, she says that, “God is not incapacitated by reason of their cognitive deficits from communicating and disclosing himself to and through them.”9 People with IDD are capable of experiencing meaningful relationship with God because God humbles Himself to communicate to them just as He does with the rest of humanity. Our relationship with God is not contingent upon ability to understand God. Remembering that all humans, not just those with IDD, have intellectual and bodily limitations is essential in reformed theology. It allows us to articulate the theology behind practices like infant baptism and beliefs like salvation through God’s grace alone.

God’s loving accommodation to the church is also a call for the church to accommodate those it has previously marginalized. The call is to emulate God by embodying a theology of accommodation and, in doing so, deepen relationships with those who live in the world of IDD. True understanding of this theology translates into bodily practices of accommodation for all image bearers of God. Failure to do so can result in illogical conclusions and continue to marginalize the community with IDD from worship and other formational programs. Harshaw points out that, “a profound intellectual disability is not the decisive factor in whether a person might experience God. The logical consequences of a contrary


9 Harshaw, God Beyond Words, 85.
view is that the onus for facilitating such an experience rests upon the human person, and that there exists a limitation on God’s ability to reach them as a direct consequence of their cognitive disabilities.” Imagining how to embody this theology raises questions for the church. In John Swinton’s words, “How do we offer the Word to those who have no words?” The temptation that CRCNA churches can easily succumb to is considering words and the intellect to understand them as necessary for full participation in the life of the church. Instead, the church is challenged to create worship and discipleship groups that include people with IDD as a way of declaring that the spiritual lives of these people matters and is worth attending to.

God’s ability to accommodate all humans regardless of intellect encourages the church to do the same for its people. This does not mean that the church should become a group of anti-intellectuals. The use of words and the ability to understand them can absolutely draw believers closer into relationship with God, but when words get caught in the mind and fails to make its way into bodily practices, one must wonder if the words have been understood at all. Instead, the church should consider how their programs geared toward a normative intellect could broaden into embodied practices that are more inclusive for people with IDD. These embodied practices remind believers that there are many ways to experience God in the body and not only in the mind. Harshaw writes that “the Bible provides multiple evidence of divine revelation, accomplished directly or indirectly by a diversity of nonverbal means, most importantly the incarnation of Christ, but also including dreams and visions, natural and supernatural phenomena, the created order and human experience.” This reiterates to the church that God is infinitely able to communicate Godself to His people. A human’s level of understanding does not matter.

10 Harshaw, God Beyond Words, 125.


12 Writers like Erik Carter, John Swinton, Jean Vanier, and other well-known disability theologians are helpful for thinking through how to create embodied practices that foster inclusivity.

13 Harshaw, God Beyond Words, 86.
If God wants to communicate something, He will. In this way, the church can look past intellectual differences, root itself in a shared humanity, and work together to create spaces where all believers can flourish in their relationship with God. The church has a beautiful opportunity to re-imagine how exclusive faith practices can become inclusive practices that welcome people with IDD and their families into a deeper connection with God and the body of Christ.
THE POSSIBLE PRESENCE OF THE CONCEPT OF THE COVENANT OF WORKS IN CALVIN’S THEOLOGY AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR HIS CHRISTOCENTRIC, GRACE-CENTERED SOTERIOLOGY

Eunyi Lee

Introduction

The double covenant idea in later Reformed orthodoxy has produced much debate among scholars since its idea of the covenant of works allegedly introduced “legalism” into the Reformed tradition in which God’s sovereign grace always has primacy in terms of salvation. The emergence of the idea of the covenant of works in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century provided one of the bases for affirming a disunity between Calvin and Calvinists.¹ This immediately raises a question whether the concept of the covenant of works with its alleged stress on human work inherently contradicts Calvin’s Christocentric, grace-centered soteriology. If it does, there will never be a room for the concept of the covenant of works in Calvin’s theology, but if it does not, there is a possibility to see this concept in Calvin in the form that is congruent with the later developed concept of the covenant of works.

Scholars such as Holmes Rolston III, Thomas F. Torrance, Donald J. Bruggink, John Murray and James B. Torrance largely agree that the double covenant idea is “totally absent from Calvin,” since the covenant of works is “inconsistent with a theology of grace.”² On the other hand, other


scholars such as Peter A. Lillback, Paul Helm and Breno Macedo claim for the presence of the covenant of works in Calvin, while scholars such as Mark W. Karlberg, Richard A. Muller and Lyle D. Bierma recognize the possible presence of the concept of the covenant of works in his theology. These latter scholars, in spite of their differences, largely agree that the concept of the covenant of works does not contradict Calvin’s grace-centered theology, but rather underpins it. Muller even said: “the Reformed view of the covenant of works, therefore, was constructed for the sake of undergirding the Reformation principle of salvation by grace.”

Based on the possible presence of the concept of the covenant of works in Calvin’s theology, this paper argues that the concept of the covenant of works should be understood in a close relation to Calvin’s soteriology with its emphasis on grace and the work of Christ. In order to do this, we will examine the previous scholarship which divides into two


groups, those who see the essential contradiction between the later federalist concept of the covenant of works and Calvin’s grace theology and those who deny it. Then we will look for some essential features of the covenant of works present in Calvin’s theology and lastly, we will demonstrate that these essential features play a significant role in Calvin’s Christocentric, grace-centered soteriology.

I. State of the Question

There have been scholars who see the essential contrast between the concept of the covenant of works and the Reformed grace theology manifested in Calvin’s thought. Among them are Karl Barth, T. F. Torrance, Rolston, Murray, Bruggink and J. B. Torrance. These scholars largely agree that the concept of the covenant of works shows the primacy of law over grace, and thus, is incompatible with Calvin’s grace-centered theology.

Without focusing on Calvin in particular, Barth understands the covenant of works with its primacy of law and justice to be at odds with the being of God who “would have been seen as righteous mercy and merciful righteousness from the very start.” In his discussion of Cocceius’ idea of the covenant of works, Barth regards the introduction of the covenant of works into the Reformed thought as the invasion by “a mode of thought in which this history…could only unfold itself and therefore only begin as the history of man and his work.” Since the covenant of grace, for Barth, is the only basis of God’s relationship with human beings both before and after the fall, the covenant of works is understood to be a legalistic and dualistic concept.

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6 Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 41. 65, 62.

In line with Barth, T. F. Torrance recognizes only one covenant of grace between God and human beings, seeing no real difference before and after the fall. Torrance argues that the later development of the covenant of works as opposed to the covenant of grace “involved a separation between creation and redemption, so that creation came to be understood in terms of its own peculiar Covenant and laws and not in relation to the one all-embracing and historical Covenant of Grace.” The federal theology, he asserts, accepted as its basic assumption “the old Roman doctrine that by nature man is intrinsically analogous to God and does not need to be made so by a special grace, and so by nature possesses in a relative degree what God possesses absolutely.” Thus, for Torrance, the double covenant idea of the later federal theology is anthropocentric at its heart, or, in his words, “the invasion of humanism into modern Christianity,” as opposed to the earlier reformers’ Christocentric theology.  

Bruggink sees the complete inconsistency between the covenant of works and Calvin’s grace theology, regarding it as “an intrusion” into the Reformed theology. He claims that the federal theology was “a perversion of great seriousness, for it introduced a covenant of works as a valid relationship between man and God, and then carried works into the very covenant of grace.”

In the same vein Rolston asserts that the covenant of works with its primacy of law has “a very deadening effect on anything said about grace.” In his understanding, the covenant of works which “overarches and encloses” the covenant of grace fatally undermines divine grace by making it “a remedy and second resort” since “chronologically and logically…grace came and comes only after sin.”

Focusing on the disunity between Calvin and the latter Reformed federal theologians, Rolston states that “Reformed orthodoxy has fallen into a legalism that is wholly uncharacteristic of the Reformer himself (Calvin).”

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8 Torrance, *School of Faith*, liv-lv.

9 Bruggink, "Calvin and Federal Theology," 18, 22.

10 Rolston, *Calvin versus Westminster Confession*, 17, 22.

Similarly, Murray finds no trace of the covenant of works in Calvin. He notes that even though Calvin uses the term “covenant of the law” he only uses this in reference to the Mosaic covenant, never applying this to the Adamic administration. Interestingly, Murray points out that Calvin had a concept of the law of God with its precept, promise and reward, which may imply the concept of the covenant of works. Considering Adam’s innocent and righteous state, this could provide the “good ground for applying the term “covenant” to that administration which had been constituted with Adam in the state of innocence.” But it turns out, for Murray, that Calvin did not make this application, even vigorously rejecting the interpretation of Hosea 6:7 as alluding to the Adamic covenant.\(^\text{12}\) Furthermore, based on his definition of covenant as “the oath-bound confirmation of promise” Murry rejects the idea of the covenant of works itself. For him, the term covenant is only “applied to God’s administration with men, in reference to a provision that is redemptive or closely related to redemptive design.”\(^\text{13}\) J. B. Torrance joins these scholars in claiming that the double covenant idea is not found in Calvin. He argues that the covenant of works is sharply contrasted with the covenant of grace since it gives primacy to law over grace on the basis of the antithesis between the law and the gospel.\(^\text{14}\)

In contrast to the scholars mentioned earlier, there are others who claim that the concept of the covenant of works does not contradict Calvin’s theology. Among them, Lillback, Helm and Macedo claim that there is the covenant of works in its seed form in Calvin, while Karlberg, Muller and Bierma affirm the possible presence of the concept of the covenant of works in Calvin’s thought, without necessarily claiming for the presence of the covenant of works itself.

Lillback, in his attempt to prove the presence of the covenant of works in Calvin, asserts Calvin’s influence alongside with Melanchthon’s on Ursinus’ idea of the covenant of works. He then provides rather comprehensive evidence for the presence of the covenant of works in Calvin, such as the legal understanding of the prelapsarian situation, the

\(^{12}\) Murray, "Covenant Theology," 201.


\(^{14}\) J. B. Torrance, "Concept of Federal Theology," 23.
identification of the natural law with the moral law, and the identification of Adam as the federal root and head. We are going to examine some of this evidence in more detail in the next section. Helm also recognizes that “the seed-ideas, and in some cases the actual details, of the leading ideas of covenant theology” are present in Calvin. He states: “it is clear...that Calvin presents all the elements of the later-developed covenant of nature, and that he denies nothing that the later, more elaborate doctrine affirms,” including the probation of Adam as the federal head with its accompanying command, promise and threat.  

Along with these two scholars, Macedo affirms that the covenant of works is present in Calvin in its seed form, though not “clearly systematized and spelled out in Calvin’s writings.”

On the other hand, Karlberg, Muller, and Bierma show their concerns for the unity and continuity between the earlier reformers’ theology and the later federal theology. Karlberg sees the full compatibility between Calvin’s doctrine and the later developed concept of the covenant of works, although Calvin did not employ the term “covenant” in relation to the pre-fall situation. Karlberg recognizes the implications of the concept of the covenant of works for Calvin’s doctrine of sin and forensic justification. Focusing on “the theological content and implication” of the fully developed concept of the covenant of works, Muller upholds the unity between the concept of the covenant of works and the reformed theology. Dealing with Witsius’ and A Brakel’s covenant idea, he amplifies the significance of the concept of the covenant of works for the Reformed doctrines of grace, Christ and salvation. In his discussion of Ursinus’ doctrine of the natural covenant, Bierma first provides some evidence that may indicate Calvin’s understanding of the pre-fall situation as a covenantal relationship, and parallels this with Ursinus’ stress on divine grace in this primal relationship. Bierma then concludes that “many of the ‘legal’ elements of Ursinus’ creation covenant are anticipated already in Calvin, and Calvin’s emphasis on divine grace in the prelapsarian

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15 Helm, "Calvin and Covenant," 67, 75.

16 Macedo, "Covenant Theology," 93.

17 Karlberg, "Reformed Interpretation of Mosaic Covenant," 12–16.

relationship with Adam clearly resurfaces in Ursinus,” whereby upholding the continuity rather than the discontinuity between Calvin and Ursinus with respect to the pre-fall covenant.19 What these scholars largely agree is that the concept of the covenant of works is found in Calvin’s thought in spite of his strong emphasis on the unity of the covenant of grace. If we do not put grace at odds with the law, as do some scholars, the concept of the covenant of works need not necessarily contradict Calvin’s grace-centered theology.

II. Presence of Essential Elements of the Covenant of Works in Calvin’s Theology

If we assume, in line with the second group of scholars, that the concept of the covenant of works is found in Calvin, what could be some substantial evidence that Calvin’s theology contains the concept of the covenant of works, if not the covenant itself? Calvin’s covenant idea manifests some essential features of the covenant of works such as a legal understanding of God’s pre-fall dealings with Adam, the understanding of Mosaic law as the legal covenant, and the principle of federal headship.

Legal Understanding of Prelapsarian Situation

Calvin stresses the gracious nature in the pre-fall situation. An order of creation as instituted by God is “an order of grace” as Rolston rightly points out.20 In his commentary on Gen. 1:26 Calvin focuses his attention to God’s generous provision for human beings at creation, saying: “in the very order of the creation the paternal solicitude of God for man is conspicuous, because he furnished the world with all things needful.” From the very beginning, God as father made it clear that he created all things for the sake of human beings, his children. In view of this divine grace at creation the tree of life is viewed as “a symbol and memorial of the life which he (Adam) had received from God.” By this external symbol of his grace, God “stretches out his hand to us” so that we may “ascend


20 Rolston, Calvin versus Westminster Confession, 24.
to him.” Like this, the primacy of grace in the pre-fall situation is pervasive in Calvin’s thought.

Calvin, nevertheless, did not disregard the legal characteristic of the primal relationship between God and Adam. In fact, there are some indications that Calvin regarded the pre-fall relationship of Adam with God in the legal terms, including prohibition, reward and judgment. In his commentary on Gen. 2:16, he wrote that “a law was imposed upon him (Adam) in token of his subjection.” The prohibition of one tree as “a test of obedience” was designed by God so that “the whole human race should be accustomed from the beginning to reverence his Deity.” This prohibition was accompanied by both the promise of eternal life and the threat of punishment. Calvin goes on to say “by denouncing punishment, he (God) strikes terror, for the purpose of confirming the authority of the law.” Again in his Institutes, he writes: “the promise by which he was bidden to hope for eternal life…conversely, the terrible threat of death once he tasted of the tree…served to prove and exercise his faith.” The presence of prohibition, promise of reward and threat of punishment implies the conditionality upon which salvation is offered, thus suggesting the pre-fall legal relationship between God and Adam.

The law imposed upon Adam, however, did not just involve this one prohibition but the whole moral law. This is supported by the fact that Calvin had a concept of natural law and identified this with the moral law or Decalogue. He writes: “the law of God which we call moral is nothing else than a testimony of natural law and of that conscience which God has engraved upon the minds of men,” and “that inward law…written, even

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engraved, upon the hearts of all, in a sense asserts the very same things that are to be learned from the two Tables.” Calvin identified the natural law written upon human consciences with the moral law or Decalogue.

Calvin in turn connects this natural law with *imago dei* in human beings. In his commentary on Gen. 2:7 he talks about the soul upon which the image of God is engraved and this image of God consists of “the faculties of the soul,” which is understanding and will. Speaking about the impairment of the natural law in us, Calvin refers to some features of this natural law such as the natural knowledge of God and the knowledge of good and evil engraved on our conscience which, proceeding from God, make us superior to the brute beasts. That is, in Calvin’s mind the natural law in human heart reflects the *imago dei* engraved upon the human soul. Since this natural law is identified with the moral law, Adam’s obedience to the moral law can be seen as the manifestation of the *imago dei* in Adam. The legal understanding of the pre-fall relationship between God and Adam becomes clearer when compared to Calvin’s comment on Lev. 18:5, in which life is promised upon obedience to the moral law even after the fall. He writes: “Salvation is not to be expected from the Law unless its precepts be in every respect complied with,” and “he (Moses) considers the Law as connected with promises and threatening. Whence it follows, that salvation can only be procured by it if its precepts be exactly fulfilled.” As noted by Lillback, Calvin thus recognizes the legal relationship both before and after the fall which includes the promise of


life upon obedience and the threat of death upon disobedience, and in both cases the obedience is to the moral law. Seen in this legal perspective, salvation is understood to be only offered on the condition of perfect obedience. The fact that Calvin viewed the pre-fall relation between God and Adam in the legal sense, in spite of his stress on the graciousness in the pre-fall situation, may have a significant ramifications for Calvin’s Christocentric and grace-centered soteriology.

**Understanding of Mosaic Law as the Covenant of the Law**

In view of the unity between the old and new covenant, Calvin clearly understands the Mosaic covenant to be the covenant of grace. In his *Institutes*, he writes: “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.” Thus, in spite of its legal aspect the Mosaic covenant with its promises of the gospel does not make justification conditional upon works-righteousness but dependent on grace alone. Nevertheless, the Mosaic covenant, for Calvin, was also the legal covenant in that physical benefits and punishments were promised on the basis of the principle of works-inheritance.

How then does Calvin explain this double aspect of the Mosaic covenant in a non-contradictory way in his theology? Calvin introduces the twofold concept of the law: the law in a broad sense and a narrow sense. In his commentary on Rom. 10:5-10 Calvin contrasts the narrow law from the whole law, or the peculiar office of Moses from his universal office. Moses in his universal office instructs people in “the true rule of godliness” by preaching repentance and faith based on the free promises. On the other hand, Moses’ peculiar office is to teach “the character of true righteousness of works” with its precepts and rewards. It is by the law in

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this latter restricted sense that Moses is contrasted with Christ. Therefore, the law in its broad sense which contains the promises of the gospel can be identified with the covenant of grace, while the law in its narrow sense is antithetical to it, showing a close affinity to the concept of the covenant of works.

When the Mosaic law is understood in the narrow sense, we find some significant similarities between the Mosaic covenant of the law and the pre-fall state of Adam. Some scholars such as Rolston and McGiffert trace the origin of the idea of the covenant of works back to the Mosaic law as the legal covenant. They suggest that the concept of the covenant of works was deduced from the Mosaic law and then extended to the pre-fall situation. The Mosaic and Adamic situation can find a possible connection in the fact that they both contain the legal aspect in defining God’s relationship with mankind: life is promised and death is threatened conditional upon the perfect obedience to the law. Calvin’s understanding of the circumcision of Abram as the symbol of the covenant of the law may suggest some link between the Mosaic and pre-fall situation. Although Calvin did not see Abram’s circumcision as the cause of his justification, it is probable, in Calvin’s thought, that Abraham saw the covenant of the law in “a proleptic sense” through his circumcision, as Lillback aptly put it. Together with the conditional aspect in Gen. 17:1 this may suggest that the Abrahamic covenant gives us a slight hint of a legal aspect, thus providing a possible link between the Mosaic and pre-fall situation.

In this respect, the legal aspect of the Mosaic covenant can be said to function as a link to connect itself with the pre-fall situation also


34 Lillback, Binding of God, 296.


understood in legal terms. In other words, Calvin’s understanding of the Mosaic law as the covenant of the law and a significant similarity between this Mosaic covenant and the pre-fall state of Adam may suggest that Calvin understood this primal state of Adam in a way similar to the concept of the covenant of works.

Interpretation of Adam as Federal Head

Calvin holds both realistic and federalistic view on the imputation of Adam’s sin. First of all, with respect to the interpretation of the crucial text Rom. 5:12 Calvin is Augustinian, maintaining that the whole humanity sinned in Adam. He declares that “by falling from the Lord, in himself he (Adam) corrupted, vitiated, depraved and ruined our nature.”37 In his Institutes, the same realistic understanding appears: “Adam, by sinning, not only took upon himself misfortune and ruin but also plunged our nature into like destruction...he infected all his posterity with that corruption into which he had fallen.”38

Calvin’s doctrine, on the other hand, contains the essential elements of the federalist view, too. First, Calvin holds to the so-called “principle of federal headship.”39 He recognizes the status of Adam as the federal head “ordained by God that the first man should at one and the same time have and lose, both for himself and for his descendants, the gifts that God had bestowed upon him.”40 Again, commenting on John 3:6 he writes: “the corruption of all mankind in the person of Adam alone did not proceed from generation, but from the appointment of God, who in one man had adorned us all, and who has in him also deprived us of his gifts.”41 Like

37 Comm. Rom. 5:12. Calvin, Epistles to Romans, 8:111.


40 Calvin, Inst., II.I.7.

this, Calvin does perceive God’s appointment of Adam as the representative head for the whole humanity.

Second, Calvin recognizes both the presence of law and the probationary condition of Adam in the pre-fall situation.42 This means that the law in the form of command was given to Adam by God, and Adam had the relation of a probationer with God. Calvin explains that the purpose of God’s command to Adam, when he told him to abstain from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was to “test his obedience and prove that he was willingly under God’s command.”43 Calvin describes the pre-fall state of Adam as not yet perfected, saying that Adam’s life was only earthly, having “no firm and settled constancy.” Thus, according to Calvin Adam would have passed to a perfect life only if he had remained upright. But it turned out that Adam did not, so ruin came to the human race as a result of “a defection from the command of God.”44 Despite his stress on God’s gracious acts toward Adam, Calvin clearly maintains that a perfect life is conditional upon persisting in “original innocence.”45

Lastly, Calvin understood the parallel between Adam and Christ as the federal heads. In his commentary on 1 Cor. 15 Calvin states that “Adam and Christ are therefore, as it were, the two origins, or roots, of the human race. That is why there is every justification for calling Adam the first man, and Christ the last.”46 Speaking of the incarnation of Christ Mediator in his Institutes, He also mentions this Adam–Christ parallel: “our Lord came forth as true man and took the person and the name of Adam in order to take Adam’s place in obeying the Father…to pay the penalty that we had

42 Lillback, Binding of God, 288; Helm, “Calvin and Covenant,” 74.

43 Calvin, Inst., II.I.4.


deserved.” Here, Calvin reveals his federalistic understanding of Christ’s active obedience. That is, Christ, by his obedience to the will of God, not only paid the penalty but also obtained righteousness for us. Thus, Calvin, based on his view of the Adam-Christ parallel, affirms justification by imputation. “Christ, in satisfying the Father, has procured righteousness for us...that which belongs properly to Christ is imputed to us,” writes Calvin.⁴⁸

All this evidence may point toward the presence of the concept of the covenant of works in Calvin’s theology. This seems to resonate with Lillback’s conclusion: “If Calvin thus sees a legal relationship before and after the fall in which obedience is rewarded with life and disobedience with death, and that the law in both cases is the moral law, then it becomes very difficult to deny that Calvin has a functioning covenant of works.”⁴⁹

III. Implications of the Covenant of Works for Calvin’s Soteriology

If we can say, based on these evidences, that the concept of a covenant of works exists in Calvin, how can this concept coexist with Calvin’s grace-centered theology and what function does this concept play in his theology? The possible presence of the concept of the covenant of works depends on how we define this concept. If we view that the covenant of works entails the primacy of law over grace, then it is less likely to be found in Calvin. But if we understand the concept of the covenant of works in a sense that it allows grace even in the pre-fall situation so that it may operate within the broad context of divine mercy, then this concept becomes compatible with Calvin’s thought. Furthermore, this concept of the covenant of works is not only compatible with Calvin’s theology but also plays a significant role in maintaining his Reformation tenet “justification by grace,” and the necessity of the satisfactory atonement by Christ.


Perpetual Validity of the Law

The law of God which has existed before the fall comes out of God’s being God and his righteous nature; thus, its efficacy lasts even after the fall. The “inward law,” called the natural law and identified with the moral law, obtains its existence based on the creator-creature relationship, so its presence precedes sin.\(^{50}\) That means, for Calvin, the law was not something added after sin was committed. The law has “a perpetual validity” in that it has been “divinely handed down to us to teach us perfect righteousness; there no other righteousness is taught than that which conforms to the requirements of God’s will.”\(^{51}\) This law of God as the moral law is “truly confirmed and established through faith in Christ.” Calvin thus insists that even the coming of Christ has not “freed us from the authority of the law” since it is “the eternal rule of a devout and holy life, and must, therefore, be as unchangeable, as the justice of God, which it embraced, is constant and uniform”\(^{52}\) In this respect the law of God, for Calvin, is perpetually valid by having its basis on God’s holy nature.

The stability of the law is illustrated in Calvin’s commentary on Lev. 18:5 in which he observes that salvation is expected on the condition of perfect obedience although its fulfillment is impossible because of the infirmity of human beings. Again, in his commentary on Ezek. 20:11 Calvin distinguishes between the righteousness of the law and of faith of which the former is achieved by keeping God’s precepts, while the latter comes from faith in Christ’s death and resurrection for our justification. Here Calvin perceives the presence of the righteousness of the law in the postlapsarian situation, but at the same time he acknowledges the fact that “the very faculty of keeping the law is altogether defective in us,” thus


\(^{51}\) Calvin, *Inst.*, II.VIII.5.

necessitating the righteousness of faith.\textsuperscript{53} This demonstrates Calvin’s recognition that the function of the law that promises either reward or punishment on the condition of obedience remains effective even after the fall.

The perpetual validity of the law entails the lasting efficacy of both promise and condemnation of the law. Speaking of God’s liberality with which he enters into covenant with his people, Calvin writes: “God then put forth a remarkable proof of his goodness, in promising life to all who kept his law: and this will remain perfect and entire.” That is, God’s promise and the condition of perfect obedience required for its fulfillment remain even after the covenant of works is broken by Adam’s fall.\textsuperscript{54} In spite of the validity of the condition for the fulfillment of promise, the fact remains that no one can satisfy the law, making its promises useless.\textsuperscript{55} From this it follows that “through the law the whole human race is proved subject to God’s curse and wrath.”\textsuperscript{56} This demonstrates, therefore, that the validity of the law continues after the fall in terms of its promise, condemnation and condition.

The stability of both promise and law has a significant ramification for understanding Christ’s atoning work. The stability of promise requires perfect obedience for its fulfillment, while the stability of the law requires eternal condemnation for the whole humanity. In order for Christ to fully satisfy the requirements of the law and obtain eternal life on our behalf, he must not only pay the penalty but also fulfill the law by his perfect obedience, which is termed respectively as “passive obedience” and “active obedience” of Christ.\textsuperscript{57} Calvin had in mind both of these aspects of Christ’s


\textsuperscript{54} Comm. Ezek. 20:11 (Calvin, First Twenty Chapters of Ezekiel, 2:299); Muller, “Stability of Divine Law,” 96.


\textsuperscript{56} Calvin, Inst., III.XVII.1.

\textsuperscript{57} Venema, “Calvin’s Doctrine of Imputation,” 18–19.
redeeming work when he understood justification to consist in “the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness.” Commenting on 2 Cor. 5:21 Calvin describes this twofold justification by imputation. He writes: “He (Christ) took, as it were, our person, that He…might be reckoned as a sinner…in the same way we are righteous in Him…because we are judged in relation to Christ’s righteousness which we have put on by faith.” In spite of his focus on Christ’s substitutionary death for the redemption of believers, Calvin does not overlook the importance of Christ’s obedience throughout his whole life: Christ has achieved redemption “by the whole course of his obedience.” “From the time when he (Christ) took on the form of a servant, he began to pay the price of liberation in order to redeem us,” writes Calvin. In this way Calvin understood the righteousness of Christ imputed to believers to include not only absolution but also Christ’s whole and perfect obedience.

Why, then, is this twofold justifying work of Christ necessary to be imputed to believers? The necessity for Christ’s twofold justification based on his death and obedience finds its justification in the stability of the promise and the law. So far as believers are concerned, they are exempted from the obligation to fulfill the law for their salvation, since they are in the covenant of grace of which the sole foundation is Christ. But so far as Christ as Mediator is concerned, he is obliged to bear the condemnation of the law and render perfect obedience to God for the fulfillment of the promise of the law, since the law with its promise and condemnation is perpetually valid even after the fall. This is why Christ paid the penalty by his “passive obedience,” and procured the blessings of the law for believers by his “active obedience.” Calvin’s understanding of the pre-fall relationship between Adam and God in legal terms, with his recognition

58 Calvin, Inst., III.XI.2.


60 Calvin, Inst., II.XVI.5.

61 Calvin, Inst., II.X.4.
of the presence of the natural law, provides the basis for affirming the perpetual validity of the law, which in turn becomes the basis by which to justify the necessity of Christ’s twofold justification imputed to believers.

**Merit and Grace in Calvin**

Furthermore, Calvin’s understanding of merit and grace in relation to the pre-fall situation has a significant implication for his soteriology centered in Christ’s atoning work.

God’s sovereign grace, for Calvin, has primacy in the pre-fall situation. God’s grace manifests itself particularly in its endowments or “gifts” to Adam. Commenting on Rom. 5:12 Calvin mentions “the gifts” Adam had received at his creation for both himself and his descendants. The consequence for losing these gifts through his fall was the corruption and depravity of nature both in him and his descendants. Calvin notes that Adam was “adorned and enriched with so many excellent gifts,” and he names “the chief thing in life” as “the grace of intelligence,” that is, “to excel in the endowments of the soul.”

The part of these gifts was the natural law or “inward law” engraved on Adam’s heart which enabled him to persist in righteousness and innocence. These gifts thus can be understood as “the Protestant form of the donum superadditum,” in Muller’s words, or “the posse non peccare of Augustine.” These gifts endowed upon Adam, therefore, imply that even Adam’s obedience as the condition for his perfect happiness should be ascribed to God’s grace as its source.

However, in spite of the primacy of grace in the pre-fall situation the presence of the law of God, along with Adam’s state of “posse non peccare,” gives us a hint at a slight possibility of “merit” with respect to Adam’s situation before the fall. As Lillback rightly points out, “Calvin’s theology permits no merit in the prelapsarian context” on the basis of the creator-

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64 Calvin, Inst., II.VIII.1.

creature relationship. No human being, even if perfect, could bring anything before God by which to gain his favor, “because as soon as man begins his existence, he is already by the very law of creation so bound to his Maker that he has nothing of his own.”

Nevertheless, the possible presence of the covenant of works in the prelapsarian context, with its precepts and promises, may suggest that there must be some kind of merit involved in Adam’s state if not in its strictest sense. It is important to note that Adam is rightly contrasted with “sinners” because of his potential not to sin and to remain perfect. Based on his ability to persist in original righteousness it seems fitting to ascribe some kind of responsibility or even merit to Adam, although we recognize even this ability was given to him as a gift from God. Given that his defection brought about real punishment, at least the responsibility of maintaining his status really fell on Adam himself, thus making himself the cause of his own fall. The fact that Adam was not given the “gift of perseverance” may also suggest that his duty of obedience can be considered as merit in a restricted sense, when contrasted with believers who are endued with this gift. The help or grace given to Adam is thus described: “the help given him was of that nature that he might abandon it when he would, and remain in it if he would, but it was not such as to make him willing.” Therefore, it can be said that while divine grace dominated the pre-fall situation, there was a room for merit in its restricted sense that presupposes both God’s grace and the possibility of further perfection.

In fact, Calvin himself permits some idea of merit at least with respect to Christ’s work as Mediator. He explicitly uses the term “merit” to refer to Christ’s redemptive work. Further Calvin does not see the antithesis

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66 Lillback, Binding of God, 299.

67 Comm. on Rom. 11:35. Calvin, Epistles to the Romans, 8:261.

68 Lillback, Binding of God, 286; Helm, “Calvin and Covenant,” 76.

between divine grace and Christ’s merit. He even criticizes those who “set Christ’s merit against God’s mercy.” Grace and merit, for Calvin, go hand in hand in Christ. With regard to Christ’s merit, Calvin stresses “God’s ordinance” or appointment of Christ as Mediator in order to obtain salvation for us. Thus God’s grace as “the first cause” precedes and undergirds Christ’s merit. Therefore, according to Calvin’s understanding, insofar as believers are concerned there is absolutely no room for merit, while insofar as Christ is concerned merit is absolutely necessary for “appeasing” God and obtaining salvation for us. If no idea of merit is permitted in Calvin, even the idea of Christ’s merit could not stand. In this respect, the possible idea of Adam’s merit, though within the context of divine grace, may provide the basis for the necessity of Christ’s meritorious work for redeeming the believers, if only we allow the difference between Adam and Christ as God-man. As Karlberg rightly put it: “failure to relate the works-principle to the first and second Adams in their covenantal capacities as representative heads obscures the meritorious nature of Christ’s saving work.”

Law and Gospel in Calvin

Calvin’s understanding of the Mosaic covenant as the legal covenant, based on the distinction between the law and the gospel, further undergirds his Christocentric, grace-centered soteriology. As we have seen earlier, Calvin points out that the law is used in a restricted sense when Moses is contrasted with Christ. Commenting on Rom. 8:15 Calvin writes: “in opposing the Gospel to the law he (Paul) regards only what was peculiar to the law itself, viz. command and prohibition, and the restraining of transgressors by the threat of death.” In several places in his commentaries Calvin reveals his view of the distinction/antithesis.

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70 Calvin, *Inst.*, II.XVII.1-3.
71 Calvin, *Inst.*, II.XVII.1, II.XVI.4.
73 Karlberg, “Reformed Interpretation of Mosaic Covenant,” 53.
between the law in the restricted sense and the gospel. Particularly in his commentary on 2 Cor. 3:6f Calvin enumerates some aspects of this antithesis between the law and the gospel, which are referred to respectively as the letter and the spirit. He begins by giving the reason why Paul distinguishes the letter from the spirit: the letter represents “an external preaching which does not reach the heart,” whereas the spirit represents “lifegiving teaching which is, through the grace of the spirit, given effective operation in men’s souls.” He then elucidates the distinction between the law and the gospel as Paul understands it. First, the gospel is “a holy and inviolable covenant” because it has the Spirit of God as its guarantor, while the law is only “the ministration of condemnation and death.” Second, while the gospel is “the means of regeneration and freely offers reconciliation with God,” the law can only condemn without the power to reform the hearts. Third, the law was temporary and had to be abolished, but the gospel lasts forever.\textsuperscript{75}

The core of the law-gospel distinction is whether to function as the basis for justification. In his \textit{Institutes}, Calvin states: “justification is withdrawn from works…that we may not rely upon them, glory in them, or ascribe salvation to them.” Here Calvin makes it clear that the works of the law cannot be the cause of justification since those works are far from “fulfilling the condition of the promises unless preceded by justification rested on faith alone, and by forgiveness of sins.”\textsuperscript{76} When he distinguishes the promises of the law from the promises of the gospel, this becomes clearer. The promises of the law in the narrow sense “declare that there is recompense ready for you if you do what they enjoin,” whereas the promises of the gospel, by proclaiming the free forgiveness of sins, “not only make us acceptable to God but also render our works pleasing to him.”\textsuperscript{77} Since a sinful person cannot fulfill what the law enjoins, the law “promises no blessing except on condition, and pronounces death on all transgressions.”\textsuperscript{78} This essential distinction between the law and the gospel is aptly encapsulated by Calvin:

\textsuperscript{75} Comm. 2 Cor. 3:6, 7. Calvin, \textit{Second Epistle to Corinthians}, 42, 44–45.

\textsuperscript{76} Calvin, \textit{Inst.}, III.XVII.1, 3.

\textsuperscript{77} Calvin, \textit{Inst.}, III.XVII.6, 3.

\textsuperscript{78} Comm. Rom. 8:15 (Calvin, \textit{Epistles to the Romans}, 8:169).
The contradiction between the law and faith lies in the matter of justification. You will more easily unite fire and water, than reconcile these two statements, that men are justified by faith, and that they are justified by the law. “The law is not of faith;” that is, it has a method of justifying a man which is wholly at variance with faith.\textsuperscript{79}

In a word, the gospel can be the basis for justification by offering the righteousness of faith based on Christ’s work, but the law can never be the cause of justification since it only offers the legal promises based on the condition of perfect obedience. These two contrary ways of salvation lie at the center of the antithesis between the law and the gospel in Calvin’s thought.\textsuperscript{80}

As Karlberg insists against Murray, the proper recognition of the antithesis between the law and the gospel safeguards the Reformation tenet “justification by faith” and the doctrine of Christ’s atonement.\textsuperscript{81} Christ as Mediator paid the penalty for disobedience and satisfied the condition of perfect obedience for eternal life, thus obtaining the righteousness of the law for believers. On the other hand, under the promises of the gospel in the covenant of grace, sinners who are unable to fulfill the requirements of the law receive these promises by faith in Christ. If the law is only subsumed under grace or “so enmeshed with grace” as Barth, along with Rolston and Torrance, insists, thus diluting the concept of the law as a way of justification antithetical to the gospel, the doctrines of Christ’s atonement and justification by faith would lose their justification.\textsuperscript{82} Therefore, the concept of the covenant of works which substantiates the


\textsuperscript{80} Bandstra, “Law and Gospel,” 36.

\textsuperscript{81} Karlberg, “Reformed Interpretation of Mosaic Covenant,” 51.

\textsuperscript{82} Young Jae Timothy Song, \textit{Theology and Piety in the Reformed Federal Thought of William Perkins and John Preston} (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1998), 76.
existence of the law in its narrow sense is indispensable to the reformation tenet of justification by faith which Calvin firmly upholds.

**Sin and Forensic Justification in Calvin**

Calvin’s understanding of Adam as the federal head and of the Adam-Christ parallel provides the basis for his doctrine of justification by imputation.

The concept of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness appears everywhere in his *Institutes*, commentaries and sermons. In his *Institutes*, Calvin speaks of Christ’s death as “the price of our redemption,” since “the righteousness found in Christ alone is reckoned as ours” by free imputation. Calvin describes the forensic nature of justification as this: “Christ’s righteousness, which as it alone is perfect alone can bear the sight of God, must appear in court on our behalf, and stand surety in judgment.”

This justification is forensic by nature in that the righteousness of Christ remains outside of us, without being imparted or infused to us. In his commentaries, Calvin explains the concept of imputation: “when…we come to Christ, we first find in Him the exact righteousness of the law, and this also becomes ours by imputation,” and “righteousness exists in Christ as a property, but…that which belongs properly to Christ is imputed to us.” He elsewhere states that “in His name we are accepted by God, because He atoned for our sins by His death, and His obedience is imputed to us for righteousness.”

This notion of justification by imputation is also found in his sermons. In his sermon on Deuteronomy, Calvin stresses Christ’s willing and perfect obedience to the law not for himself but for us, whereby God accepts us “as if we brought perfect obedience with us.” Again, speaking of God’s adopting us as his children and giving his own Son to us as a “pledge of his love,” Calvin states that “whatsoever our Lord Jesus Christ has is all ours, with

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83 Calvin, *Inst.*, II.XVII.5; III.XIV.12.

84 Calvin, *Inst.*, III.XI.11.


86 *Comm.* 1 Cor. 1:30. Calvin, *First Epistle to Corinthians*, 46.
all the fullness of riches which we read was given unto him.” The fact that this concept of justification by imputation is pervasive in Calvin demonstrates the central place it takes in Calvin’s soteriology centered in Christ’s redemptive work.

Calvin’s view of Adam as the federal head and the Adam-Christ parallel has a significant implication for his doctrine of justification by imputation, as briefly noted by Lillback. As Adam was “ordained” by God to be the head of the covenant, so was Christ “divinely appointed” to be Mediator or the head of the covenant. Besides both being ordained by God, Adam and Christ have it in common that they both were required to fulfill the law by perfect obedience. However, there also exist some differences between Adam and Christ, of which the most important difference is that though by Adam’s sinning our nature was also vitiated and corrupted in him, Christ’s righteousness cannot be mixed with our own nature. That is, we are righteous not by “the infusion both of his (God’s) essence and of his quality” but by imputation. Parallel with Adam Christ’s righteousness is imputed to believers, but differently from Adam Christ’s righteousness is not infused into believers, thereby making their nature righteous. Thus, though the concept of imputation entails both the parallel and difference between Adam and Christ, the concept of the covenant of works functions as a link to connect Adam and Christ as the federal heads. Therefore, Calvin’s view of the parallel between Adam and Christ undergirds the Reformation tenet of justification by faith by affirming the doctrine of justification by imputation.


88 Lillback, Binding of God, 277.

89 Calvin, Inst., II.XII.4; II.XVIII.1.

90 Calvin, Inst., II.1.6-7; III.XI.5.

91 Calvin, Inst., III.XI.5.
Conclusion

We have demonstrated that Calvin’s theology contains some essential features of the covenant of works: the legal understanding of the prelapsarian situation, the understanding of the Mosaic law as the covenant of the law, and the principle of the federal headship. Based on this observation, we have argued that these essential features of the covenant of works function in a way that is fully consistent with and undergirds and safeguards Calvin’s Christocentric, grace-focused soteriology. The core features that arise from the concept of the covenant of works - the perpetual validity of the law, the concept of merit in relation to Christ’s work, the antithesis between the law and the gospel, and justification by imputation - provide the basis for the necessity of Christ’s atoning work, thus for the Reformation tenet of justification by grace through faith which Calvin firmly upholds.

The claims of such scholars as Barth, Rolston, Murray, and T. F. Torrance that the concept of the covenant of works seriously undermines the primacy of grace in Calvin’s thought do not seem to hold true. These scholars tend to think that the recognition of the works-principle in the pre-fall situation downright contradicts God’s gracious dealings with the mankind both before and after the fall. Therefore, they focus solely on grace to the exclusion of the law even with respect to the pre-fall state of Adam. Ironically, however, it is not ‘all grace and no law’ of these scholars, but the proper recognition of both grace and law implied in the covenant of works that contributes to Calvin’s grace theology centered in Christ’s work of atonement. Therefore, the concept of the covenant of works does not contradict Calvin’s soteriology, but rather undergirds it.
READING JOHN 7:37–39 IN LIGHT OF ZECHARIAH 14

Gwangsoo Lee

Introduction

The Gospel of John employs Jewish festivals as one important device to develop its narrative. Many scholars have studied the roles of Jewish festivals in the Gospel of John. The important festivals in the Gospel of John are the Sabbath, the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Festival of Dedication. This paper will focus on the relationship between the Feast of Tabernacles and John 7:37–39.

Most previous studies focus on the specific ceremony (known as water libation) of the Feast of Tabernacles on the basis of “on the last and greatest day of the festival” (v. 37). Besides, scholars propose several texts in the Old Testament (OT) as the background of Jesus’ teaching. For example, many scholars consider the phrase “let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink” (v. 37) as related to Isaiah 55:1; Zechariah 14:16–17, and so on.¹ And they suggest that the phrase “rivers of living water will flow from within them” (v. 38) is related to Ezekiel 47:1–12; Zechariah 14:8, and so on.² The problem is that scholars suggest different verses based on their understanding. For this reason, it is difficult to understand the correlation between the Feast of Tabernacles and each passage. When Jesus says, “as Scripture has said,” where is the passage he has in mind?

This paper will contend that John 7:37–39 has a close relationship with Zechariah 14. There are two reasons: One is the Feast of Tabernacles.


Although scholars have proposed several verses to link with John 7:37–39, Zechariah 14 is the only text associated with the Feast of Tabernacles. The other ground is the linguistic theological similarities between John 7:37–39 and Zechariah 14 (esp. v. 8 and vv. 16–19). To prove this claim, Part I will focus on the living water (v. 8) and the Feast of Tabernacles (vv. 16–19) in Zechariah 14, which are relevant to John 7:37–39; and then Part II will try to prove the relationship between Zechariah 14 and John 7:37–39.

I. The Meaning of the Living Water and the Feast of Tabernacles in Zechariah 14

This section looks at the living water (v. 8) and the Feast of Tabernacles (vv.16–19) in Zechariah 14. The two subjects are important clues to reveal the relationship between Zechariah 14 and John 7:37–39.

The Meaning of Zechariah 14:8

The phrase “on that day” (vv. 4, 6, 8, 9, 13, 20, 21) serves to proclaim a coming of divine intervention in Zechariah 14.\(^3\) Zechariah changes his focus from light (vv. 6–7) to water (v. 8).\(^4\) The source of living water is Jerusalem. In the ancient Near East, many areas suffered from a shortage of water, and thus places with abundant water were regarded as paradise.\(^5\) The flow of living water means no more dependence on the rain of heaven (Deut. 11:10–11).\(^6\) One of Hezekiah’s major accomplishments was to create a pool and tunnel to draw water into the city (2 Kings 20:20).\(^7\) The Gihon Spring was the important water source of Jerusalem and was located

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west of the Kidron Valley. Here, it is necessary to pay attention to the correlation between the place of the Gihon Spring and the Mount of Olives (v. 4). In this historical context, Jerusalem will be the source of living water. The expression “living water will flow out from Jerusalem” includes the concept that Zion is the center of the universe. The continuity of living water is related to the LORD’s protection and his lasting presence in Jerusalem. While Zechariah mentions Jerusalem, he does not refer the temple using direct discourse. Besides, chapter 14 focuses on the festival in the Jerusalem temple. Therefore, Jerusalem actually refers to the temple.

The Mount of Olives has a deep historical relationship with water and also serves as a refuge. The LORD’s feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem (v. 4). The remnant of Jerusalem will flee into the LORD’s mountain valley (v. 5). David ascends up the Mount of Olives while fleeing to Jerusalem because of Absalom’s rebellion (2 Sam. 15:30). The LORD will come, and all the holy ones with him (v. 5). In Ezekiel 11:23, the glory of the LORD stays above the mountain east of the city. Zechariah may have kept these two verses (2 Sam. 15:30 and Ezek. 11:23) in mind.

Most of all, it is believed that the Mount of Olives is related to the Feast of Tabernacles. The Mount of Olives was the main cultivation site

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of olive trees, and since the olive harvest was followed by the keeping of
the Feast of Tabernacles, it seems that the Mount of Olives plays a role in
preparing for the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles for all the nations
(vv. 16–21).16

Through the text study, we have observed that living water is a concept
closely linked to rain. And rain has a close connection with the Feast of
Tabernacles. Eventually, in Zechariah 14, living water is linked to the Feast
of Tabernacles. In addition, we also have observed that the importance of
Jerusalem is emphasized. Jerusalem will be the source of living water. It is
a refuge for the Israelites and a place for divine dwelling. It is also a place
where the nations will celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Meaning of Zechariah 14:16–19

Most commentators refer to Zechariah 14:16–19 as the background of
John 7:37–39.17 Before looking at the relationship between the two texts,
we need to deal with the meaning of Zechariah 14:16–19 in detail.

This passage consists of the LORD’s command about the Feast of
Tabernacles towards all the nations (v. 16) and punishment for the
disobedience of the peoples of the earth (vv. 17–19). The Feast of
Tabernacles is a season to remember the grace of the LORD in
thanksgiving to the Israelites in the wilderness (Lev. 23:42–43).18 The
nations had no obligation to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, but the
Gentiles who were in the region of Israel participated in the festival (e.g.,
Deut. 16:11, 14).19 Until then, the Feast of Tabernacles had been a season
for Israel, however, foreign nations also will celebrate the festival together.
Distinctively, Zechariah relates the Feast of Tabernacles to the LORD’s


17 Köstenberger, John, 240.


19 Meyers and Meyers, Zechariah 9–14, 468.
kingship and pilgrimage. The nations must go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles and worship the King, the LORD Almighty. It is also noticeable that the price of disobedience is related to rain. Deuteronomy 11:13–14 says the LORD will send rain and they will have abundant produce when the people of Israel faithfully obey the LORD’s commands. But if they do not obey the instructions of the LORD and do not keep his ordinances (Deut. 28:18), the LORD will not send rain, but will judge by disaster (Deut. 28:22–24). The Feast of Tabernacles is a season closely related to rain. After the harvest of the olive trees and the vineyard had been finished, the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated until just before the autumn rain (Lev. 23:39).

By this background, Jews go up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. The conversation between Jesus and his brothers shows that the Jews were keeping the Feast of Tabernacles at that time (John 7:2–10). During the Feast of Tabernacles, they performed a special ceremony called water libation. According to m. Sukkah 4:9–10, on the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the two vessels each had a ceremony to hold water and wine. Wine symbolized the end of the harvest (Deut. 16:13), and water represented the coming autumn rain. Therefore, it is right to find the origin of the connection to the Feast of Tabernacles and the traditional rituals in Zechariah 14:16–19.

Summary

Zechariah 14:8 mentions living water and Jerusalem. Water was a very important resource in the ancient Near East, and water-rich areas were considered Paradise. The presence of living water eliminates the

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21 Meyers and Meyers, Zechariah 9–14, 473; Petersen, Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi, 158.


dependence of rain. The fact that living water flows out of Jerusalem includes the concept that Jerusalem will become a Zion of the nations. The connection between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives is likely to be closely linked to the Feast of Tabernacles.

Zechariah 14:16–19 contains a command to observe the Feast of Tabernacles toward the nations. The Feast of Tabernacles was closely related to rain. If the nations do not celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, the punishment for disobedience is drought. The Feast of Tabernacles must be kept in Jerusalem.

II. The Relationship between Zechariah 14 and John 7:37–39

John 7:37–38 is evidence of the connection between “living water” and the “Feast of Tabernacles” in early Christian tradition. This passage is situated between two paragraphs (7:10–36; 7:40–52) where Jesus is in conflict with his enemies in the temple; the intention seems to reflect the expectation that eschatological living water will flow out the temple. It is believed that Zechariah 14 is in the background of Jesus’ words. The Feast of Tabernacles is related to the important rainy season (Zech. 14:16–17) in an ancient agricultural society, and on the first day of the feast, the people of Israel read this verses according to the precedent of b. Meg. 31a. Also, Jesus’ teaching in verse 38 reminds us of the living water that springs from Jerusalem in Zechariah 14:8. In Zechariah 14:8, the flowing water from the Jerusalem symbolizes the completion of the eschatological restoration. The meaning applies equally to John 7:38. In this way, most scholars recognize the connection between John 7:37–38 and Zechariah 14:8, 16–19. However, some scholars prefer other OT texts. Each scholar


28 Keener acknowledges the influence of Zechariah 14, but considers John to be more mindful of Ezekiel 47 (*The Gospel of John*, 725–28). See Haenchen, *John* 2,
presents several passages, but this paper will focus only on two representative passages, namely, Isaiah 55:1 and Ezekiel 47:1. This section will make two comparisons and why the OT texts are not appropriate as a background of John 7:37–38, and then will examine the connection between John 7:37–38 and Zechariah 14:8, 16–19. These works will ensure the legitimacy of this paper.

Comparing between John 7:37 and Isaiah 55:1

Isaiah 55:1 is the most frequently mentioned text in the interpretation of John 7:37. This section will deal with the meaning of Isaiah 55:1 and John 7:37, then will examine the similarities and differences between the two texts.

The Meaning of Isaiah 55:1

Isaiah 55:1–5 is a paragraph that contains an invitation of the LORD (vv. 1-3a), an everlasting covenant (vv. 3b–4) and divine oracle (v. 5).\(^{29}\) This paragraph begins with the LORD’s invitation (v. 1-3a); the recipients of the invitation are “servants of the LORD” (54:17).\(^{30}\) Such a metaphorical invitation in verse 1 is a typical device of wisdom literature.\(^{31}\) In this verse the metaphorical invitation is intended to attract people’s attention to the eternal covenant of the LORD about the restoration of Israel.\(^{32}\) This


\(^{30}\) Childs, *Isaiah*, 433.


metaphor regards the fate of the nation as closely related to the covenants of the LORD, just as water and food are essential for human life. It is noteworthy that the LORD’s invitation contains 12 imperative verbs. The repetitive use of the imperative involves the eager desire of the prophet Isaiah for the Israelites to respond to the LORD’s invitation. The purpose of the invitation is to give life, which is possible through the everlasting covenant (v. 3b). The life of David guarantees the everlasting covenant of the LORD (v. 4). Because of the Holy One of Israel, the Israelites will see the people they do not know (v. 5). It is certain that this verse contains the concept of a pilgrimage to Zion.

The Meaning of John 7:37

The Gospel of John deals with the Feast of Tabernacles in chapter 7 through half of chapter 10, but the focus is on Jesus, not on the festival. Most scholars interpret “on the last and greatest day of the festival” as one of the days of the Feast of Tabernacles. In my opinion, there is no need to be overly conscious of water libation. Someone said of this discussion:

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33 Sweeney, Isaiah 40–66, 245.


36 Childs, Isaiah, 433. Oswalt points out this: “Elsewhere in this book, water is associated with the giving of the Spirit of God, poured in the ground that has been parched by sin and disobedience (32:15; 44:3).” (The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40–66, 435).

37 Childs, Isaiah, 436.

38 Baltzer, Deutero-Isaiah, 473.

“Whether Jesus’ words in 7:37–38 and 8:12 were uttered on the climactic seventh day, with its water-pouring and torch-lighting ceremonies, or on the eighth day of joyful assembly and celebration, they would have had a tremendous impact on the pilgrims.”

Traditionally, the Feast of Tabernacles is connected with rainfall (Zech. 14:16–17) in an ancient agrarian society, and on the first day of the feast, these verses were read according to the precedent of b. Meg. 31a. John’s purpose is to persuade his readers that Jesus fulfilled and replaced the Feast of Tabernacles. Although John does not mention the water libation, this ceremony provides a foundation of Jesus’ invitation (4:13–14; 6:35). This intention is most evident in John 7:37–39, where Jesus expresses himself as the fulfillment of the water libation ceremony. This is why John emphasizes the Feast of Tabernacles as the background of Jesus’ teaching. Therefore, John 7:37 is not most closely related to Isaiah 55:1. Rather, it should be interpreted as the background of Zechariah 14.

**Similarities and Differences between Isaiah 55:1 and John 7:37**

Isaiah 55:1 and John 7:37 have a common ground; the invitation for thirsty people, and those who accept the invitation can drink water. In other words, both texts have a soteriological meaning. However, Isaiah 55:1 is not based on the Feast of Tabernacles. It is a crucial difference between the two texts. Some commentators interpret John 7:37 in connection with Isaiah 55:1 in the historical context of the Feast of Tabernacles, but regardless of their intentions, Isaiah 55:1 does not take the Feast of Tabernacles as its background. Thus, there is no link between the two passages.

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40 Köstenberger, *John*, 240. See footnote 53 for scholars' positions on each argument.

41 Köstenberger, *John*, 239.


Comparing between John 7:38 and Ezekiel 47:1

Ezekiel 47:1 is the most frequently mentioned text in the interpretation of John 7:38. This section will look at the meaning of Ezekiel 47:1 and John 7:38, then will examine the similarities and differences between the two texts.

The Meaning of Ezekiel 47:1

The prophet Ezekiel’s visionary experience describes and declares the temple as a source of blessing for the land. The direction of the water flow is the same as the way the LORD had traveled back to the temple. The flow of this stream, which actually retraced his path, was flowing from the divine presence. The waters that flow from the temple remind us of the river of paradise, whose streams make glad the city of the LORD (Ps. 46:4). Such an expression means praise for the restoration given by the divine dwelling. The water coming out from under the threshold of the temple (v. 1) becomes a river that no one not cross (v. 5). The bank of the river influences a number of trees on each side of the river (vv. 5–6). This water revives living things wherever it flows (vv. 8–12). These transformations symbolize the LORD’s rule and his eschatological salvation.

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The Meaning of John 7:38

In this verse many interpreters reach an impasse: First, where is the OT texts Jesus refers to? Second, which part of the body does κολίζεις point to? Third, who does water come from?51

Jesus says “as Scripture has said,” but the citation cannot be found in the Bible.52 Many scholars refer to Ezekiel 47:1. However, as we have seen above, Zechariah 14 is more appropriate than Ezekiel 47:1. The reason can be found in the answer to the following question. The second and third questions are about the origin of water. Among various translations, several English versions have adopted “out of his heart” (ESV, NKJ, RSV). Although many interpretations are possible, this paper will follow the Christological interpretation on the basis of the feasibility of the interpretation. Considering John 19:34, the Christian interpretation seems more appropriate in this verse.53 Conclusively, in the Gospel of John, Jesus is the source of “living water” (4:13–14; 6:35).54 Furthermore, in the Gospel of John Jesus is the eschatological temple (2:17–19).55

Similarities and differences between Ezekiel 47:1 and John 7:38

Ezekiel 47:1 and John 7:38 have something in common; first, the water does not stay in one place and it flows; second, the source of the water is the Jerusalem temple. The similarity between the two texts is fully appreciated. However, Ezekiel 47:1 is not based on the Feast of Tabernacles unlike John 7:38.

54 Beasley-Murray points out that this verse has linguistic parallelism with 6:35 (*John*, 115).
Conclusion

Isaiah 55:1 and Ezekiel 47:1 have similarities with John 7:37–38. However, the OT texts are not based on the Feast of Tabernacles. Zechariah 14, on the other hand, is in the background of the Feast of Tabernacles and has this in common with John 7:37–38. Of course, there is a possibility that other OT texts will be more helpful in understanding the meaning of John 7:37–39. Nevertheless, according to our observations, we can conclude that the other texts are not the most appropriate texts compared with Zechariah 14. Therefore, John 7:37–38 should be read in light of Zechariah 14.

Regarding the Meaning of John 7:37–39 in light of Zechariah 14, John 7:37–39 could climax the teaching of 7:14–36.⁵⁶ To understand this passage, readers need to figure out which OT text Jesus had in mind. Many OT texts come to our mind, John 7:37–39 is most intimately related to Zechariah 14. If we read John 7:37–39 in light of Zechariah 14, we can derive the following meaning:

In verse 37, the word Jesus spoke to his fellows is an invitation to eschatological salvation. The living water is the source of life, and Jesus referred to himself as living water. Jesus is the source of life. Jesus is also the eschatological temple. Therefore, the invitation of Jesus can be linked to the command of the Feast of Tabernacles toward the nations (Zech. 14:16–19). Verse 38 and verse 39 have the same meaning. Jesus says that through his death the believers are saved (cf. 19:34). In the Gospel of John, Jesus is the eschatological temple, and thus his body can symbolize Jerusalem, especially the temple in Jerusalem. The water flowing from Jesus’ body can be interpreted as a river of living water. In sum, John 7:37–39 is a proclamation that Jesus fulfills the eschatological prophecy of Zechariah 14.

AN INVITATION TO DIALOGUE: SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY BASED ON THE VIEWS OF LOUIS-MARIE CHAUVET AND JOHN CALVIN

Sewon Jang

Abstract: “What are sacrament?” “What are their functions?” “What do they do, symbolize, or represent?” “How do the sacraments relate to the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ?” and “What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the administration of the sacraments?” The Sacraments can be understood in several ways. For Louis-Marie Chauvet, Sacraments are best understood as symbols. He emphasizes that liturgy “shows” not by reason, but by symbolic action. This was especially important for Protestants as they deepen liturgical expression which has, according to the critique of many, become a product of the Enlightenment separation of symbol and reality. In fact, John Calvin believed that they are visible signs of the promises of God. Therefore, the primary goal of this study is to reach a consensus on healthy sacramental worship practices for Protestants, especially to the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) based on the views of Louis-Marie Chauvet John Calvin’s sacramental theology.

Keywords: Sacramental Theology, Louis-Marie Chauvet, John Calvin, Lord’s Supper, Baptism, Symbol, Pneumatology, The Presbyterian Church of Korea.

Introduction

The Sacraments can be understood in several ways. Any understanding of sacrament must be tethered closely to the entire Christ event, to the biblical witness concerning the person of Jesus Christ, and the sacred meal he instituted in the Last Supper. However, in The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body, Louis-Marie Chauvet presents an alternative way to think about the Sacraments. He argues that Sacraments are best understood as symbols: “Now, by way of language and symbolism

it is possible… to present a general sacramental theology.”

Symbols are an intimate part of our existence as human beings. Symbols enable us to express both ourselves and our profound human experiences, such as the birth of a baby, the death of a loved one, falling in love, the sense of our own sinfulness. Throughout them we might sense God’s presence and the need to express the faith that inspires; we improvise, or more commonly, turn to already existing symbols to express the experience.

Strictly, the symbol (the symbolic reality) does not represent or point to an absent reality. The symbol has been formed or transformed by this reality. The symbol, thus, renders present what it reveals or symbolizes. Symbols are not things; they are things or actions involving relationships.


Chauvet, The Sacraments, 86.

Karl Rahner, “The Theology of Symbol,” in Theological Investigations 4, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966): 231-235. For Rahner, symbol was described in the highest, most primordial fundamental sense as one reality rendering another present.

Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 120-121. Chauvet prefers to speak of the symbolic rather than of symbol in order to avoid taking any symbol as adequate to express the divine or fixing on the symbol rather than on the one who comes to us through the symbol.

Especially, Julius Melton classified three types of Presbyterian churches in terms of their approach to worship: First, Presbyterians associated with Anglicans who celebrated according to a fixed liturgy that gave maximum opportunity for formalized corporate participation. Second, Presbyterians associated with radical Reformation and radical Puritanism who thought that people should be as free as possible in praising God. And third, Presbyterians associated with the Word. These took the stand that nothing was to be trusted in worship except what the
Henri Mottu speaks of the fact that “for the Reformers to place the meaning and power of sacraments back in the hands of the people themselves but the development of the cognitive to the exclusion of the body, the emotions, of experience has done damage to the liturgy and thus to our experience of and relationship with God.”\(^8\) However, Luther and Calvin both argued that signs effect what they signify and are visible signs of the promises of God. Also, the work of Louis-Marie Chauvet is immanently helpful in understanding this shift. He emphasizes that liturgy “shows” not by reason, but by symbolic action.\(^9\) He proposes a postmodern account of being rooted in Eucharistic symbolic exchange. Drawing on Heidegger and Derrida, Chauvet criticizes onto-theological models which detail the Eucharist in metaphysical terms. Chauvet also offers instead a view of being as mediate, locating the real not “behind” or “underneath” the symbolic, but precisely in the significant language of the symbolic order.\(^10\) Of this order, the Eucharist is the prime image.

The primary goal of this study is to reach a consensus on healthy sacramental worship practices for Protestants based on the views of Louis-Marie Chauvet and John Calvin’s sacramental theology. I will provide a basis for ecumenical dialogue, especially to the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK). My research questions are the following: “What are sacraments?” “What are their functions?” “What do they do, symbolize, or represent?” “How do the sacraments relate to the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ?” and “What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the administration of the sacraments?” In this respect, I will examine the meaning and significance of the sacraments from Chauvet's perspective. Second, I will explore John Calvin’s sacramental theology and pneumatology regarding baptism, looking for also the Lord’s Supper in light of John Calvin’s theology of worship.

Scripture commanded. According to Melton, Presbyterian worship has basically been shaped by the interrelation of these three approaches. See Jong-Bin Rhee, “Toward the Establishment of a Worship Theology in the Presbyterian Church of Korea,” (D. Min. diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005), 74.


\(^9\) Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 110-127.

\(^10\) Ibid., 274.
Re-Thinking “Sacrament” from Chauvet’s Perspective

Chauvet defines the sacraments in a variety of ways: (1) Chauvet describes the sacraments as being the most powerful expression of the Christian faith at the mercy of the body; (2) sacraments are expressions in word and rite proper to the particular religious group that Christians are; (3) the sacraments are also the language (or quasi language) of gestures, postures, movements, which are all forms of body language; (4) the sacrament is the crystallization of the word of God; (5) the sacrament is everything that pertains to the thankfulness which the Church expresses to God. For Chauvet, the sacraments are meant to act as a “buffer” that controls our temptations, allowing us to ignore body, history, and society, and enable God’s grace to enter our bodies and our lives. Furthermore, Chauvet views the sacraments as the symbolic carriers of God’s grace which are precisely the expression of this humanity of the divine God. The idea of Christian identity can be plainly summarized by the statement that one cannot be a Christian without belonging to the church. It is clear that the sacraments form the foundation of our Christian faith and identity. Within the structure of Christian identity, the sacraments exercise an

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11 I will examine the meaning and significance of the sacraments from the work of Louis-Marie Chauvet, The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body. His shorter work The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body passes over the more philosophical and methodological questions of Symbol and Sacrament to offer a more readable application or implementation of that method as it pertains to the sacraments in general.

12 Chauvet argues that all human interactions in the world are mediated. For instance, communication with others is mediated through language. Likewise, communication with God is mediated through the language of the Church, the Sacraments. These mediations are not “obstacles to truth,” but are rather “the very milieu within which human beings attain their truth and thus correspond to the Truth which calls them.” Furthermore, mediations such as the Sacraments serve as the lens that shapes how each subject perceives reality. Chauvet, The Sacraments, 6-10.

13 Ibid., 3-43.

14 Ibid., 114.

15 Ibid., 13,17,19,20,30,35,45 and 101.
original function; the sacraments are both a symbolic and ritual language that must be celebrated.\textsuperscript{16}

Chauvet argues that as symbols, the Sacraments link the past tradition in Scripture with the daily ethics that Christians live out in the present. The sacrament refers to the present, Eucharistic body. The sacrament of the Eucharist is meant to inspire us to display our gratitude to God for the reception of the body and blood of his son, Jesus Christ. The Eucharist reinforces this previous point by asking the faithful members of the church to perform celebrations in order to provide Christ with “a body of humanity and history” in which the memory of his presence, death and resurrection is kept alive. Ethics refers to the future, ecclesial body of Christ.\textsuperscript{17} In other words, the three elements of Christian identity are scriptures, sacraments, and ethics.\textsuperscript{18} Chauvet suggests that all three of these elements are necessary for one to live a good Christian existence.\textsuperscript{19} As a result, these elements are related. For example, with regard to the relationship between Scripture and the Sacraments, Scripture can be thought of as the words within the Bible. However, Chauvet argues that the Bible was made to be proclaimed by the assembly.\textsuperscript{20} Therefore, Scripture is at the mercy of the ecclesial body since it is up to the members to share the Scriptures. In addition, Chauvet argues that the Word is written on the body.\textsuperscript{21} Thus, the Word is not only proclaimed, it also becomes an action. Having celebrated the Sacraments, the ecclesial body can turn the Word that is inside them into visible actions.\textsuperscript{22} These actions

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 29 and 164.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 133 and 155.

\textsuperscript{18} See also Chauvet, \textit{Symbol and Sacrament}, 3. Christian identity itself, for Chauvet, is located in the tripartite relation of Sacrament-Scriptures-Ethics whereby the Church mediates Christ to the world: His discussion of being (symbol) and knowing (meaning).

\textsuperscript{19} Chauvet, \textit{The Sacraments}, 41.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 47.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 101.

\textsuperscript{22} Chauvet explains how the “‘hypostatic union’ designates the assumption
are ethical actions that take place in the context of daily life. Thus, by living ethically, the ecclesial body can live out the Scriptures.

Chauvet also emphasizes when the Word of God takes on a ritual form, it is able to reach Christians through the liveliness of the Spirit. Chauvet is of the opinion that the Spirit… allows the Word of God to be deposited in a body of Scriptures. To put it another way, the Spirit serves as both God’s agent of embodiment and his agent of communication with humanity: it gives a body to the Word. According to Chauvet, in recent modernity, there have been attempts to resist our own bodiliness, such as in the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment. Chauvet constantly stresses the importance of embracing our own embodiment and that we must allow the rite to be inhabited by the word of God and the Spirit; we cannot embark on the journey of faith and expect to find truth if we do not first recognize our own bodiliness. According to Chauvet, the sacraments affirm that the Word of God has the ability to inhabit our bodies and that, for anyone indwelt by the Spirit, the divine Christ will in fact take the human road in order to continue his journey of faith. Actually, Chauvet muses about different philosophical traditions such as the metaphysical tradition, which he describes as the age-long refusal to acknowledge the bodiliness of meaning and mind. In summary, Chauvet’s

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of human nature by the person of the Word in Jesus.” He is also of the conviction that Christians interpret “the letter of the Scriptures as a sacrament only inasmuch as it announces something other than itself.” Ibid., 46 and 155. See also Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 456.

23 Ibid., 31.

24 Ibid., 94.

25 Ibid., 166.

26 Ibid.

27 One of the central themes in Chauvet’s sacramental theology is the idea of bodiliness.

28 Ibid., 112.

29 Ibid., 114.
critique of the onto-theological presuppositions of scholastic metaphysics touches on three key problems confronting any contemporary theology of the sacraments: first, the inadequacy of causality to express the symbolic mediation of the divine-human encounter in the sacraments; second, the always-already mediated character of human knowing and therefore the centrality of language as ‘world’ rather than instrument; third, the inadequacy of thinking of the divine as permanent presence rather than in the shadow of the self-effacement of God on the cross. The net result of this therapeutic is a methodological orientation that thinks theologically out of the difference preserved by a conversion to the presence of the absence of God. Following this articulation of his methodological orientation, in the remainder of his treatise Chauvet reflects on the sacraments, primarily the Eucharistic liturgy, where he puts his method into practice. Chauvet comes to the conclusion that the very difference of God is written and made visible in the body of humanity in two instances in the body of the church and the body of all believers.

Chauvet puts forth the argument that Jesus should be viewed as the prime sacrament, since he redeemed us through his sacrifice, and as a result is considered a gift of God to humanity. According to Chauvet, symbolic exchange involves a three-step process which consists of the giving of the gift, the reception of the gift, and then the return-gift. Symbolic exchange provides us with a very helpful way of understanding the grace, and most specifically the sacramental grace, of God. Grace is beyond the useful and the useless, being a matter of super-abundance, beyond all value and calculation. This graciousness, however, fails fully to express the fact of gratuitousness—the precedence of God’s gift. Our own selves are received as a gift:

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31 Ibid., 166.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 125.

34 See Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 108.
By the very structure of the exchange, the gratuitousness of the gift carries the obligation of the return-gift of a response. Therefore, theologically, grace requires not only this initial gratuitousness on which everything else depends but also the graciousness of the whole circuit, and especially of the return-gift. This graciousness qualifies the return-gift as beyond-price, without calculation—in short, as a response of love. Even the return-gift of our human response thus belongs to the theologically Christian concept of "grace."

The combination of gift, reception, and return-gift enables us to distinguish two dimensions of grace: gratuitousness and graciousness. Chauvet asserts that the sacraments are the revelatory expressions of the already-here of God’s grace in daily life and therefore the summit of Christian life; they are also simultaneously the operating expression of the gratuitousness gift of God and the source of what makes a properly Christian life. The reception of the Eucharistic body of Christ enables Christians to become the ecclesial body of Christ, but there is a reception of the gift as gift only by the obligatory implication of the return-gift. In short, the return-gift serves as the mark of the reception. The gift is only successfully received if it produces the return-gift of faith, justice, mercy, gratitude, thanksgiving, and an increase of love. Once again, Chauvet promotes the idea of embracing one’s bodiliness in order to receive the true grace of God; we have to recognize that we are one body in Christ.

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35 Ibid., 109. In addition, when explaining his notion of symbolic gift exchange as a replacement for the notion of Eucharistic sacrifice conceived in the scholastic manner, Chauvet recognizes that he is constrained by the language of the Eucharist prayer, which he attempts to reinterpret in the light of his category of symbolic exchange. See also Ibid., 248-250.

36 Chauvet, Sacrament, 87-89.

37 Ibid., 147.

38 Ibid., 122.

39 Ibid., 122-124.

40 See 1 Cor 10:17, “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (NIV).
It is, therefore, important to note that when Chauvet uses the term “Sacrament,” he does not mean only the seven recognized Sacraments of the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{41} Chauvet defines this term as everything that pertains to the thankfulness which the church expresses to God.\textsuperscript{42}

In addition, Sarah Gagliano asserts that “[t]o say that Jesus is at the mercy of the historical body emphasizes that Jesus was fully human as well as divine, which makes sense with respect to the Trinity. As best exemplified in the Paschal Mystery, the death and resurrection of Jesus, God became fully human. He had a human body and experienced human events, such as death. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is a key player in the Sacraments. For example, the Holy Spirit plays an important role in the celebration of the Eucharist, as exemplified in the Eucharistic Prayer II. In the first epiclesis, the Spirit creates the Eucharistic body of Christ, and in the second epiclesis the ecclesial body is evoked. Moreover, due to the presence of the Holy Spirit, God is present in Scripture, in the ecclesial body, as previously stated, and also in the particular ritual word acts that this church effects in memory of Him, the Sacraments. Thus, the Sacraments are the symbolic expression of the eschatological embodiment of God through the Spirit in Christ, and then in the church. Keeping in mind Chauvet’s way of explaining the Sacraments through symbolic exchange, one can envision an interaction between God and believers. Since the relationship among the three persons of the Trinity perfectly exemplifies symbolic exchange, Christology and Pneumatology are central to understanding the Sacraments as explained by Chauvet.”\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{41} The seven sacraments officially recognized by the Roman Catholic Church at the time of the Reformation were: baptism, the Eucharist, confirmation, penance, marriage, ordination, and extreme unction. See more information Kenneth Scott Latourette, \textit{A History of Christianity: Volume I} (Peabody: Prince Press, 1997), 528-533 and William R. Cannon, \textit{History of Christianity in the Middle Ages} (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), 313-315.

\textsuperscript{42} Chauvet, \textit{Sacrament}, 30.

Taken together, the various elements of the structure of Christian identity can finally be depicted as follows:

![Diagram of the structure of Christian identity]

**Fig. 1**

**Re-Thinking “Sacrament” from the John Calvin’s Perspectives**

John Calvin never received any formal theological education. He was raised within the Catholic Church and trained as a lawyer. This is not to say that Calvin was not committed to the truths of Scripture and willing to stand up against the Catholic Church and its many deviations from that standard; however, this perspective does help one to understand the

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context in which he formulated his views of the sacraments. John Calvin defined a sacrament as:

An external sign, by which the Lord seals on our consciences his promises of good will toward us, in order to sustain the weakness of our faith, and we in our turn testify our piety toward him, both before himself, and before angels as well as men.\(^{46}\)

Two things stand out in this definition: (1) the sacrament is an action of God; (2) the sacrament is a statement of belief and obedience on the part of the participants, Calvin is clear that the initiatory action of the sacrament is on the part of God. We can see, therefore, the graciousness of God in his using the sacrament to minister to our finite form in a suitable way. This is because our small capacity needs the Word communicated by more tactile means than written and spoken words alone. In fact, Calvin agreed with Zwingli that the Word of God is sufficient to assure believers of their salvation, and that sacraments are not necessary. However, Calvin believes God has given the sacraments to the Church in light of human ignorance and frailty:

Thus, the sacraments are, as it were, seals to seal the grace of God in our hearts, and render it more authentic, for which reason they may be termed visible doctrine.\(^{47}\)

Calvin also states that “in this way he consults our weakness. If we were wholly spiritual, we might, like the angels, spiritually behold both him and his grace; but as we are surrounded with this body of clay, we need figures or mirrors to exhibit a view of spiritual and heavenly things in a kind of earthly manner; for we could not otherwise attain to them. At the same time, it is our interest to have all our senses exercised in the promises of God, that they may be the better confirmed to us.”\(^{48}\) James White states,


\(^{48}\)John Calvin, *Treatises on the Sacraments, Catechism of the Church of Geneva, Forms*
for Calvin, sacramentality is based on the nature of humans and our need for visual signs.\textsuperscript{49} However, these signs are not mere representations. Calvin stated sacraments are truly named the testimonies of God’s grace and are like seals of the good will that he feels toward us. Thus, God therefore truly executes whatever he promises and represents in signs.\textsuperscript{50} Sacramentality in Calvin is not a general principal that the natural world is imbued with transcendence, or an epiphany of the sacred; sacramentality begins with the anthropological observation that being human, having a body, means that we are users of signs and need corporeal expressions to experience the full reality of spiritual truth.\textsuperscript{51} The sacraments present a form of the Word of God that addresses an aspect of human nature that the preached Word does not. A Reformed concept of the sacraments addresses the corporeal side of human nature, as previously mentioned, which the Catholic theologian Louis-Marie Chauvet nicely captures in a subtitle —“the Word of God at the Mercy of the Body.”\textsuperscript{52} According to Calvin, although we are spiritual beings with souls we have bodies, which means that God uses visible means to impart spiritual things. Sacraments then are God’s accommodation to our corporeal nature:

But as our faith is slight and feeble unless it be propped on all sides and sustained by every means, it trembles, wavers, tooters, and at last gives way. Here our merciful Lord, according to his infinite kindness, so tempers himself to our capacity that, since we are creatures who always creep on the ground, cleave to the flesh, and, do not think about or even conceive of anything spiritual, he


\textsuperscript{51} Ganski Christopher, \textit{Spirit and Flesh: On the Significance of the Reformed Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper for Pneumatology} (Ph. D. diss., Marquette University, 2009), 95.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. His work has significant ecumenical potential for a common sacramental understanding between Reformed and Roman Catholic traditions. Chauvet develops his sacramental vision most fully in \textit{Symbol and Sacrament}. 

condescends to lead us to himself even by these earthly elements, and to set before us in the flesh a mirror of spiritual blessings.\textsuperscript{53}

For Calvin the sacraments are accommodations of God to the human situation in the most concrete sense – the body. However, we must note a criticism of Calvin’s tendency to speak of our theological need for the sacraments and the visible church not in terms of the positive experience of salvation, but rather in the language of a soteriological deficit.\textsuperscript{54} As previously mentioned, Calvin often highlights the weakness, frailty and incapacity of human flesh in ascending to spiritual realities; but accenting the fallen and finite character of human nature does not mean Calvin’s concept of sacramentality functions only on the basis of a soteriological deficit.\textsuperscript{55} The corporeal experience of salvation is positively grounded in the incarnation of God in human flesh, which in a certain sense is the ultimate basis of all subsequent accommodations of God’s grace to us:

Hence, it was necessary for the Son of God to become Immanuel, that is, God with us and in such a way that his divinity and our human nature by mutual connection grow together. Otherwise the nearness would not be enough, nor the affinity sufficiently firm, for us to hope that God might dwell with us.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 96 and Calvin, \textit{Institutes}, 4.14.3.

\textsuperscript{54} Christopher’s building on the work of Miroslav Volf, we can see that understanding the pastoral and pedagogical character of Calvin’s theological rhetoric is critical for a proper interpretation of his frequent use of language that to modern ears smacks of soteriological deficit, and even a depreciation of corporeal existence. See Christopher, \textit{Spirit and Flesh}, 96.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{56} Calvin, \textit{Institutes}, 2.12.1. Calvin never explicitly links accommodation and his treatment of the incarnation, but many scholars have commented on the implicit connections. Paul Helm says, “Accommodation is a divine activity, and since the ends that God seeks to secure by the use of language are ultimately soteric in character, we must see the idea of God’s accommodation of himself in his language about himself as integral to his grace, an accommodation that has its end-point in the accommodation of God the Son in the incarnation.” See Paul Helm, \textit{John Calvin’s Ideas} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 197.
For Calvin the whole structure of revelation has the nature of accommodation, and the sacraments are merely the most sensible and personal form of God’s gracious address to us. Accommodation is not merely a divine pedagogical device to address the mental “torpor” and “dullness” of the human, rather it is “an account of some of the conditions under which God chooses to say and must say certain things about himself in order to reach certain ends. It is an integral feature of his gracious self-revelation.” As visible words, Calvin argues that in order for the sacraments to be effective in producing faith they must be accompanied with the preached Word, which itself must present to us the Word incarnate.

According to Calvin the sensible depiction of the Word in the sacraments penetrates human nature more deeply than the auditory or written Word alone. The preached Word approaches a person through hearing, is discursive and analytic, primarily addresses the heart through the intellect and is not capable of presenting more than one aspect of divine truth at a time. The sacrament, on the other hand, communicates by touch, taste and sight, reaches the whole person in their bodiliness and is capable of presenting in one moment the concrete whole of the person and work of Christ. Richard Paquier calls this the “synthetic” work of the sacrament.

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57 Christopher, *Spirit and Flesh*, 96.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid. In additions, Christopher argues that the sacraments are distinguished from the preached Word in how they “sign” and “seal” the promises of God in us. The preached Word addresses our ignorance and the dullness of our minds and hearts, while the sacraments authenticate the promises to our weakness and fragile flesh. The sacraments are not superfluous or dispensable because they bring the “clearest promises” of God over and above the preached Word – they “represent them for us as painted in a picture from life.” They do not offer us a grace that is not available in the Word, but they do offer us access to grace at a more intimate level. This is the sealing work of the sacrament, which works assurance in our hearts of God’s promises. Calvin calls the sacraments “the pillars of our faith” and compares their importance to the columns that uphold a building. They are mirrors upon which to contemplate the lavish riches of God’s grace. In fact, Calvin goes on to make a very surprising claim: the sacraments bear witness to God’s “good will and love towards us more expressly than by word.”
sacraments since they unite word, vision and sign. The sacraments for Calvin are not merely visible didactic means to teach what the more spiritual person can apprehend by the word alone. Rather, the sacraments lead us directly into Calvin’s understanding of the experience of grace through the sealing and ratifying work of the Spirit. The function of the sacraments is not primarily a teaching one, but one that sustains, confirms, nourishes and deepens our establishment and faith in the promises of God.

The sacraments are accommodations of the Holy Spirit to the human body. In other words, the role of the Spirit is central to Calvin’s sacramental theology. The sacraments are not merely rhetoric for the sensual, but God’s divine energy, power and Spirit channeled through physical things. Actually, John Calvin understood the grace of the Lord’s Supper to be the “visible Word,” by which Christ in the Spirit is accommodated to the human body. Calvin wrote that, “the power and efficacy of a sacrament is not contained in the outward element, but flows entirely from the Spirit of God.” This is what is meant by Calvin’s claim that the sacraments are spiritual in nature:

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60 Ibid., 98.

61 Ibid., 98-99.

62 Ibid. The sacraments then, are a making real of God’s promises to human corporeality, in the elect they effect what they represent. See also Calvin, Institutes, 4.14.15.


64 In addition, Calvin starts his treatment of the sacraments with the Augustinian definition of a sacrament as the “visible form of an invisible grace.” In another place he insists “on the intervention of a symbol which may enable us to make a transition to the spiritual reality.” Bodily creatures require bodily means for the experience of grace – “because we are flesh, they are shown us under things of flesh.” See Calvin, Institutes, 4.14.1 and 4.14.6.

65 Calvin, Treatises on the Sacraments, 84.

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We believe this communication of Christ from God to his people to be (a) mystical, and incomprehensible to human reason, and (b) spiritual, since it is effected by the Holy Spirit.66

In additions, Chauvet also captures how the sacraments link our experience of the spiritual and the corporeal:

That Christian identity cannot be separated from the sacraments means that faith cannot be lived in any other way, including what is most spiritual in it, than in the mediation of the body, the body of a society, or a desire, of a tradition, of a history, of an institution, and so on. What is most spiritual always takes place in the most corporeal.67

While the importance of the Spirit’s working in the sacraments is seen especially in Calvin’s Eucharistic theology, it is also clear in his baptismal theology. To put it another way, Calvin rightly notes in his Institutes of the Christian Religion that there are two sacraments: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Both sacraments work in conjunction with the Word, in which the promises of God are laid forth. These promises are then sealed and confirmed in the sacraments. According to Ronald Wallace, “Calvin tested the various ceremonies practiced in the Roman Church of his day as to whether they satisfied this definition. His rule was: ‘There must be a promise and command of the Lord’ – ‘a Word of God which promises the presence of the Holy Spirit.’”68 Calvin found in the words of Jesus only enough evidence for baptism and the Lord’s Supper to rightly be called sacraments.

Baptism, Calvin said, works in this same way:
The external minister baptizes with an external element, that is water, which is received bodily… The internal minister, the Holy

66 Ibid., 171.

67 See Chauvet, The Sacraments, xii.

68 Ronald S. Wallace, Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), 133.
Spirit, baptizes with the blood of the spotless Lamb, so that he that is baptized is endowed with the whole Christ.\(^6\)

Another significant focus of Calvin’s baptismal theology —indeed of his sacramental theology in general—is the covenant. Calvin understood baptism as a sign of the covenant between God and the Christian community. The covenant metaphor was prominent in early Reformed discussions of both soteriology and sacramental theology. He also understood it is relationship to daily piety in it is purpose saying it is used for “arousing, nourishing, and confirming our faith.” He taught “baptism is a sign of the inevitable suffering that will accompany the Christian life.” He also believes baptism provides an anchor for Christian piety by serving as a constant source of assurance for the wounded conscience of the believer.\(^7\) He wrote that baptism is a kind of entrance into the Church; for we have in it a testimony that we who are otherwise strangers and aliens, are received into the family of God, so as to be counted of his household.\(^8\) In this admission into God’s people, God signs and seals his promises to the person baptized: forgiveness, regeneration and union with Christ. Marcus Johnson is helpful at this point in clarifying Calvin’s thought, though he chooses to use the word “included.” He writes,

Baptism is God’s pledge to us that we have been so included in Jesus Christ that we are joined with him in his death, burial, and resurrection.\(^9\)

\(^{6}\) Calvin, *Treatises on the Sacraments*, 173-174. In addition, for Luther, baptism signified more than simply the washing away of sin, although it was that: it was death and resurrection, “full and complete justification.” Zwingli’s view of baptism was in line with his sacramental perspective which, in contrast to Luther, separated the external sign from the internal act. See Martin Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church” in Martin Luther, *Three Treatises*, 2nd rev. ed. (Philadelphia, Pa: Fortress Press, 1970), 190-191 and W. Peter Stephens, “The Theology of Zwingli,” in Bagchi and Steinmetz, *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*; 88.


\(^{8}\) Ibid., 86.

\(^{9}\) Calvin’s view of baptism appears to be a mediating path between that of
Christians have been engrafted into Christ, united to him, and baptism is the sign of all that has taken place. When we understand baptism through the lens of union with Christ, we come to see how the benefits of baptism are applied to the believer our faith receives from baptism the advantage of its sure testimony to us that we are not only engrafted into the death and life of Christ but also united to Christ himself that we become sharers in all his blessings. For he dedicated and sanctified baptism in his own body (Matt. 3:13) in order that he might have it in common with us as the firmest bond of the union and fellowship which he has designed to form with us. Hence, Paul proves that we are children of God from the fact that we put on Christ in baptism (Gal. 3:26-27). Thus, we see that the fulfillment of baptism is in Christ, whom also for this reason we call the proper object of baptism. Here again, Calvin was careful to distinguish that these things are accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit, not the sign itself, though God does join the thing signed to the sign itself, in so far as God works through outward means.

Re-Thinking “the Lord’s Supper” from the John Calvin’s Theology of Worship

John Calvin’s reformation of worship attempted to reconstruct Early church worship as much as possible based upon the warrant of Scripture. He wanted to abolish the traditionally transmitted ostentatious and symbolic rituals of the medieval church and recover a simple form of worship. He called the first edition of the rite which appeared in 1540 The Form of Prayers and Manner of Ministering the Sacraments according to the Use of the Roman Catholic Church, which ascribed to the water the power to cleanse from sin and grant salvation. Marcus Johnson, One With Christ: An Evangelical Theology of Salvation (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 227. See also Rom 6:4, “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (NIV).

73 Calvin, Institutes, 3.15.6.

74 Calvin, Institutes, 4.15.13.

This rite of Calvin’s became a pattern, generally, for the worship of Calvinistic churches on the continent and later in the British Isles and in America. Many variations were made locally, but the general outline of the rite has remained substantially the same even into our own times. It is often stated that Calvin set the pattern of worship, though not always of doctrine, for Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, Disciples, and of course Presbyterians, in the entire English-speaking world. Maxwell describes the liturgical order utilized by Calvin from Calvin’s service book, Strasbourg edition, 1545, as follows:

The Liturgy of the Word
Scripture Sentence (Ps. 124:8)
Confession of sins
Scriptural words of pardon
Absolution
Metrical Decalogue sung with Κύριε ἐλέησον (Greek: Κύριε, ἐλέησον) after each Law
Collect for Illumination
Lection
Sermon

The Liturgy of the Upper Room
Collection of Alms
Intercessions
Lord’s Prayer in long paraphrase
Preparation of elements while Apostles’ Creed sung
Consecration Prayer
Lord’s Prayer
Words of Institution
Exhortation

It went through at least three editions, the second in 1542, and the third in 1545. After he was recalled to Geneva, he published a modified form of the Strasbourg rite in 1542, which also went through several editions after 1547. This is known as the Geneva rite and is not to be confused with the 1542 edition of the Strasbourg rite. See Ilion T. Jones, A Historical Approach to Evangelical Worship (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), 126.

Ibid., 128.
Calvin’s liturgy was clearly shaped by certain biblical principles and influenced by what was known of early church practice. Calvinists believed that there are some elements which are necessary for a rightly formed liturgy, and they read Acts 2:42 as a summary of the first Christians’ worship: to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship (κοινωνία), to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Calvinists generally understood this biblical pattern as pure preaching of the Word, the sacraments rightly administered, prayer (both spoken and sung), and the expression of communal love, for example in the kiss of peace or almsgiving. The notable fact concerning Calvin’s liturgy is that it is not canonical. Calvin accommodated himself to liturgical practices in Geneva and Strasbourg. While he had strong preferences, the variations he tolerated in this liturgy indicate he did not try to impose anyone authoritative pattern for the worship of God.  

Calvin’s liturgy emphasized hearing and receiving, in faith, the Word of God in Word and sacrament. He wanted to give the Scripture its authoritative place. So he gave the Scriptures, read in course and expounded their central place as in the ancient rites. He referred to the minister as the mouth of God and contended that the sermon, a commentary on Scripture, was the Word of God in the worship service.

For Calvin, the doctrine and proper use of the sacraments was one of the most important issues of the Reformation. Calvin’s writings on the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper are imbued with profound pastoral insight.

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81 Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 82-83.
and devotional depth. Uttering Calvin’s liturgy at the Lord’s Table, the minister enheartened participants saying:

Jesus Christ makes us worthy of the gifts he offers to us here, so “may we never be so perverse as to draw away when Jesus Christ invites us so gently by His Word.”

He devoted about 15 percent of his Genevan Catechism to the sacraments, the same percentage found in the final 1559 edition of the Institutes. Calvin’s view on the sacraments was midway between Zwingli and Luther. Calvin recognized the necessity of signs in worship. He thought the institution of sacraments provided visible signs through which God’s love could be revealed. Reflecting on his own experience at the Table, Calvin writes:

I embrace without controversy the truth of God in which I may safely rest. Our Lord declares his flesh the food of my soul, his blood its drink. I offer my soul to him to be fed with such food. In his Sacred Supper he bids me take, eat, and drink his body and blood under the symbols of bread and wine. I do not doubt that he himself truly presents them, and that I receive them.

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82 Thompson, Liturgies of the Western Church, 207.


84 Zwingli did not accept the necessity of signs in worship. He considered the sacraments as oaths of allegiance to Christ. The word sacramentum had meant (in Latin) the oath of allegiance to the officer. Thus, he strongly opposed Luther’s localized objective presence of the Lord in the elements.

85 Jean Calvin and Donald K. McKim, Calvin’s Institutes: Abridged Edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 160. Much like baptism, the Lord’s Supper “is a visible, tangible – and in this case, edible – sign of the invisible reality of our union with Christ.” As baptism symbolizes the beginning of the Christian life, so now the Lord’s Supper nourishes and sustains this life in Christ. “Given our union with Christ, our souls receive a continual communication of Christ’s body and blood as spiritual food for the spiritual journey.” See Johnson, One With Christ, 232 and J. Todd Billings and I. John Hesselink, ed. Calvin’s Theology and Its Reception: Disputes, Developments, and New
He recognized that God uses material things to reveal spiritual things to us, and this view on signs provided important insights into how humans related to God. For Calvin, through the power of the Holy Spirit we are made to participate in the body and blood of Christ in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. In the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559) Calvin lays out the Spirit’s role in the sacrament:

> Our souls are fed by the flesh and blood of Christ in the same way that bread and wine keep and sustain physical life. For the analogy of the sign applies only if souls find their nourishment in Christ – which cannot happen unless Christ truly grows into one with us, and refreshes us by the eating of his flesh and the drinking of his blood. Even though it seems unbelievable that Christ’s flesh, separated from us by such great distance, penetrates to us, so that it becomes our food, let us remember how far the secrete [sic] power of the Holy Spirit towers above all our senses, and how foolish it is to wish to measure his immeasurableness by our measure. What, then, our mind does not comprehend, let faith conceive: that the Spirit truly unites things separated in space. Now that sacred partaking of his flesh and blood, by which Christ pours his life into us, as if it penetrated into our bones and marrow, he also testifies and seals in the Supper – not by presenting a vain and empty sign, but by manifesting there the effectiveness of his Spirit to fulfill what he promises.\(^{86}\)

What is remarkable is the manner in which Calvin asserts that it is the Holy Spirit who makes the body of Christ available to believers: we partake of the very body and blood of Christ, although not by means of a local presence in the elements. Here again, the importance of the Spirit is central to Calvin’s view of the Lord’s Supper. Boniface Meyer also writes:

> If the Lutheran position stresses Christ’s presence by means of the Word and the Zwinglian by means of faith, Calvin combines these two elements and adds the dimension of the Holy Spirit. The signs are neither efficacious in themselves nor empty symbols, but necessary conjunctives in the Eucharistic

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\(^{86}\) Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.10.
communion of Christ’s presence. It is inadequate to explain this presence simply as a ‘virtual’ or a ‘spiritual’ presence. Rather this communication of Christ’s presence as expressed in Calvin’s teaching is, ‘a divine spiritual event that includes the body and hence not a “pure” spiritual event.’

Ronald Wallace describes Calvin’s view of this “divine spiritual event” in this way:

Communion with the body of Christ is effected through the descent of the Holy Spirit, by whom our souls are lifted up to heaven there to partake of the life transfused into us from the flesh of Christ.

Therefore, Calvin carefully strove to construct a real but spiritual presence of Christ, again placing him in something of a middle position between Zwingli and Luther. Calvin appears to take a middle road between Luther and Zwingli on the issue of the Real Presence. Traditionally in the Presbyterian Church Korea (PCK), the sermon and explanation of the Lord’s Supper at the table usually focused on the crucifixion of Christ in a solemn and sad mood for participants to remember and meditate on the redemptive work and grace of salvation of Christ. Such a practice reflects Zwingli’s memorialism rather than Calvin’s spiritual presence of Christ at the table. Calvin tried to restore the Lord’s Supper in its primitive simplicity and completeness as the central service. He did not wish to replace sacramental worship with a preaching service. Rather, he wanted the balance between the Word and the sacraments in worship. Calvin believed the Lord’s Supper was central in the church’s life, and he desired it to be a weekly celebration. In his practice of worship, as in his theology

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89 In Strasbourg, he was able to effect the Lord’s Supper only monthly, and in Geneva it was observed only three times a year (Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas), then later observed quarterly. See Leith, *An Introduction to the Reformed Tradition*, 187 and John Calvin, “Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances (1541),” *In Calvin: Theological Treatises*, trans. ed. J.K.S. Reid (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 76
of the sacraments, Calvin followed the teaching of Scripture and the tradition of the early church.

Worship in his church began with confession which reminded worshippers that they were incapable of any good and that they transgressed God’s holy commandments without ceasing. At communion, a long list of sins was read and everyone who felt guilty was told not to receive the sacraments.90 Also worship must not only be correct but must also be understood. Of course, this insistence was not Calvin’s own. Luther had already practiced worship in the language of the people. But Calvin went further. He insisted that all the acts and symbols of worship must be clearly understood by the congregation. For example, in music care must be taken lest the melody obscure the meaning. In the sacraments, the Word must explain the act or symbol. Church members were educated in the liberal arts so that they could understand not only the Word of God but also the works of God in His world. Calvin wanted worship to be an opportunity for edification of the congregation. Thus, a major criterion of worship was edification. If a practice met this criterion, nonbiblical practices could be tolerated or even encouraged. If it failed to meet the criterion, even a biblical practice was ignored.91 He worked hard so that worship could be connected to life.

For Calvin, worship was not limited to just the liturgy of the church. Rather, it extended to all areas of a congregation’s life. We believe that worship must express itself in life. In Calvin’s view, as worship was fulfilled in front of God, the life of Christians was also “the life in front of God.”92 Therefore, for Calvin, worship was the chief opportunity for the instructing and reprimanding of congregations to be God’s holy people.

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91 Ibid., 118.

Conclusion

No sacrament is given without God’s promise. It is the function of the sacrament to seal and confirm the promise. Although God’s Word is itself sufficient, and the sacrament is not needed to establish God’s Word, because our faith is weak, we are given the sacrament to affirm God’s Word to us. The sacrament is given in material form because we are human and reside in bodies; we need earthly reminders of God’s spiritual promises. The sacraments are also not mere symbols, but they mediate the power of Christ, and are capable of demonstrating the faith of the recipient.

Chauvet’s sacramental theology, while regularly attentive to historical texts and practices, is a philosophical interpretation of how God’s having taken up and saved the human condition in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus becomes real in the lives of those baptized into that same paschal mystery. As we have seen, the Church’s symbolic order of Scripture, sacrament, and ethics makes of the human subject’s historically and culturally mediated project of knowledge, gratitude, and ethics a sacrament – an embodied revelation – of the reign of God, the salvation of human beings. What keeps this way of life explicitly Christian is the ongoing balance between these three constitutive poles of the practice of faith. At the heart of Chauvet’s fundamental sacramental theology is his insistence that the sacraments of the Church are practices of faith, with faith being “the assent to a loss,” a continuous letting go of our projections of what we imagine God should be like, so that the totally other yet lovingly near

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96 Ibid.

God revealed in the crucified and resurrected Christ might really be present to us in our lived experience.

In Calvin’s sacramental theology, the Lord’s Supper (as was true with baptism) is a sign and seal of the believers’ union with Christ. It is through the mysterious reality of union with Christ that the believer receives the benefits and is nourished by the Lord’s Supper.\(^98\) In other words, both baptism and the Lord’s Supper are not only signs and seals of the believers union with Christ, but it is through union with Christ that the benefits and nourishment of the sacraments are applied to the believer.

As Protestant Christians, we might say this word “sacrament” may fit more Roman Catholic than Protestant, but this is indeed the word which Calvin (and the reformers) chose to use and we need to think about it again. Through the views of Louis-Marie Chauvet’s sacramental theology and the work of John Calvin’s sacramental theology we can see that:\(^99\) (1) the corporality of the practice of the sacraments, precisely as language-laden, communal acts of symbolic mediation, is what makes their celebration so essential to knowing and living the Christ proclaimed in Scripture;\(^100\) (2) participation in sacramental liturgy as an ecclesial body given over to both the Word in Scripture and symbolic gestures that inscribe that divine word on our persons delivers us from the human tendency to imagine that there should be no distance, no gap, no otherness between ourselves and the fullness of God; (3) the members of a liturgical assembly bring precisely their bodies to the celebration, their daily action (ethics) as persons engaged in the social and cosmic bodiliness of the human story being written in history; (4) by participating in the traditional body of the Church’s sacramental worship we submit to the mystery of

\(^98\) As we have seen, Zwingli saw the significance of the sacraments simply in terms of an oath; they are symbols and do nothing that the Spirit could do without them. However, Calvin’s position appears to be a mediating one: while the sacraments are signs and symbols, there is a strong link between the sacrament and that which it signifies.

\(^99\) See Bruce T. Morrill SJ, Divine Worship and Human Healing: Liturgical Theology at the Margins of Life and Death (Collegeville: Pueblo Books, 2009), 122-123.

\(^100\) See Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 1-40.
God revealed in the crucified and resurrected Jesus, a God who comes to us in and through the shared bodily medium of our human knowing, suffering, and loving. Thus, does the God of Jesus become really present to our lives, even as that sacramental ecclesial presence always recedes in its coming, sending us in the Spirit to discover the Word as living and active in us and our world.
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