Chapter Six

Reforming Ascent: Calvin, Irenaeus, and Christian Spirituality

We are on an entirely different level when we speak of Irenaeus. He was the only one of the ecclesiastical writers of the second century to grasp the depth of Paul's idea about the Son of Man. His entire Christology is dominated by the contrast between Adam and Christ, and he makes the only attempt in the whole history of doctrine to build a Christology on the concept "Man."[1]

As remarkable as it may sound when I say this about Calvin, he thinks initially not from God but from the human person and his situation. Yet the situation of *humanity* cannot be considered with any seriousness at all without thinking immediately of *God.* For what purpose is the human created?[2]

Backward and Forward with Descent and Ascent

Our study has brought us into contact with two lively theologies of participation, articulated in radically differing contexts. While Calvin

1. Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1963), p. 189.
2. Karl Barth, *The Theology of the Reformed Confessions, 1923,* trans. Darrell and Judith Guder (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), p. 94.

found himself up against a humanism that overexalted the creature, Irenaeus contended against the Gnostic contempt for the creature.[3] Nevertheless, both theologians fought their opponents using the same resources: a correct Creator-creature relationship that would ensure humanity's intended participation *(koinōnia)* in the divine life. Both Irenaeus and Calvin responded to the heresies of their day by burrowing deeper into creation and its fundamentally incomplete, derived status. By radically delineating between Creator and creature, they cleared the ground for a proper anthropology based on *difference.* Only then could humanity's true ascent begin and a correct doctrine of participation in the divine life flourish.[4] They found that "ascent" was not the ascent of the individual soul but humanity's participation in the triune communion, a participation that had been decisively opened in the historical Ascension of Jesus.

For Irenaeus, the story of ascent is told via the narrative of humanity; for Calvin, it is the story of Christ. Yet for both theologians the goal of humanity is the same: participation in the triune communion, as made available in the Son by the Spirit.

From Irenaeus's *Adversus haereses,* V.36.2:

> This is the gradation and arrangement of those who are saved, and that they advance through steps of this nature: also that they ascend through the Spirit to the Son, and through the Son to the Father.

3. The legacy of theologians such as Gabriel Biel caused those in the Protestant Ref ormation to emphasize the creature's "negative capacity" (Kathryn Tanner, *God and Cre ation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1988], pp. 13 41, 152).

4. This can be seen in the way that both responded to their various enemies wit theologies of participation. Gnostic salvation was a matter of consubstantiality wit the divine; Irenaeus argued, instead, for the *koinōnia* of nonidentical things: flesh an spirit. In Calvin's time, one could argue that a theology of participation was threa ened on at least three fronts. Against scholastic speculations on "created grace" an grace-infused virtue, Calvin asserted a participation in God himself (*Comm. Col.* III *Comm. John* 6:26). Against Osiander's overly open anthropology, Calvin insisted thi we are not infused by Christ; rather, we are indwelt by the Spirit of Christ and partic ipate in the Son through the Spirit alone. Against Zwingli's symbolic doctrine of th Eucharist, Calvin insisted on a real presence of Christ in which we participate by th Spirit.

From Calvin's *Responsum ad fratres Polonos:*

> Christ, for this reason, is said to send the Spirit from his Father (John 16:7) to raise us, by degrees, up to the Father.[5]

Both theologians insist with persistence and precision that humanity was created for communion and that all of human life and history projects toward (or is pulled toward) this *koinōnia.* Despite their differences, both Irenaeus and Calvin saw christology serving this theological anthropology of participation: the human vocation of union with the triune God.[6] The Holy Spirit serves as the only way into this ascending vocation, and both theologians were equally sensitive to any transgressions on this front. Says Calvin, "These men devise a Christianity that does not require the Spirit of Christ" (III.2.39), while Irenaeus protests, "These men do, in fact, set the Spirit aside altogether" (*AH* III.17.4).

Where a comparison proves especially tantalizing is the extent to which it exposes how they applied this ascent to their radically differing contexts.[7] For Calvin, ascent functioned to remind the church of its vocation: union with the ascended Christ rather than a misplaced focus on the things of this earth. "For thus they leave nothing to the secret working of the Spirit, which unites Christ himself to us. To them Christ does not seem present unless he descends to us. As though, if he should lift us to himself, we should not just as much enjoy his presence!" (IV.17.31). Accordingly, the language of "descent" comes to represent the means by which sinful humans wish to manipulate God, rather than trusting God's chosen means of ascent — the Holy Spirit.

5. Joseph Tylenda, "Christ the Mediator: Calvin Versus Stancaro," *Calvin Theological Journal* 8 (1973): 16.

6. This is why, as I have previously argued (chap. 4), Calvin's insistence on *unio cum Christo* must not be turned into a mechanism for salvation and thus a natural theology. It functionalizes christology for an anthropocentric end rather than placing it in its proper theocentric context: the triune God's desire for us.

7. Given Calvin's early modern context, he emphasizes the Spirit's appropriation of the gospel for the *individual.* This is not Cartesian hyper-individualism but, as Heiko Oberman makes clear, answers to the challenge of late medieval individualism (Oberman, "Reformation, Preaching, and *Ex Opere Operato,*" in *Christianity Divided,* ed. Daniel Callahan [New York: Sheed & Ward, 1961], p. 228). For how the sin-anguished conscience was already a "mass phenomenon in the Latin world" in the fourteenth century, see James McCue, "*Simul justus et peccator* in Augustine, Aquinas, and Luther: Towards Putting the Debate in Context," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48 (1980): 90.

Yet Irenaeus goes where Calvin does not dare, given the polemics of his situation, and it is here that their comparison proves especially fruitful. Specifically, in Irenaeus's time, creation was under attack. Under these antagonistic circumstances, when the "spiritual" was preferred to the material, Irenaeus undertakes a colorful exploration of the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the created realm.[8] Ascent functions as the entire creation's vocation *in* the Spirit and is proof that the fleshly is not opposed to the spiritual but is intended for communion with God. This progressive relationship of the creation with the Creator does not involve a change (or abandonment) of physicality, but is its fulfillment. "This, however, does not take place by a casting away of the flesh, but by the impartation [*communionem*] of the Spirit" (*AH* V.8.1).

Both of these perspectives complement and sharpen one another, offering different emphases and correctives to a doctrine of participation. Calvin gives structure and definition to participation in ways that Irenaeus could not, especially given Calvin's historical position after Nicaea. Although Irenaeus lodges participation *en Christō* in startling ways, it is Calvin who magisterially works out the breadth and depth of this relationship in a way unparalleled by any theologian, except perhaps Karl Barth. It is also Calvin whom we have to thank for working out a soteriology that draws heavily on both imputation and participation rather than allowing those categories to stand in two streams opposing one another. So whereas Rusch can say that Eastern theologians — while building on Irenaeus — were the "developers of a theology of salvation outside the framework of justification categories," Calvin brings emphases that are dear to both the West and East into his soteriology.[9] In making imputation a distinctively *participationist* category, Calvin was able to reckon both with the non-necessary character of justification and its grounding in *unio cum Christo*. Irenaeus had a general view of humanity's participation in Christ's victory over sin, but it was left to Calvin and the Reformers to work out how Christ's human righteousness became our own, thereby justifying us.

However, we will look to Irenaeus for help when Calvin hesitates to sufficiently honor the integrity of the created realm — for obvious polem-

8. Even Calvin notes this, and he explains (away) Irenaeus's commitment to free will on this basis (*CO* 6.281-82).

9. William Rusch, "How the Eastern Fathers Understood What the Western Church Meant by Justification," in *Justification by Faith,* ed. H. George Anderson, T. Austin Murphy, and Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), p. 133.

ical reasons. While both see the Spirit as threshold to participation in God, this proved to Calvin that the divine and human do not fuse; for Irenaeus, this proved the intimate compatibility of the divine and human. For those of us in an era concerned with the particularity, freedom, and integrity of the material sphere, Irenaeus serves to articulate new (old!) ways of applying participation to the creaturely realm. With the broadened lens that Irenaeus gives us, we can give renewed attention to Calvin's pneumatology, even correcting him, where needed, to do greater justice to anthropology and creation.

Recapitulating Ascent in Calvin

Although Irenaeus is more renowned for his doctrine of human ascent, Calvin's anthropology also brings this to the fore.[10] Drawing from conventional medieval (and Irenaean) imagery, his earlier works portray the soul's "increase" to the "vision of God,"[11] while his later works incorporate Pauline imagery of the "childhood" of the church and its slow "maturation" by the Word and Spirit.[12] We will briefly look at the common moves that Irenaeus and Calvin make in their conceptions of (1) creation and (2) christology for their similar grounding of participatory ascent; then we will be able to assess the differences in how they conceive of (3) the Spirit's relationship to the created realm.

The Triune Mediation of Creation

Neither Irenaeus nor Calvin began with participation as a metaphysical principle. Instead, they both looked to a doctrine of creation to provide clues for the divine-human relationship and found themselves face to face with a material world ensconced in divine *koinōnia.* Equally convinced of the creature's total dependence on the Creator, they argued that this

10. On Christ's "perfecting" work as a necessity regardless of the Fall, see Peter Wyatt, *Jesus Christ and Creation* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1996), chapter 2.

11. Souls "always increase till they see God, and pass from that increase to the vision of God" (Calvin, "Psychopannychia," *T&T* III.441).

12. See T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), pp. 63, 83, 100, 115.

stemmed not from a flaw in the human condition but from its glory — its being the recipient of divine love. Thus the "metaphysical given" for both Calvin and Irenaeus is a radical doctrine of the triune relationships. In the words of Irenaeus, "In the beginning, therefore, did God form Adam, not as if He stood in need of man, but that He might have some one upon whom to confer His benefits" (*AH* IV.14.1). Calvin's doctrine of the Spirit in creation complements this participatory anthropology; from it we find that God does not give us things other than himself: "God sendeth forth that [S]pirit which remains with him whither he pleases; and as soon as he has sent it forth, all things are created. In this way, what was his own he makes to be ours."[13] This strong pneumatological rendering of creation has profound ramifications for how we think of the self: to be a creature is to participate in God and the things of God.

Adam becomes a test case of sorts for this participation, the emblematic figure who has no grounding or basis outside of the "two hands" (Irenaeus) or the "mediator" (Calvin). Both ascribe to Adam a certain instability and fragility: Calvin calls it "lowliness" (II.12.1), and Irenaeus more generously calls it "infancy" (*AH* IV.38.1). Either way, this signals the need for God's ongoing involvement in human life even before the Fall. By design, the normative human condition is participation in God and all his gifts. Calvin looks specifically to Irenaeus for substantiation here:

> For when we say that the spirit of man is immortal, we do not affirm that it can stand against the hand of God; or subsist without his agency. Far from us be such blasphemy! But we say that it is sustained by his hand and blessing. Thus Irenaeus, who with us asserts the immortality of the spirit, (Irenaeus adv. Haeres. V) wishes us, however, to learn that by nature we are mortal, and God alone immortal. And in the same place he says, "Let us not be inflated and raise ourselves up against God, as if we had life of ourselves; and let us learn by experience that we have endurance for eternity through his goodness, and not from our nature."[14]

Immortality does not differ from all the other gifts that Adam enjoyed in the Garden by participation. In Calvin, this participation is disciplined strictly to the Word (*Comm. Gen.* 2:9), who mediates all creation, while in

13. *Comm. Ps.* 104:29 (*CO* 32.96). An external relationship between the Spirit and creation must not be read into the text here.

14. Calvin, "Psychopannychia," *T&T* III.478; Calvin is quoting *AH* V.2.3.

Irenaeus this participation is linked to Christ *and* "receiving the Spirit" and his gifts in progressively firmer ways (*AH* IV.38.2). Yet Irenaeus does not lack the christological thrust that Calvin's doctrine of creation affords; his notion of the two hands consistently orders creation to Christ, in whom creation will find its true stability and being.[15]

Christ's Mediation of the New Creation

What is similarly remarkable about Calvin and Irenaeus is how this general God-world relationship is grounded in the person of Christ. The mediation of the Word in the Garden is "prefiguring the future" (Irenaeus, *Epideixis* 12), when the Word would dwell with humanity, and humanity would be "perfected" in him. Calvin says that

> . . . the state of man was not perfected in the person of Adam; but it is a peculiar benefit conferred by Christ, that we may be renewed to a life which is *celestial,* whereas before the fall of Adam, man's life was only earthly, seeing it had no firm and settled constancy.[16]

Christ's recapitulatory work not only did away with sin and guilt but was the formation of a new humanity in his person.

> The proper condition of creatures is to keep close to God. Such a *gathering together* [recapitulation — ἀνακεφαλαίωσις] as might bring us back to regular order, the apostle tells us, has been made in Christ. Formed into one body, we are united to God, and closely connected with each other. Without Christ, on the other hand, the whole world is a shapeless chaos and frightful confusion.[17]

15. But as an improvement on Calvin, Irenaeus's pneumatology directs creation more than does predestination — that "other hand" of God in Calvin. See the analysis by Colin Gunton, *Christ and Creation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 95-98. While both Irenaeus and Calvin place Jesus Christ at the center of creation, Irenaeus's pneumatology consistently relates everything to Christ without reducing creation to an instrument of the divine will. Calvin's good desire to emphasize God's sovereignty against a self-sufficient humanism can at times render creation — and even the human Jesus — as instruments in God's divine plan.

16. *Comm. Gen.* 2:7; see also the discussion in chap. 2 above.

17. *Comm. Eph.* 1:10.

Therefore, for Calvin, it is self-evident that recapitulation happens *in* the person of Christ. Humanity's *telos* is to "ascend," united to the one who is the center of the new creation. "Now, we know, that out of Christ there is nothing but confusion in the world; and though Christ had already begun to erect the kingdom of God, yet his death was the commencement of a well-regulated condition and the full restoration of the world."[18] Hence, as Calvin says in his commentary on Acts, "We must seek Christ nowhere else save only in heaven, whilst we hope for the last restoring of all things."[19] All "growth," all "progress" will only happen through union with him who is the center of the restored world and a restored humanity.[20]

Both Irenaeus and Calvin emphasize that ascent takes place only as humanity once again is joined to its head — re-headed (re-*capit*-ulated) — by the Spirit, which is also the reestablishment of human anthropology: "The proper condition of creatures is to keep close to God."[21] But the head of humanity is also the Son of God, a convergence that caused them to take adoption seriously: it is his sonship that forms us and defines human ascent.

From *Adversus haereses*, III.19.1:

> For it was for this end that the Word of God was made man, and He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, that man, having been taken into the Word, and receiving the adoption, might become the son of God.

From the *Institutes*, IV.17.2:

> This is the wonderful exchange which, out of his measureless benevolence, he has made with us; that, becoming Son of man with us, he has made us sons of God with him; that, by his descent to earth, he has prepared an ascent to heaven for us. . . .

Irenaeus and Calvin both use the patristic formula that has become associated with deification, what McLelland calls "an instance of bad Latin for

18. *Comm. John* 12:31.

19. *Comm. Acts* 3:21.

20. See David E. Holwerda, "Eschatology and History: A Look at Calvin's Eschatological Vision," in *Exploring the Heritage of John Calvin*, ed. David E. Holwerda (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), pp. 110-39.

21. *Comm. Eph.* 1:10.

good Greek."[22] Regardless of the term, the theological concept has always functioned to communicate that for which humanity has been created: a relationship of *koinōnia* with the triune God. It is common (as, e.g., in the writings of Wilhelm Niesel) to classify Osiander's pantheism as "deification" and to juxtapose it to Calvin's "orthodoxy." I should note that Osiander's theology is far from the patristic, orthodox doctrine of deification; rather, it is a caricature of it, more akin to pagan pantheism. Calvin's response is much more in line with classical patristic deification than is Osiander's. Calvin can even go so far as to say:

> For we must consider from whence it is that God raises us up to such a height of honor. We know how abject is the condition of our nature; that God, then, should make himself ours, so that all his things should in a manner become our things, the greatness of his grace cannot be sufficiently conceived by our minds. Therefore this consideration alone ought to be abundantly sufficient to make us to renounce the world and to carry us aloft to heaven. Let us then mark, that the end of the gospel is, to render us eventually conformable to God, and, if we may so speak, to deify us. (*Comm. II Pet.* 1:4, *CO* 55.446)

But in disciplining ascent specifically to the Son, both Irenaeus and Calvin preserve the Creator-creature distinction vital to their conceptions of participation. Ascent is into *sonship*, but never as *the Son*.[23]

In Irenaeus, adoption functions as proof of deification — God's decision to bring humanity into his own life. For Calvin, adoption is what safeguards us from being deified, or fused into the divine, in that it is grounded in Trinitarian differentiation. Yet it is clear that for neither theologian is this adoptive ascent something that has to do with some abstract divinization of nature; rather, it is ascent into deeper *koinōnia* with God and his benefits. Everything depends on their theology of the Spirit,

22. "By this term the Fathers meant to signify what happens when man is graciously dealt with by the living God: Father, Son, and Spirit" (Joseph C. McLelland, "Sailing to Byzantium," in *The New Man: An Orthodox and Reformed Dialogue*, ed. John Meyendorff and J. C. McLelland [New Brunswick, NJ: Agora, 1973], p. 20).

23. Both use the nature/grace distinction for adoption: Calvin (II.14.5), Irenaeus (*AH* III.6.1). Yet we have seen that each considers adoption as true participation in the divine life: Calvin argues that this is "not a matter of figures" (II.14.5), and he relates it to the Son's relationship with the Father (III.2.22); Irenaeus specifically associates adoption with the Jewish deification, Psalm 86 (*AH* III.6.1).

as both the one who preserves the contingency of creation and the one who ensures that this is the personal activity of God on and within humanity. But it is how they then conceive of the Spirit's work with respect to the new creation and the church where their emphases diverge so widely. While this can in part be explained polemically and methodologically, it goes beyond mere "emphasis" to theological consequence.

Locus of Ascent: The Church

While Calvin's ascent follows a strictly Trinitarian structure, it is by no means theoretical. Calvin speaks of the church as our "mother," on whose bosom we "grow" until we reach "perfect manhood" (IV.1.4-5). Preaching is one such "spiritual food" whereby Christ presents himself to us, choosing "human means" and an "ordinary manner" of giving us divine life.

> Surely, this is because believers have no greater help than public worship, for by it God raises his own folk upward step by step. . . . As if it were not in God's power somehow to come down to us, in order to be near us, yet without changing place or confining us to earthly means; but rather by these to bear us up as if in chariots to his heavenly glory, a glory that fills all things with its immeasurableness and even surpasses the heavens in height! (IV.1.5)

Ascent is neither for the individual person nor for the disembodied soul, but is for the people of God. Bound together by the Spirit into one body, "all — from the highest to the lowest — aspire toward the Head!" If through worship God raises us "step by step," then sacraments are the physical "steps of the ladder."[24] In language redolent of Irenaean imagery, Calvin says: "For although the faithful come into this Communion [*koinōnia*] on the very first day of their calling; nevertheless, inasmuch as the life of Christ increases in them, He daily offers Himself to be enjoyed by them. This is the Communion [*koinōnia*] which they receive in the Sacred Supper."[25] The "increase" that the church enjoys on its ascending journey is the very life of Christ, offered to the church by the Spirit.[26]

24. *Serm. 2 Sam.* 6:1-7.

25. *Letter to Peter Martyr,* 8 August 1555 (*CO* 15.723).

26. The sacrament of baptism is understood in this way as well. Calvin says, "By

The radical — even watershed — role that Calvin gave to the Spirit in the Lord's Supper cannot be overstated. As had not been done since perhaps the patristic fathers, Calvin attempted to take seriously the pneumatological dimensions of presence: the Spirit is not the Pentecostal replacement *for* Christ but the way *to* him. It is not we who need to alter God's reality, but it is God who alters ours by taking us into the triune *koinōnia* via the Spirit. Thus, in the Lord's Supper, the Spirit comes upon creation and makes it a means to union with Christ — lifting us "up" to him. There is thus no need for the bread to change and become something else, for that would be "no slight insult" to the Spirit (IV.17.33). For support, Calvin cites Irenaeus:

> This ought not to seem incredible or contradictory to reason (Irenaeus, Lib. iv. cap. 34); because, as the whole kingdom of Christ is spiritual, so whatever he does in his Church is not to be tested by the wisdom of this world. . . . Such, I say, is the corporeal presence which the nature of the sacrament requires, and which we say is here displayed in such power and efficacy, that it not only gives our minds undoubted assurance of eternal life, but also secures the immortality of our flesh, since it is now quickened by his immortal flesh, and in a manner shines in his immortality. (IV.17.32, Beveridge trans.)[27]

The passage to which Calvin makes a parenthetical reference is from *Adversus haereses,* IV.18.5, where Irenaeus speaks of the Eucharist as "consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly." For both theologians, it was critical that the eucharistic bread not change; and both considered the Eucharist as the perfect expression of the divine-human relationship. For Calvin, any change in the bread would signify an end of God's sovereignty (God enclosed in the elements) and an end to Christ's mediation. "While they feign an immense fantasy instead of the flesh, we defend the reality of the human nature on which our faith is founded."[28]

For Irenaeus, any change in the good, physical substance of bread would signify a fundamental deficiency in creation, as not worthy of "bear-

baptism they are admitted into the fold of Christ, and the symbol of adoption is sufficient for them, until they grow up and become fit to bear solid food" (IV.16.31).

27. See also Calvin's use of Irenaeus in "True Partaking . . . ," *T&T* II.537-38; "Last Admonition . . . ," *T&T* II.435-36; and "Adultero-German Interim . . . ," *T&T* III.226.

28. Calvin, "Last Admonition . . . ," *T&T* II.436.

ing" the Spirit and being irreconcilable with God: "For how can they be consistent with themselves when they say that the bread over which thanks have been given is the body of their Lord, and the cup His blood, if they do not call Himself the Son of the Creator of the world, that is, His Word, through whom the wood fructifies, and the fountains gush forth . . ." (*AH* IV.18.4). Irenaeus and Calvin both turn to the Holy Spirit as the one who accomplishes the "reality" of the eucharistic presence, without changing the integrity of creation.

We are in familiar territory, and it is just here that the divergence between Calvin and Irenaeus may be of some genuine use. What is interesting to note is how Calvin tweaks Irenaeus for his own purposes here (IV.17.32, quoted above), for they are not really saying the same thing.[29] In this passage Irenaeus insists that the Eucharist proclaims one thing: "the fellowship [*koinōnian*] and union of the flesh and Spirit."

> For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity. (*AH* IV.18.5)

Irenaeus's point is that creation *as creation* participates in God. When the Spirit comes upon creation, there is forged an enduring relationship between the two such that the bread is no longer "common bread." Creation, under the impact of the Spirit, does not give way to a higher reality that is other than itself; rather, it becomes more itself as it participates in the new creation. For Irenaeus, the Eucharist is the ultimate proof that the creaturely participates in the divine life in the here and now as the new creation, and is moved closer to its *telos* of "the *koinōnian* of the flesh and Spirit." It is not a new substance, but it is in a new relationship *(koinōnia)* that alters — and yet does not alter — creation. As the bread receives the blessing of the Spirit, and is put in this new relationship, so the church, as it partakes of the Eucharist, is also participating via the Spirit in the new creation — the life of incorruptibility.[30]

29. This is a relic from the medieval *auctoritates* method of reading the fathers. See the chapter on Calvin in Irena Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 63–129.

30. For sources on how Irenaeus's phrase *ex duabus rebus constans* has been used

Calvin, on the other hand, called on this passage to emphasize the separateness — the particularity — of the earthly and heavenly. Whereas for Irenaeus the two realities of earthly and heavenly are shown as eschatologically related (in terms of participating in the new creation), for Calvin the two realities exist more or less side by side: the earthly — the bread (IV.17.14), and the heavenly — the "assurance of eternal life."[31] Although this assurance "in a sense partakes of his immortality" (IV.17.32), nevertheless the point is that the Eucharist, by the Holy Spirit, consists of two distinct things.

Calvin's interpretation here reflects not only his polemical situation but also his anthropology, which tended to move along more dualist lines of soul/body, nobler/lower, spiritual/physical.[32] The sacraments parallel the nature of humanity, whose "nobler part" (I.15.2) is the soul: "[B]ecause we have souls engrafted in bodies, he imparts spiritual things under visible ones" (IV.14.3). Thus the "believer does not halt at the physical sight of them, but rises up to lofty mysteries" (IV.14.5). The ministry of the sacraments thus "increase[s] faith" (IV.14.9), as "God accomplishes *within* what the minister represents and attests by *outward* action . . ." (IV.14.17 [emphasis added]).

Irenaeus's anthropology, of course, informs (or is informed by) his notion of the sacraments as well. While Calvin concedes that "the body is not excluded from participation in glory, in so far as it is connected to the soul" (*Comm. 1 Pet.* 1:9), Irenaeus insists that "both are necessary, since both contribute towards the life of God" (*AH* III.18.2). The soul does not have priority over the body, but serves the body in receiving the "Spirit of the Father" (*AH* III.18.2). For Calvin, the Lord's Supper has become the supreme example of how the "visible" participates by the Spirit in the "invisible." Irenaeus, on the other hand, bound the two

throughout church history, see Mary Ann Donovan, *One Right Reading? A Guide to Irenaeus* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), p. 113 n. 18.

31. Calvin probably has the Lutheran *Fleischbrot* (fleshbread) in mind here, which formed a singular new substance. For how Calvin used Irenaeus against Lutheran ubiquitousness, see Irena Backus, "Irenaeus, Calvin and Calvinist Orthodoxy: The Patristic Manual of Abraham Scultetus (1598)," *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 1 (June 1999): 43–44. Irena Backus finds "Calvin's doctrine of the soul [to be] an amalgam of Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics" (Backus, *Historical Method*, p. 90).

32. Perhaps it is this dualist anthropology that is the root of Calvin's oscillation between the "two views" of the Spirit that are in tension with one another throughout his works.

earthly and heavenly realities together not through sign/signified, but through the pneumatological notion of the first fruits of the new creation (*AH* IV.18.1.4).

"First fruits" invites reflection on the ways in which the present physical creation participates in the ascended Lord. Calvin rightly emphasizes communion with the risen Lord, but this was not always matched by an equal pneumatological insistence on its material dimension. For whereas Calvin's insistence on "Christ the true sacrament"[33] led him to de-emphasize the materiality of the sacrament, it is precisely Christ the true sacrament that allowed Irenaeus to affirm the material. His emphasis on the physicality of the sacraments was never directly identified with Christ. Without taking away from Christ's preeminence, the sacraments participate *in him* and thus are wholly valid, present actions of God *among us*.

Furthermore, for Irenaeus, we are not only recipients of this gift but we are invited to participate in Christ's priestly action to the Father. As opposed to the potential for altruism in Calvin's rendering of the "sacrifice of gratitude," Irenaeus recognizes the noncompetitive nature of human and divine action. From this he is able to recognize the sacrament as our invitation to participate in Christ's self-offering to the Father.[34] In offering back to God what is his own, our human, earthly actions are sanctified by Christ's, and they bring all of creation into this sanctification. Calvin failed to see how our participation in the ascended Christ, the center of the new creation, brings our present materiality into this new eschatological reality. The Ascension does not merely locate Christ in heaven; rather, the risen, *human* Jesus also sends his Spirit to accomplish in creation what was accomplished first in him. By doing so, he transforms the physical from serving as a barrier to participation into becoming the very means by which we enjoy Christ in the Spirit.

33. "Christ is the matter or (if you prefer) the substance of all the sacraments; for in him they have all their firmness, and they do not promise anything apart from him" (IV.14.16). See also George Hunsinger's critique of Barth along these lines: Hunsinger, "Baptism and the Soteriology of Forgiveness," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 2 (2000): 254-56.

34. See chapter 5 above.