"No one thought more clearly or creatively about the place of worship in a postmodern environment than did Graham Hughes. Firmly grounded in the Reformed theological tradition, Hughes nonetheless vigorously engaged a wide range of ecumenical and philosophical thought. Now, through the generous work of William Emilsen and Steffen Lösel, we gratefully have the much-anticipated book Hughes was working on when he died. *Reformed Sacramentality* is highly original, profoundly theological, and richly practical. Hughes manages to remain true to the Reformed sacramental tradition, while at the same time pointing in breathtaking new directions."

—Thomas G. Long
Bandy Professor Emeritus of Preaching
Candler School of Theology
Emory University

"This posthumous study is a long-awaited consideration of an issue which concerns all thoughtful practitioners in the Reformed Tradition: it explores the origins of Reform's bifurcation of spirit and form, its long favouring of the cognitive over the physical (and indeed the affective) mode, of speech over symbol in sermon and sacrament. Hughes constantly reaches out to other Christian traditions as he delineates a new Reformed canonicity. It is especially pertinent to his own church, the Uniting Church in Australia (Reformed/Methodist), for a reclamation of the materiality of faith itself, and therefore of both word and sacrament, is a key to the recovery of rich and enduring forms of worship."

—The Rev. Dr Robert Gribben
Professor Emeritus of Worship and Mission
Uniting Church Faculty of Theology, Melbourne, Australia

"This volume reintroduces Hughes's critical and constructive achievement in his book *Worship and Meaning* and extends it by presenting his argument for a distinctively Reformed sacramentality. A welcome addition to Reformed and ecumenical reflection!"

—Amy Plantinga Pauw
Henry P. Mobley, Jr., Professor of Doctrinal Theology
Louisville Presbyterian Seminary

"This 'final word' from Australian liturgical theologian Graham Hughes is a distinctive and rich contribution to contemporary discussions about sacramentality. He ably demonstrates the need to balance disseminated sacramentality with a 'condensed' sacramentality, through which our awareness of the sacred is found in specific trusted material actions, our physicality is acknowledged and engaged in Christian worship, and our encounter with God is given physical form."

—E. Byron Anderson
Styberg Professor of Worship
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

"The Reformed tradition is in need of sacramental reform! This timely work comes to light in an era in which brain research makes clear that human knowing arises from sensory engagement with the material and social environment. This bold and provocative work by Hughes calls for a fundamental reconsideration of the role of embodiment in Reformed approaches to baptism and the Lord's Supper. Taking cues from a robust Christology that highlights Christ as the icon of God, Hughes provides a fresh way of thinking about the fusion of materiality and the sacred in the sacraments. Lösel's introductory essay provides illumination and context for the thought-provoking challenges offered here."

—Rev. Dr. Gordon S. Mikoski
Princeton Theological Seminary

# Reformed Sacramentality

Graham R. Hughes

Edited and Introduced by Steffen Lösel
Foreword by Gordon W. Lathrop

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# Contents

# Foreword

When Graham Hughes died in February 2015 we lost an exceedingly important voice in worldwide ecumenical liturgical theology. That voice was known principally in his magisterial *Worship as Meaning: A Liturgical Theology for Late Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). But it also echoed in many articles and shorter books, in the memory of many of his students in Australia and New Zealand, in memorable conversations he had over the years undertaken with other scholars at Congresses of *Societas Liturgica*, and especially in the hearts of his colleagues and friends. Still, he had much more to say. The loss was thus the greater as many people came to know that Graham had been at work on yet another important book, this one on the issues involved in a Reformed Christian approach to sacramental meaning and practice, a book he did not live to finish.

But the loss has at least some mitigation. *Mirabile dictu*, this present volume is that book—or *nearly* that book. Graham did leave several articles which had been conceived as part of the total project, and he did leave two chapters of the projected manuscript. Through the kindness and skill of two people—William Emilsen, one of Graham's closest friends and colleagues, and Steffen Lösel, one of his most insightful interpreters—and through the willingness of Liturgical Press in Collegeville, those fragments toward a book have been assembled here into something very close to the book Graham intended. The book has been marvelously filled out by an interpretive introduction by Lösel and the record of a conversation

Emilsen had with Graham shortly before his death, a conversation which clearly articulates what Graham was doing with this work.

If you do not know Graham Hughes's work, let me urge you to begin with Lösel's introduction. There you will find not only an outline of the argument in the chapters to follow but also a lucid and inviting summary of the contents of *Worship as Meaning*. I have long said that *Worship as Meaning* is not only a hugely significant contribution to the field of liturgical theology but also the clearest and most helpful study I know of how "meaning" functions in our late-modern/"postmodern" times and why this concern is significant for Christian worship. Lösel's introduction is a worthy interpretation of that book—and a worthy invitation to this present new book—not least because of its own brilliant clarity.

And if you do not think that questions involved in *Reformed* sacramental theology concern you, let me urge you to think again. It is not only that healthy practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper in the worldwide Reformed churches matters to all Christians. It is also that many of the questions so well dealt with here are questions for anyone, Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox, who thinks about Christian liturgy: the sacraments as images; the signifying work of the sacraments; the relationship of materiality and the divine as also of idolatry and faith; and counsel for all of us on how to avoid disappointing and trivializing sacramental practice that has the assembly—or at least those in the assembly who care about meaning—scrambling to do most of the interpretation in their own individual heads.

Hughes began *Worship as Meaning* with the image of a woman coming anew into a church. He continued his exploration into liturgical meaning with this arriving woman never far from mind. Indeed, she functioned as Hughes's "Mrs. Murphy"; and she returned in the summarizing epilogue to the book. But if that book could be said to be framed by a "subject entering a church unfamiliar to her" (*Worship as Meaning*, p. 300), then this present book moves well beyond that initial entrance. It is deeply concerned with the central matters at the heart of the meaning making and meaningful assembly.

In 1519, Martin Luther wrote a series of treatises or "sermons" on the sacraments, in which he sought to explore their significance, to urge people to practice them in such a way that the practice

would be "a true and complete sign of the thing it signifies,"[1] and to invite people to trust God through them. *Sign, significance, faith*: such was his Augustinian pastoral hermeneutics. For Luther, the faithful sign needed to be immersion for baptism, communal eating and drinking for Eucharist, and the clear announcement of absolution for penance. In many ways it feels to me as if the chapters you are about to read are Graham Hughes's late-modern version of these treatises, his plea for strong sign, profound significance, and responding faith. Indeed, immersion—or, at least, more water!—and beautiful, communal eating and drinking are part of his argument for the sacraments as images. We would do well to pay attention.

Graham Hughes was a practicing Christian; he was a theologian who went to church and cared deeply about what going to church was like for anyone. Before he was a seminary professor, he was a parish pastor. And before he was either, he was a New Testament scholar and a baptized Christian. His New Testament connection was always fascinating to me; I too had done my doctoral studies in New Testament, though I had worked on Mark, while Graham wrote on Hebrews and hermeneutics.

I vividly recall my last face-to-face conversation with Graham. We were at the 2013 Congress of *Societas Liturgica* in Würzburg, Germany, and we were talking at length about sacraments. In classic Lutheran-Reformed mode—perhaps in classic Markan–Letter to the Hebrews mode—I was defending the paradox of *finitum capax infiniti* and the idea of the ubiquity of the "right hand of God." Graham was having none of it. But he was reinterpreting Calvin for current need in a beguiling and helpful way. It struck me at the time that Reformed ease with philosophy and Lutheran concern for existential meaning need each other, just as they both need Catholic materiality. I was to see more of that beguiling way and its importance as, after his return to Australia and in the year that followed our conversation, Graham sent me a first chapter of

1. Martin Luther, "The Blessed and Holy Sacrament of Baptism, 1519," 1, in *The Roots of Reform*, ed. Timothy J. Wengert, vol. 1 of *The Annotated Luther*, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand, Kirsi I. Stjerna, and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 207.

his new book. You will find both that chapter and that inviting way in this volume.

It is clear from the final exchanges between Hughes and Emilsen, the exchanges that conclude this volume, that Graham ended the interview reluctantly, ambiguously even, as if he had more he really wanted to say but not at all the energy to say it. Emilsen: "Do you mind if we pause now?" Hughes: "I think so." Emilsen: "I think that would be good."

*That would be good.*

Graham Hughes ends reluctantly, and we reluctantly let him go. Surely he needs to rest.

But thanks to the work he did in the last years and months of his life, and thanks to William Emilsen and Steffen Lösel, this book is indeed very good.

Gordon W. Lathrop
*Societas Liturgica*
Past-President
All Saints Day 2016

# Introduction

*Steffen Lösel*

## 1. Graham Hughes: A Short Introduction

When Graham Robert Hughes published his magisterial *Worship as Meaning: A Liturgical Theology for Late Modernity* with Cambridge University Press in 2003, he was already a well-known liturgical authority in Australia. Down Under, the book represented the pinnacle of his literary career. Worldwide, it established him as an authoritative voice in liturgics to be reckoned with. Of course, Graham's many friends at the international *Societas Liturgica* had known him well for a long time as an insightful thinker and beautiful writer. But *Worship as Meaning* broadened his scholarly prominence far beyond the inner circle of the liturgical world.

That Hughes would one day become one of the world's preeminent *liturgical* scholars had not always been clear. He grew up on a farm in rural New Zealand with parental expectations that eventually he would take over responsibility there. By the age of twenty-one, however, he experienced a call to the ministry through the preaching of one of his evangelical pastors, and he embarked on the journey toward ordained ministry in the church. Even though he had not enjoyed the privileges of a humanistic education in classical languages, which makes the study of theology so much easier, he not only acquired supreme command in Greek but also in theology. After his first two degrees at the University of Otago (bachelor of arts and master of arts in Classical Greek), he went on

to do postgraduate studies in Cambridge, England, and eventually became a promising New Testament scholar whose dissertation on the Epistle to the Hebrews received scholarly acclaim.

After completing his dissertation, Hughes became a parish pastor in New Zealand for five years before he received a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Otago, at the end of which, in 1977, he successfully applied for a position in New Testament Studies at United Theological College in Sydney, Australia. There, Graham's career developed over the course of three decades: first, as a New Testament scholar, or perhaps more precisely as a scholar of biblical theology, and later, since the mid-1980s, upon the prompting of his then-dean, as a professor in the fields of worship and preaching—a field which had not been taught before at his school and which finally assumed the name of Liturgical Studies. As Graham once remembered in an interview with his friend and colleague, William W. Emilsen, he had already moved toward an interest in biblical hermeneutics and the reception of the biblical texts by other communities of listeners. Therefore, the move over to the study of worship and preaching was well prepared for.

Since the early 1980s, then, Hughes taught preaching and worship at the United Theological College and in this capacity trained several generations of pastors and ministers in the church of Australia to appreciate what Emilsen and John T. Squires aptly named as Graham's passion for "doxological excellence."[1] As a minister and scholar in the Reformed tradition, Graham was not a natural liturgist. As he is quick to point out at several occasions in this new book, the Reformed tradition has since its inception de-emphasized the material aspects of the church's liturgy in favor of an almost exclusive emphasis on the spoken, seemingly nonmaterial word. And yet, Graham developed a zeal for liturgy born from an acute awareness of the inadequacies of much of Protestant worship. As he put it in 2002, "I was reaching for more aesthetic and satisfying forms of worship, forms based not just in words and on the sermon."[2] Naturally, as we would expect, introducing Protestant students into

1. *Prayer and Thanksgiving: Essays in Honour of Rev. Dr. Graham Hughes*, ed. William W. Emilsen and John T. Squires (Sydney: UTC Publications, 2003), v.
2. Ibid., 4.

more sacramental and materially rich forms of liturgy encountered significant opposition rooted in a long anti-Catholic tradition.[3]

Hughes's search for more material forms of signification drawn from the wells of the church's rich liturgical tradition has been the mark of his scholarship from the beginning. It expresses a deep conviction—rooted philosophically in the insights of late-modern thought—that the human person is an inseparable unity of body and spirit. Meaningful worship will therefore have to engage the totality of its human recipients with all of their senses. Similarly, liturgical leadership must emerge from the totality of a human being. It must, as Hughes put it in 2002, involve two aspects: "[O]ne is, as with a musical instrument, one must practise it so as to store it, so to speak, in one's 'muscle memory.' . . . The other is that a liturgical leader will actually show in her or his practice the prayer life that he or she exercises in private. One should not be a liturgical leader—lead public prayer—if one is not practising prayer in one's personal life."[4] In other words, liturgical leadership must emerge from the whole embodied human person. And it is not simply a task to be routinely performed, which one can separate from one's own personal existence.

This appreciation for the materiality of the human person and hence the materiality of all forms of human communication and signification has led Hughes to affirm, first, the importance of a eucharistic spirituality. Hughes recognizes in the Eucharist a strong communal element, which "draws people out of their individuality" and which "draws us into community."[5] He notes historically that an emphasis on sacramental worship has, at least in nineteenth-century Anglicanism, often been combined with an urge to social action and outreach into the community. For Hughes, this development might not have been accidental: "[I]t seems to me that a mission ideal which is organised around *personal conversion* tends to see people being saved out of their places of deprivation, whereas a mission which is organized [*sic*] on the basis of Eucharist and of *eucharistic community* tends to go and live in those places and,

3. See ibid., 6.
4. Ibid., 5.
5. Ibid., 7 and 8.

as it were, generate mission *in* rather than taking people *out* of their social situation."[6] Accordingly, Hughes's wish was to establish a strong eucharistic spirituality in his own Reformed tradition, which has lost both an appreciation of the Eucharist and often a sense of communal spirituality.

If Hughes emphasized the importance of sacramental and especially eucharistic forms of worship and spirituality, he was also invested in the rediscovery of rich semiotic forms of worship. For him, this emphasis on what his colleague and friend, Lutheran liturgical theologian Gordon Lathrop, aptly calls "strong and primary symbols" has to do primarily with the semiotic character of worship.[7] Worship is a communicative event. It constitutes primarily a sort of communication between God and the Christian congregation. But worship includes also communication between those who lead worship and those who actively participate in worship. As an event of communication, worship—or liturgy, as Hughes sometimes prefers to say—involves meaning, and meaning for its part is communicated through symbols: through words, actions, things, times, and spaces. This is where semiosis comes in: for the meaning of these symbols to be best understood, they have to be as strong as possible. The things of the liturgy need to be meaningful. That is, they need to be *full* of meaning. To express an act of washing, one needs to use a sufficient amount of water. To communicate the community of a shared meal, one best breaks a real loaf of bread and uses a handsome cup full of wine. The material things we use in worship matter, because they express meanings, and some do so more strongly than others.

## 2. Worship as Meaning

This recognition of worship as a communicative event necessitates a discussion of Hughes's *magnum opus*, *Worship as Meaning*. In this groundbreaking work, Hughes lays out a semiotic theory of worship as an event of communication, which involves the production and

6. Ibid., 9.

7. Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 5.

reception of meaning. Hughes's guiding question is how meaning emerges in worship. How, to put it differently, can a participant in a worship service make sense of what happens in this communal event? Hughes avers that a proper understanding of how meaning develops in worship provides an important step to overcoming the crisis of Christianity in the late-modern age.

### *a) Charles S. Peirce and Semiosis*

In order to answer this question of meaning, Hughes turns to American philosopher Charles S. Peirce's theory of semiosis. On the backdrop of a discussion of late modernity or postmodernity, Hughes applies Peirce's semiotic theory to the event of public worship. According to Peirce, whom Hughes follows closely, meaning is not simply a given in the world—something that just exists—but rather something that emerges from the interaction between its producers and its recipients.[8] Hence, meaning is not static but develops in an active process of communication, more specifically, in the exchange of signs, which involves respective responsibilities on all sides.[9]

In his theory of meaning, Peirce distinguishes three distinct factors: the producer, the recipient, and the interpramen or interpretative context, which allows for the production and reception of meaning in the first place.[10] Similarly, for Peirce, each sign as the carrier of meaning involves three factors: the signifier, the signified, and the interpretant, or else: the representamen, the object, and the interpretant.[11] Again, for the signifier or representamen to actually communicate the meaning of what is signified, that is, its object, a third factor must join the first two: the interpramen, which supplies possible interpretations to both the producer and the recipient of meaning.

8. Against, for example, the position of Karl-Heinz Menke, *Sakramentalität: Wesen und Wunde des Katholizismus*, 2nd ed. (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2012), 88. Menke argues rather too matter-of-factly that meaning is factual.

9. See Graham Hughes, *Worship as Meaning: A Liturgical Theology for Late Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 41, 62, and 185. On the question of respective responsibilities, see ibid., 193–94.

10. See ibid., 62.

11. See ibid., 62, 122, and 184–85.

Peirce's theory of meaning is distinct in that it offers a triadic rather than simply a dyadic view of meaning. It distinguishes itself herein from that of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913). In his theory, Peirce puts the emphasis on the interpramen as the third factor of meaning making: a factor that mediates between the producer and the recipient of the sign. For meaning to occur, the interpramen or interpretant must join its producer to its recipient. As Hughes puts it, "Successful semiosis, a meaningful transaction of meaning . . . depends upon the ability of both producer and recipient to bring their respective interpretants sufficiently close for their mutual satisfaction."[12] Meaning, in other words, is not simply a given. Rather, it has to occur. Meaning is both made and found, both construction and discovery.[13] It "is made; but it is not made *ex nihilo*."[14] It is therefore neither arbitrary nor relativistic. It is a grasping together of identity and difference: not just of identity, as modernity had it, but neither simply of difference, as deconstruction insisted.[15] Although there are no absolute certainties, we can still give what Charles Taylor calls a "Best Account,"[16] an account that is—in Paul Ricoeur's term—followable.[17] And in this entire meaning making, it is something we do: an action.[18]

Since it cannot be assumed in an a priori fashion that the producer and the recipient of meaning share the same interpretants, meaning making is always a fragile endeavor, however. It consists of "identity and difference" and inevitably runs the risk of failure.[19] What one person means to say is never exactly identical with what another understands. In the extreme case, the recipient of a sign is incapable of understanding it altogether. Here, the producer and the

12. Ibid., 185.

13. See ibid., 63–65. Here, Hughes tries to avoid the one-sidedness of positivism, on the one hand, and phenomenology, on the other.

14. Ibid., 75.

15. See ibid., 82 and 83.

16. Ibid., 71, with reference to Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 57.

17. See Hughes, *Worship as Meaning*, 72–73. Hughes points out that Ricoeur borrowed the term "followability" from Walter Bryce Gallie, *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968).

18. See Hughes, *Worship as Meaning*, 66.

19. Ibid., 62. See also ibid., 81–98.

## Chapter Three

# The Uncertain Place of Materiality in the Reformed Tradition

To celebrate the five-hundredth anniversary of someone's birth is in fact to celebrate the enduring legacy of that person's life and work. And in this case the legacy is momentous. Whereas the Lutheran reform never really struck root in other than Germanic or Nordic populations, within a few decades Calvin's style of Reformation had crossed most northern European frontiers and had become *the* face of Reformation.[1] Five centuries later it is arguably still the dominant form of Protestantism on all five continents, though of course in recent decades Pentecostalism has seriously challenged this hegemony.

Historical explanations are invariably precarious. But some strong element of Reformed Christianity's phenomenal success must lie in the close conjunction it was able to achieve from its beginnings between itself and the emerging temper of the age, namely, what we would come to call modernity.

1. So, David E. Wright, "Calvin's Role in Church History," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 287: "Calvinism proved itself eminently more exportable than Lutheranism."

And yet, precisely to couch Reformed Christianity in these terms may be to lay one's finger on its present predicament. For, equally arguably, it has been churches of this persuasion that have proven most susceptible to the ravages of secularization. (This might seem to be contradicted by the prosperity of the so-called evangelical churches, most of which would see themselves in one way or another as "Calvinist" but which are grounded more nearly in precritical precepts than the humanism of Reformed Christianity.)

Somewhat encouraged by the conference title and agenda, it is from this contemporary vantage point that I wish to approach Calvin and his legacy. A persistent characteristic of this tradition, I shall argue, has been the doubtful place it has accorded embodiment, physicality, or materiality (all used here more or less synonymously), and, I shall further want to say, this now shows itself as a considerable liability. Calvin and the style of Christianity he forged do have a place for physicality—chiefly in terms of the created order and the dignity of the human person—as manifestations of God's creative goodness and grace. What seems to be a persistent strain, however, is that this material revelation is regarded generically, universally, assuming a form I shall describe as "disseminated sacrality." Otherwise expressed, what Reformed styles of faith have never been comfortable with is a *particular* representation of God's presence, whether in terms of designated spaces, of physical depictions of the sacred (images), or of human representatives of God (priestly persons). Even the canonical sacraments, we shall see, have been hedged about as carriers of God's or Christ's presence.

This rejection of particular sacramentality in favor of an "affirmation of ordinary life" unquestionably dovetailed with the already emerging culture[2] and ensured Reformed Christianity's mainline place in Western societies for the bulk of the ensuing five centuries. In today's climate, I shall want to say, where such a disseminated sa-

2. Charles Taylor, in his *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), devotes a long section of his account of modern self-understanding to the emergence, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of "ordinary life" as the basic cultural frame of reference; see ibid., esp. 211–47.

crality must find its way in post-Christian and post-secular societies,[3] a clearer perception of wherein Christian sacramentality consists has become necessary. As Calvin's legatees, we need to revisit his abhorrence of particular physicality as a vehicle of God's presence.

## I

Western intellection has long distrusted materiality. From the time of Plato until only very recently it has depended on a dualist split between form and matter, between the noetic and the ontic, between an idea and its utterance, between theory and practice, and so on (the permutations must be almost endless), and the valorization of the former: "Platonism distrusts and condemns the senses. The eyes and ears are not, for the Platonist, windows of the soul, opening upon reality. The soul sees best when these windows are closed and she holds silent converse with herself in the citadel of thought."[4] In our own time postmodernism or post-structuralism has sought to collapse such dichotomies. In the sixteenth century, however, the tendency was still ascending to its apogee in the Cartesian separation of reality between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*—named by one prominent observer as "the chief girder in [the] framework of modernity."[5] That the Reformers and their successors should draw heavily on this cultural and intellectual assumption, then, was virtually inevitable.

Though the Catholic Church against which they ranged themselves had also long been susceptible to these influences,[6] it was still

3. The book *Sacred Australia: Post-Secular Considerations*, ed. Makarand Paranjape (Melbourne: Clouds of Magellan, 2009), on which I will draw later in this essay, makes a good deal of the point of view that much of Australian society has moved on beyond its atheistic modernity to a new resacralizing of reality.

4. Francis M. Cornford, *Before and After Socrates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960 [1st ed., 1932]), 86.

5. Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 108.

6. Taylor, in his recent narrative of Western secularization, devotes his first two hundred pages to what he calls "the work of reform" within medieval Catholicism, by which he means a centuries-long effort to encourage a more contemplative, spiritualistic faith in preference to a dependence on physical

essentially a materialistic church. For these believers, faith consisted in doing things: "[F]asting and abstaining from work at the appropriate times . . . attendance at Mass on Sunday, Penance and Communion at least once a year . . . as well as a rich gamut of devotional acts . . . like 'creeping to the Cross' on Good Friday, blessing candles on Candlemas, [or] taking part in Corpus Christi parades."[7] And this "doing of things" depended on particular locations and artifacts: sacred things, places, and times. At the heart of it all, the Real Presence of Christ was to be discerned in the consecrated wafer and cup. In the church's institution, and through its consecrated priesthood, the medieval believer—so it was held—had access to God's presence on earth.[8]

From the Reformers' point of view it was exactly this dependence on outward forms that most attracted their ire. For them, faith was—by definition, we may say—an inward, personal volition of spirit. It consisted not in ritual actions, in seeing and doing certain things, but in hearing and responding to God's Word. The church was not, essentially, an institution but the invisible communion of those who truly believe. And the person of faith needs no human intermediary, since his or her faith is directly in Christ as the only necessary intermediary between people and God.

The degree to which the Reformers' attack on Catholicism depended on the old spirit/matter dichotomy varied. At one end of a spectrum, humanists like Erasmus and Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples (usually known as Faber Stapulensis) could certainly, on occasions, appeal to a recognizably Neoplatonic dualism.[9] At this end

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artifacts and actions; Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), particularly 61–75.

7. Ibid., 63.

8. "The medieval believer before 1500 took it for granted that the human relationship to God and the supernatural world was visually reflected and was mediated through this visible order of things" (William A. Dyrness, *Reformed Theology and Visual Culture: The Protestant Imagination from Calvin to Edwards* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004], 26).

9. Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 28–52. Professor Bruce Mansfield, in personal correspondence, advises me that one has to add to Erasmus's dualism ("which is certainly there, especially

of the spectrum one must also place Zwingli, Reformer of Zürich, whose antimaterialism would subsequently influence some parts of Reformed Christianity more deeply even than Calvin's mediating stance. Thus Zwingli draws an absolute line between spirit and matter or between the invisible and visible worlds.[10] For Zwingli, unbelief *is* unbelief *because* it looks to the sentient world while faith is faith insofar as, or because, it believes in God as pure Spirit, is only ever brought into being by God, and thereafter entrusts itself to God's Word alone: "If your faith is not so perfect as to need a ceremonial sign to confirm it, *it is not faith*," he could say; or, "A substance that is incorporeal [i.e., the inner person] cannot be purified by a corporeal element."[11] Luther, on the other hand, is well known to have stood at the opposite end of such a spectrum. For him, the dichotomy at the heart of the Reformation was decidedly *not* the ancient one of spirit/matter but that of faith *versus* works (or, we can equally say, of gospel *versus* law). That is why he could regard the religious images not as idols crying out for destruction but as a matter of indifference—iconoclasm, in fact, he saw as dangerously like a "work." And, of course, of absolute importance for Luther was to be able to speak of Christ's bodily presence in the sacramental elements.

For his part, Calvin cannot be called a dualist.[12] For him, it is not some lower corporeality that constitutes the human predicament;

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in the earlier works") a practical ethic: it is better to stay at home and attend to one's responsibilities than to go on a pilgrimage looking at relics or sacred sites. "Here," writes Mansfield, "Erasmus links up to Reformation thinking about vocation and family."

10. W. Peter Stephens (*The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1986], 139) speaks of the "profound ambiguity" in Zwingli's anthropology—that it is "both biblical and Neoplatonist"; on p. 153 he describes Zwingli's theology as "both Paulinist and Greek dualist"; and on p. 187 he says: "Zwingli's profound suspicion of outward things in religion is derived in part from Augustine's Neoplatonism with its stress on the inward over against the outward."

11. Ibid., 162 (emphasis added) and 182.

12. So he distances himself from the traditional scheme: "The philosophers . . . imagine that the reason is located in the mind, which like a lamp illuminates all counsels, and like a queen governs the will. . . . On the other hand,

rather, it is the *entire person*—mind, heart, and body—that is consumed in darkness: "Not only did a lower appetite seduce [Adam], but unspeakable impiety occupied the very citadel of his mind, and pride penetrated to the depths of his heart."[13] One observer writes: "Calvin makes it clear that the root of idolatry lies not in the material world *per se*, but in man himself."[14] And we have already indicated—to which aspect of Calvin's thought we will return in greater detail—that the created order is for him "the theatre of God's glory" and "the mirror of divinity."[15]

And yet, neither is it possible to think that Calvin escaped the lure of the spirit/matter bifurcation.[16] He may see the whole person as ensnared in sin. This by no means leads him to suppose that body and soul are of equal dignity; he thus cites Plato approvingly in this respect;[17] the body, he says repeatedly, is our "prison house";[18] our body is "this unstable, defective, corruptible, fleeting, wasting, rotting tabernacle";[19] it "fetters" us.[20] And it is the soul alone that bears God's image, definitely *not* the whole person, body and soul.[21]

For Calvin, the key seems to lie in his absolute conviction that there can be *no admixture of the created order and its Creator*. And

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they imagine that sense perception is gripped by torpor and dimness of sight; so that it always creeps along the ground, is entangled in lesser things and never rises up to true discernment" (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960], II.2.2).

13. Ibid., II.1.9.

14. Eire, *War Against the Idols*, 206.

15. See Dennis E. Tamburello, "Calvin and Sacramentality: A Catholic Perspective," in *John Calvin and Roman Catholicism: Critique and Engagement, Then and Now*, ed. Randall C. Zachman (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), esp. 202–8.

16. Alasdair Heron thus speaks of "a certain lingering dualism which even Calvin did not entirely overcome"; see his *Table and Tradition: Towards an Ecumenical Understanding of the Eucharist* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1983), 132.

17. Calvin, *Institutes*, I.15.6.

18. Ibid., II.7.13; III.3.20; III.9.4.

19. Ibid., III.9.5.

20. Ibid., III.2.19.

21. Ibid., I.15.3.

since God is pure Spirit, everything, which pertains to him, must similarly be spiritual in nature: "God's nature is immeasurable and spiritual. . . . Surely, his infinity ought to make us afraid to try to measure him by our own senses [and] his spiritual nature forbids our imagining anything earthly or carnal of him";[22] "nothing belonging to his divinity is to be transferred to another."[23]

From this radical separation flows a series of consequences. For a start, worship must be preserved from any and all material impurity. Calvin thus regularly issues the call for "spiritual worship."[24] He accordingly takes the Second Commandment[25] as the directive for the "spiritual worship of the Invisible God"; God is said here to make clear "with what kind of worship he should be honoured, lest we dare attribute anything carnal to him." The commandment is given to "restrain our licence from daring to subject God, who is incomprehensible, to our sense perceptions, or to try to represent him by any form."[26] Of course this is the premise for Calvin's unrelenting attack on images in Catholic practice. It is sometimes said that Calvin disapproved iconoclasm, holding the destruction of images to be the responsibility of elected councils rather than popular uprisings. His chapter on "Images in Worship" (*Institutes* I.12), however, leaves no doubt that any such restraint had more to do with his sense of civic order than any tolerance of images in worship.

His distrust of materiality, we may also say, determines his fixation on the Word as God's singular medium of self-communication; for language must seem to be the most ephemeral, instantaneous, and transparent form of utterance known to us.[27] Hardy thus speaks

22. Ibid., I.13.1.

23. Ibid., I.12.1.

24. See, notably, Eire, *War Against the Idols*, 200–202.

25. It is perhaps important to note that the separation of the prohibition of images in the Decalogue as a separate, self-contained commandment (the "Second Commandment") was a Reformed innovation; Catholic and Lutheran Bibles included this within the First Commandment (and then reached a total of ten by dividing the tenth commandment).

26. Calvin, *Institutes*, II.8.17.

27. An oversight on the part of the Reformers, both interesting and hugely significant for subsequent Reformed Christianity, was the assumption that language has no material content. The deconstructionist analyses of Derrida particularly

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