



What does it mean to be human? John Calvin's surprising answer

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What does John Calvin have to say about what it means to be human? For many, the quick answer might be, *not much!* Calvin was a rhetorician and his pronouncements such as man is a 'five-foot worm' (I.5.4)¹ or 'a grub crawling upon the earth' (II.6.4) do not endear us to him quickly. But is there more behind the rhetoric? Can we in the twenty-first century garner anything from Calvin's insights?

Calvin wrote theology in an era where humanity was exalted to an astonishing degree. Caught up in the scene of humanism, leading theologians in the church celebrated the spiritual potential of humanity with an almost unchecked enthusiasm. To counter this, Calvin and other Reformers wrote about humanity with a necessary austerity demanded by the times. Their negative discourse sounds off-key to our ears and, unless we are patient and discerning, can hide the radical message about what it means to be human. It is only when the rhetorical force of Calvin's language – so suitable for heading off the dangers of medieval claims – has been de-contextualised and made absolute does his message become twisted and unrecognizable.

Even Calvin knew himself to be, at times, carried away by the force of his own rhetoric. True to fashion he will calmly stop, rein himself in, and recapture the larger picture. Quoting Bernard of Clairvaux, he reminds himself,

"[...] *Man is nought*. Yet how can he whom God magnifies be utterly nothing? How can he upon whom God has set his heart be nothing?

"Brethren, let us take heart again. Even if we are nothing in our own hearts, perchance something of us may be hidden in the heart of God. (III.2.25, my emphasis)

Calvin is keenly aware that sin distorts our self-perception, whether toward pride or self-hatred. It is only God's perspective that can be trusted. He states (again quoting Bernard) that we must examine 'how from the one point of view we are nothing, and from the other how magnified'. As a result of perceiving ourselves through the divine perspective, our 'glorying' will be 'better founded than before, so that we glory not in ourselves but in the Lord'. (III.2.25)

What, then, is the divine perspective that Calvin counsels us to adopt regarding what it means to be human? Let us turn to his picture of life in the Garden of Eden, and pull apart his language and images for some important clues.



Communion in the garden

Calvin's concept of the world is as the sphere for communion – the trysting place between God and humanity. Calvin uses the traditional features of the Garden of Eden to retell the story of humanity whose purpose is to be near God. Adam is not the superhero that Augustine had made him out to be, with intelligence like that of the angels. Rather, he is a fragile being, glorious in the quality of his dependence upon God. 'At that time, I say, when [Adam] had been advanced to the highest degree of honor, Scripture attributed nothing else to him than that he had been created in the image of God, thus suggesting that man was blessed, not because of his own good actions, but *by participation in God*.' (II.2.1, my emphasis) Here we note the absence of attributes and 'perfections' typical of medieval discussions of Adam; in its place is a *mode of being*, where Adam stays near to God, participating in him for the glory that Adam himself exhibits.

This is a typical move for Calvin, who takes the focus off humanity in itself and instead considers the human being in terms of its relations. Life in the garden is characterized by *living by the Word* – seeking all good things *in* him, not merely *from* him. Already from the first few lines of Genesis, Calvin is painting a picture of humanity that stands in sharp contradistinction to our modern portrait of the individual. For Calvin, the individual is – quite simply – a myth. Adam and Eve are not superhumans who relate to God because they can, but because they can exist in no other way. God chooses to share himself in such

a way that Adam's being is incomplete without God's own: 'direct communication with God was the source of life to Adam.'² In Calvin's version of the Garden of Eden, the world has been designed so that nothing can be had independently of God; everything is to be had in and with him. This is Calvin's meaning of *what it means to be created*.

The tree of life is central for this understanding of the communal nature of what it means to be human. It stood as a 'visible testimony [to Adam] that "in God we are, and live, and move."³ Yet Calvin is not content that Adam should generally be 'spiritual' through some kind of acknowledgement of God. Calvin believes that the tree of life reveals Adam's life to be *in Christ*, already in the garden. 'Wherefore, by this sign, Adam was admonished, that he could claim nothing for himself as if it were his own, in order that he might depend wholly upon the Son of God, and might not seek life anywhere but in him.' Adam 'lives not by his own power' but more specifically, he 'depend[s] wholly upon the Son of God' for 'the life of all things was included in the Word'.⁴

Is this Calvin's relentless campaign to strip Adam of all things, such that he has *nothing* he can claim as his own? To emphasize Adam's impoverishment? Far from it. Calvin's Adam is one whose 'perfect' status involves relationship with another. Adam cannot 'own' anything in the garden, except that it brings him into relationship. The flip side of this is that 'our nature lacks everything that our Heavenly Father bestows' (II.2.20). The point is not the 'lack', but the 'bestows'.

Even the gift of the divine image was not automatically included in the Edenic Package Deal, as Calvin makes clear. While theologians prior to Calvin had sought to understand where the divine image was located in humankind (the soul? the mind?), Calvin believes that 'a definition of the image of God ought to rest on a firmer basis than such subtleties.'⁵ Calvin begins by differentiating humanity from the animal kingdom in this way: 'The likeness of God extends to the whole excellence by which man's nature towers over all the kinds of living creatures.' (I.15.3) But this excellence tends to be formed in qualitative, rather than quantitative terms: 'And, indeed, there is nothing in which man excels the lower animals unless it be his *spiritual communion with God* in the hope of a blessed eternity.'⁶ For Calvin, what is crucial is not merely the 'endowment' of this excellence but

that the excellence is turned toward God in communion. As we have observed, God does not give Adam properties that would then function without him; their very character demands communion. Calvin says, ‘He does not indeed transfer his power into outward signs; but by them he stretches out his hand to us’.⁷

T. F. Torrance pioneered this interpretation with Calvin’s use of the term ‘mirror’. This angle allows Torrance to prove that Calvin never intended the divine image to be an endowment – something ‘owned’ by humanity apart from God. ‘Strictly speaking, it is God who images himself in man [...] there can be no image where there is no one beholding. [...] *Imago dei* has to do fundamentally with God’s beholding rather than with man’s.’⁸ This, however, does not necessarily tell the whole story.

Take, for example, the way in which Calvin holds together two differing accounts of wisdom. In his first edition of the *Institutes* (1536), Calvin writes,

[Adam] was endowed with wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and was so clinging by these gifts of grace to God that he could have lived forever in Him’ (I.2)

In a near-contemporary document, *Psychopannychia*, Calvin writes,

man, in respect of spirit, was made partaker of the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God.⁹

Endowed with wisdom or *partaker* in God’s wisdom? For Calvin, participating in God’s gifts does not cut off the possibility of these gifts truly becoming our own, in our nature; but it is the only ground for them. Indeed, once Calvin establishes the proper divine perspective, he can say things such as ‘Yet those good works which he has bestowed upon us the Lord calls “ours,”’ (III.15.3). Also, ‘God, then, should make himself ours, so that all his things should in a manner become our things’.¹⁰ This signifies that the divine origin of a gift does not prohibit it from being properly ascribed to, or even becoming part of the creaturely realm. Thus, the issue becomes irrelevant whether or

not humanity is ‘endowed’ with various qualities, for Calvin is not looking at humanity apart from God but rather in its constant state of participation in Christ.¹¹



Christ and our humanity

Calvin makes his case for the God-ensconced-human in ways other than his portrayal of Adam. He also tackles it from the perspective of a Trinitarian theology of creation in which the roles of the mediator and the Spirit take primary place.

Although we more commonly associate Christ’s mediation with reconciliation and the forgiveness of sin, Calvin says that Christ’s mediation is much broader than that. Even Adam and Eve had need of a mediator! ‘[B]ut from the beginning of creation he already truly was mediator, for he always was the head of the Church, had primacy over the angels, and was the firstborn of every creature’.¹² Calvin says that the mediator’s ‘proper function [...] is to unite us to God.’¹³ From the very beginning, humanity was united to God through a mediator.¹⁴ All creation is related to God in the second person of the Trinity who mediates creation and its *telos*. All things are created by him, created to exist in him, and created for perfect union with him (‘as far as our capacities will allow’).¹⁵ This is not an arrangement due to sin, but to the *en Christo* way that God relates to humanity. He has not structured a universe in which life, grace, and ‘benefits’ can be had apart from him.

Even in the garden, Adam received life not from God *simpliciter* but from Christ: ‘he was the mid-point (*medium*) between God and creatures, so that the life which was otherwise hidden in God would flow from him.’¹⁶ Not only did life flow *from* him but Adam’s life was *in* him. It is because Christ was the source of life to Adam in the garden, that Calvin reasons that Christ – as opposed to the other members of the Trinity – came to mediate reconciliation. ‘Previously, direct communication with God was the source of life to Adam; but, from the moment in which he became alienated from God, it was necessary that he should recover life by the death of Christ, *by whose life he then lived*.’¹⁷ In this grand sweep, Calvin is positioning

the forthcoming redemption (mediation-expiation) of Christ within a more comprehensive story – that of the God who intends us for communion (mediation-union).

So what does this all mean? Calvin has introduced an intimacy between Creator and creation in that a *person* – the mediator – has bound himself to the ongoing life of the world. Not only is creation ‘textured’ with the person of Christ, but the Spirit is ‘everywhere diffused, [and] sustains all things, causes them to grow, and quickens them in heaven and in earth [...] transfusing into all things his energy, and breathing into them essence, life, and movement’ (I.13.14). Although the Reformed tradition has been plagued with a strong sense of God’s distance from creation, here Calvin’s pneumatology clearly reveals creation to be anything but external and ‘outside’ of God.



Caricatures of Calvin

In Calvin, mediation is not about the overcoming of a presupposed boundary between God and creation but about the proper way God and creation are related. However, when Calvin’s emphasis on communion drops from sight, mediation has been misinterpreted as Calvin’s relentless desire to portray humans as incomplete, lacking, and fundamentally flawed.

Does mediation imply creaturely debasement?

When we consider the *other* side of Calvin’s doctrine of mediation – *why is it that creaturely reality is not in itself capable of being in relation to God without a mediator?* – Calvin gives two interesting and often misconstrued anthropological reasons: insufficient righteousness and creaturely frailty.¹⁸ These will need some unpacking, lest they be martialled in support of the false view that Calvin degrades creaturely reality.

The test-case for this is Calvin’s treatment of angels – beings who have not fallen into sin, and yet who still need a mediator in order to be united to God.

But the Spirit declares there, that the greatest purity is vile, if it is brought into comparison with the righteousness of God. We

must, therefore, conclude, that there is not on the part of angels so much of righteousness as would suffice for their being fully joined with God. They have, therefore, need of a peace maker, through whose grace they may wholly cleave to God.¹⁹

Is Calvin here a sin-monger, detecting depravity even in angels? Perhaps, but I think not, especially when we remember that Calvin's notion of mediation is governed by communion. The greater reason is that Calvin establishes the mediator, rather than righteousness, as our primary bond with God. The structure of our existence, the 'proper condition of creatures is to keep close to God.'²⁰ Not even righteousness can circumvent this primary anthropology, which relates all humanity to God in the second person of the Trinity. Calvin views our anthropology as occasion for constant communion, utilizing even our *unfallen* state as proof.²¹ Thus we see that for Calvin, our *telos* is not moral perfection (outside the mediator) but communion.²²

This dependent, relational anthropology is compounded by Calvin's second reason for a mediator: creaturely frailty. Unfallen creatures (and even angels) not only lack sufficient righteousness but their lives lack 'a constancy and stability'.²³ Again, Calvin makes his point by using a best-case-scenario: angels. As early as the 1536 *Institutes*²⁴ Calvin held that even angels ('[s]o far as they are creatures') are 'liable to change and to sin, and consequently their happiness would not have been eternal. [...] Men had been lost, and angels were not beyond the reach of danger.'²⁵

Calvin's anthropology is here easily obscured when readers do not ask what creaturely frailty is *for*. Hidden in this passage is Calvin's definition of the creature: one whose finitude (and potential for defection) is certain but *who has already been provided for* in that Christ has been mediator from the beginning of creation. For all too long the negative cast of such a definition has been over-played. Interpreted as Calvin's pessimism about creaturely capacity, Calvin's startling vision of participation is lost. For Calvin, even the perfect (non-fallen) creature *must constantly be united to the mediator*. This is its condition. This is its glory. 'The proper condition of creatures is to keep close to God.'²⁶

It would be a common, but basic, error to hold this extrinsic, relational orientation responsible for demeaning creaturely reality itself. For Calvin, being creaturely (and bearing the divine image) is to accept gratefully our status as *created* with its accompanying conditions of finitude. Calvin's classic statement to this end is the following (which can be interpreted in two quite contrasting ways):

Even if man had remained free from all stain, his condition would have been too lowly for him to reach God without a Mediator. (II.12.1)

Is this a negative view of creatureliness? Or is it indicative of Calvin's attempt to forge a new anthropology in which human beings are constituted, not by themselves, but by another?²⁷ Despite Calvin's alleged pessimism, this is arguably his true intent. What is at stake is not creaturely honour but the Creator-creature distinction.²⁸ Elsewhere Calvin phrases it more mildly, saying that even Adam had to 'depend wholly upon the Son of God.'²⁹ Calvin can appear to be against humanness but he is only against a humanness not in communion with Christ. It takes careful reading to pull these two apart.

Does mediation imply God's distance?

It has been a persistent stereotype that Calvin's God is a remote deity who is separated from humanity by a 'gulf'. Pierre Imbart de la Tour laments, 'God and humanity [...] what an antithesis!'³⁰ François Wendel hails this distance as Calvin's theological triumph.³¹ Calvin's doctrine of mediation proves just how difficult it is to read Calvin aright. We will now consider how Calvin's theology of mediation, if not governed by communion, can also lead to this false definition of God's transcendence and thus separation from the world.

Louis Bouyer places the blame on 'the inadequate grasp of divine transcendence that marks Calvin [...] as a child of his time; not because of any innovation his time produced, but because of its inheritance from the late Middle Ages.'³² This serious charge lies in the inability to discern the function that transcendence plays in Calvin's theology. Rather than the bastard child of nominalism,³³ transcendence must be seen against the background of medieval piety

and its domestication of God, oriented as it was away from communion and toward manipulation. God was no longer free to offer communion to his people, but ‘they wish to hide Him in a box, and they wish to carry Him here and there, and to play with Him as with a doll.’³⁴ Calvin rebelled against this common misunderstanding in both piety and philosophy, by countering with God’s transcendence and ‘glory’.

Calvin fights for God’s transcendence not due to some abstract nominalist principle but for the purpose of *communion*. God’s transcendence is not God’s imprisonment over (and thus out of) the world, but rather his freedom to be present to the world. While God’s transcendence is often hailed as the most distinctive mark of Reformed theology, this transcendence (if it is to follow Calvin) must not mean external relation to the world but the absolute freedom with which God stands *in relation* to his creatures.³⁵ It establishes the radical non-continuity of grace and the world; it certainly does not establish that grace and the world have nothing to do with one another! Instead, he offered the possibility of a new way to ground the Creator-creature relation. Although it does not look promising to begin with the ontological divide between Creator and creature, it is only when this is established that participation is possible. This is Calvin’s genius and what is most often misunderstood about his theological program. For we must remember that Calvin believes it is not the divine perspective but the *sinful human one* to regard this ontological divide as a fearful separation.³⁶



Being human

It is here that we must consider the radical implications of what Calvin is saying, particularly as it relates to us today. All too often we think of ourselves in the terms established by Descartes: independent, autonomous individuals. Descartes laid down a whole new method by which we can establish the existence of ourselves and of reality by our *process of thinking*. Suddenly, one’s true ‘self’ can be isolated from the world, under the assumption that one can be a ‘self’ completely on one’s own.

Secular anthropology today begins with the human as autonomous, independent of God, acted upon by God only in an external manner.

Calvin's anthropology hints at a much more profound relation, where the fulfilment of 'human potential' – to use a secular slogan – is defined precisely as staying in intimacy with the God who created it, is still creating it, and is the ground of its uniqueness. It is an entire reorientation from the autonomous-self (which is the ungrounded self) to the self-in-relation.³⁷ It is not some kind of cruel flaw that renders us incomplete without this love: it is our glory.

In his portrait of Adam, Calvin takes great pains to show that the 'perfection' of Adam was in his communion with God, not certain moral traits, virtues or intelligence that he possessed. Adam, even in the garden, was to live a life of faith and trust, having no 'stability' without the mediator. This clearly signals the need for God's ongoing involvement in human life even before the Fall. By design, the 'normative' human condition – even before sin entered the scene – is participation in God and all his gifts.

Even modern theology can get the relation of God and the world wrong, by skipping over this important insight. The world is not full of human beings *and* God, who are on the same plane of being. In this scheme, God and creation are pitted against one another as ontological equals, where God's transcendent sovereignty is his ability to have power over these creatures. Calvin begins at another starting point: God's relation *to* creation, through the person of the mediator. This creator God can neither be closer nor farther to us: he simply *is*. Christ is the 'mid-point'³⁸ between God and creation, the person in whom all things exist. 'Hence, he is not called the *first-born*, simply on the ground of his having preceded all creatures in point of time, but because he was begotten by the Father, that they might be created by him, *and that he might be, as it were, the substance or foundation of all things*.'³⁹ First-born is not chronology but rather relational-ontology. We are 'established upon Him', the result of which is an 'admirable arrangement and a well-defined order which He has put into created things [...] and we can behold Him in all creatures, because he sustains all things.'⁴⁰

Many of these insights have been hidden behind Calvin's rhetoric. So, for example, 'because all his things are ours and we have all things in him, *in us there is nothing*.' (III.15.5, my emphasis) Although Calvin's rhetoric can degenerate into an obsession with creaturely

limitation, what needs to be remembered is this: human limitation is part of its fundamental need for a divine partner. At times, this comes across as rubbing our noses in our own finitude but Calvin's hope is to move us to glory in our unique status as dependent, loved, even *participating* in God.

Calvin's message is this: *you are not self-enclosed*. Your truest 'self' is only to be had in communion with God, its creator. Participation in God is not the *dissolving* of the self in God, but the *finding* of the self in God – because it is only truly 'human' as it exists in this deep communion of giving and receiving.

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Notes

- ¹ All references to John Calvin's *Institutes* will be placed in the body of the text as follows: I.5.4. Unless otherwise noted, English translations are from the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1559 (2 vols.; ed. John T. McNeill; trans. F. L. Battles; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).
- ² John Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis* 3:22 [hereafter as *Comm. Gen.* 3:22], from Calvin's commentaries, published in English by the Calvin Translation Society, 22 vols. (Edinburgh, 1843–55; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1979).
- ³ *Comm. Gen.* 2:9, cf. Acts 17:28.
- ⁴ *Comm. Gen.* 2:9.
- ⁵ *Comm. Gen.* 1:26.
- ⁶ John Calvin and Jacopo Sadoleto, *A Reformation Debate: Sadoleto's Letter to the Genevans and Calvin's Reply* (ed. John C. Olin; New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 59 (my emphasis).
- ⁷ *Comm. Gen.* 2:9.

- ⁸ T. F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), 35, 39, 73.
- ⁹ John Calvin, "Psychopannychia; Or, A Refutation of the Error That the Soul Sleeps in the Interval Between Death and the Judgment", in *In Defense of the Reformed Faith* (vol. 3 of *Tracts and Treatises*, ed. Henry Beveridge; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1958), 424.
- ¹⁰ *Comm. 2 Pet.* 1:4.
- ¹¹ Calvin sees the *imago* as both reality in Eden (because of Christ), but also as a promise to come (II.12.6).
- ¹² Joseph Tylenda, "Christ the Mediator: Calvin Versus Stancaró", *Calvin Theological Journal* 8 (1973): 12.
- ¹³ Joseph Tylenda, "The Controversy on Christ the Mediator: Calvin's Second Reply to Stancaró", *Calvin Theological Journal* 8 (1973): 148.
- ¹⁴ Christ's fleshly mediation is described in similar terms, 'And certainly he would not be a properly qualified Mediator, if he did not unite both natures in his person, and thus bring men into an alliance with God' (*Comm. Matt.* 1:23).
- ¹⁵ *Comm. 2 Pet.* 1:4.
- ¹⁶ Tylenda, "Christ the Mediator", 13.
- ¹⁷ *Comm. Gen.* 3:22, emphasis added. This will become a more explicit strategy in Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation but we already can discern a christological differentiation (pairing humanity with the mediator) at play in creation.
- ¹⁸ *Serm. Eph.* 1:7–10.
- ¹⁹ *Comm. Col.* 1:20.
- ²⁰ *Comm. Eph.* 1:10.
- ²¹ I am not purposefully avoiding the first sentence of Calvin's above quotation, in which he alludes to the 'vileness' of even our greatest purity. I just happen to think that this is not Calvin's point. His constant demeaning and, to be honest, virulent disparagement of human natural abilities must not be given undue weight, offensive as it is to our modern sensibilities. It is the flip-side of an anthropology *en Christo* but with a rhetorical flourish, perhaps gone a bit awry. We must also remember Calvin's sapiential

- commitments, which lead him to spend the entire first Book of the *Institutes* reflecting not on ‘the miserable condition of man to which he is now subjected,’ but letting it be known that ‘it is worth-while to know what he was like when first created.’ (I.15.1)
- ²² The parallel between this and Calvin’s view of the law is striking. Just as our fallen obedience does not suffice to unite us to God, neither does our *unfallen* obedience, for ‘it is not clear whether by this path [of obedience alone] we may attain eternal life.’ (II.7.3) Both fallen and unfallen, our *telos* is to be joined to God in Christ.
- ²³ *Serm. Eph.* 1:7–10.
- ²⁴ ‘And yet even [the angels] had need of a Head, in whom they might cleave to their God’ (II.12).
- ²⁵ *Comm. Eph.* 1:10.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ ‘Nenny: ce n’est pas cela, mais il veut monstrier que nous n’avons rien qui ne depende de Dieu et en ait son estre’, *Serm. John* 1:1–5, *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia* [hereafter *CO*] (eds. Wilhelm Baum, Eduard Cunitz and Eduard Reuss; 59 vols.; Brunswick; Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke & Son [M. Bruhn], 1863–1900), 47:479.
- ²⁸ Gordon Bates links this quotation to the Creator-creature distinction but wanders into metaphors of distance, ‘[...] gulf that separated God and man in the very act of creation itself’: Gordon Bates, “The Typology of Adam and Christ in John Calvin”, *Hartford Quarterly* 5 (1964): 49.
- ²⁹ *Comm. Gen.* 2:9.
- ³⁰ Pierre Imbart de la Tour, *Les Origines de la Réforme*, vol. IV (Paris: Librairie de Paris; Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1935), 69.
- ³¹ Wendel (applying it to the two natures) calls it ‘a very important aspect of Calvin’s theological thought, and perhaps what is most original in it’: François Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (trans. P. Mairet; London: Collins, 1963), 219. What is rarely seen is that Calvin’s genius is not in his separation of divine and human but in the way he distinguishes them *in order to relate them properly*. Their classification is for communion.

- ³² Louis Bouyer, *A History of Christian Spirituality*, vol. III (London: Burns & Oates, 1969), 87, 89.
- ³³ Oberman has already challenged this outdated view of nominalism, in his article “*Initia Calvini: The Matrix of Calvin’s Reformation*”, in *Calvinus sacrae scripturae professor / Calvin as Confessor of Holy Scripture* (ed. Wilhelm Neuser; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 119.
- ³⁴ *Serm. Acts* 1:9–11.
- ³⁵ Muller also concludes that ‘the ontological distinction of divine from human is by no means a rigid separation’: Richard A. Muller, “Christ in the Eschaton: Calvin and Moltmann on the Duration of the *Munus Regium*”, *Harvard Theological Review* 74 (1981): 50.
- ³⁶ ‘So greatly are we at variance with him, that, regarding him as adverse to us, we, in our turn, flee from his presence’ (*Comm. Gen.* 28:12). Mary Potter Engel’s ‘perspectivalism’ fails to note that it is not the divine, but the human perspective that posits God ‘in stark contrast’ – even ‘mutually exclusive’ to humanity. See Mary Potter Engel, *John Calvin’s Perspectival Anthropology* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 2.
- ³⁷ The fertile cross-over with John Zizioulas here should be evident, and holds much promise for ecumenical dialogue: John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985).
- ³⁸ See n. 16.
- ³⁹ *Comm. Col.* 1:15, emphasis added.
- ⁴⁰ *Serm. John* 1:1–5. This passage takes place in a remarkably Trinitarian context.