

## INTRODUCTION

### Purpose

THE PRESENT STUDY IS AN EXAMINATION OF JOHN CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF the Church.<sup>1</sup> It argues that Calvin's idea of the twofold identity of the Church—its spiritual identity as the body of Christ and its functional identity as the mother of all believers—is closely related to his understanding of the Christian identity and Christian life, which are initiated and maintained by the grace of the triune God.

Throughout his writings, Calvin uses the term “Church” in two senses, which represent the twofold identity of the Church. On the one hand, Calvin opens his ecclesiological discussions of the *Institutes* IV with the description of the Church as the institution to which God has entrusted a number of aids for the Christian faith:

And in order that the preaching of the gospel might flourish, he deposited this treasure in the church. He instituted “pastors and teachers” through whose lips he might teach his own . . . he instituted sacraments, which we who have experienced them feel to be highly useful aids to foster and strengthen faith.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, Calvin identifies the Church with the spiritual fellowship of Christians across time and space. In the *Institutes* III, he uses the same terms that he uses for the regeneration of individual Christians in

1. As the titles of the recent conferences of the two major research groups for Calvin studies show, Calvin's ecclesiology is still one of the most popular areas for research on Calvin. Foxgrover, *Calvin and the Church*, Selderhuis, *Calvinus Praeceptor Ecclesiae*. Celebrating 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth in 2009, many studies on Calvin's ecclesiology and its influences have been published. We can find useful studies in the following compilatory books. Hirzel and Sallmann, *John Calvin's Impact on Church and Society, 1509–2009*; Beeke, *Calvin for Today*; Thompson, *Engaging with Calvin*; Selderhuis, *The Calvin Handbook*; Billings and Hesselink, *Calvin's Theology and its Reception*.

2. *Institutes*, IV.1.1, OS 5:1.

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his discussion of the restoration of the Church: “God is said to purge his church of all sin, in that through baptism he promises that grace of deliverance, and fulfills it in his elect [Ephesians 5:26–27] . . . God truly carries this out by regenerating his own people, so that the sway of sin is abolished in them.”<sup>3</sup> It is correspondingly certain in the *Institutes* IV.1.2, that Calvin conceives two identities of the Church: “The article in the Creed in which we profess to ‘believe the church’ refers not only to the visible church (our present topic) but also to all God’s elect, in whose number are also included the dead.”<sup>4</sup> In his ecclesiology, therefore, the Church is understood not only as the institution or the “treasure house” of God’s aids for Christians, its functional and visible identity, but also as a spiritual fellowship of believers, its spiritual and invisible identity. What does Calvin think of the theological basis for this twofold identity of the Church? Calvin explains these two identities of the Church in the light of his anthropological ideas: his idea of the Christian’s identity as a child of God has significance for the functional identity of the Church; and his trinitarian and eschatological ideas of the Christian life are crucial for the spiritual identity of the Church. In the following pages, I will review the previous studies which have dealt with Calvin’s ideas of the Church, and then explain the methodological points of this study, and finally provide an outline of the contents of this study.

## Review of Previous Studies

Scholars of Calvin’s ecclesiology have generally fallen into two broad groups. On the one hand, those who deal with the theological implications of Calvin’s ecclesiological ideas, such as spiritual warfare, Christ’s headship and the progress of the Church, tend to focus mainly on the spiritual identity of the Church as the fellowship of Christians. On the other hand, those who examine the practical aspects of the visible Church in Calvin’s ecclesiology, such as its government, ministry and discipline, tend to concentrate on the functional identity of the Church as the agent of God’s grace for believers.

Before the late 1980s, scholars tended to examine the theological foundations of Calvin’s ideas of the Church, usually focusing on its spiritual

3. *Institutes*, III.3.11, OS 4:66. Calvin’s use of the term “Church” to denote God’s people appears frequently in his commentaries on the prophets. For example, he interprets Isaiah 37:26 thus: “I [God] have founded the Church, and therefore the salvation of the Church shall always be my care; because I will not leave unfinished the work which I have begun, but will carry it forward to perfection.” *Comm. Isa.* 37:26, CO 36:616.

4. *Institutes*, IV.1.2, OS 5:2.

identity. This group of scholars included Niesel, Wendel, Kroon, Milner and Loeschen. Niesel's study of Calvin's doctrine of the Church represents a tendency in early twentieth-century studies toward a christological understanding of Calvin's theology. He argues that Calvin thinks of the Church as "the sphere of the self-revelation of God and the encounter between Christ and ourselves," and "the means by which the exalted Christ accomplishes His work among men."<sup>5</sup> Niesel does not find any importance attached to the difference between the functional and the spiritual identities of the Church in Calvin's ecclesiology, while he considers Calvin to present his ideas of the Church from a consistent christological perspective. With regard to Calvin's idea of the Church as the mother of believers, Niesel says, "Because the church is placed in the service of Christ, because it has His promise that He desires to meet us there and only there in human earthly guise, Calvin can—nay must—repeat the ancient saying that outside the church there is no salvation."<sup>6</sup> Similarly, considering Calvin's idea of the Church as the body of Christ, Niesel argues, "That very sense of confrontation, in which the ministry of the church is enacted toward us, works itself out in such a way that we become one body with Christ, and by our union with Him are drawn into a fellowship with each other which is distinguished from all earthly and religious fellowship by the fact that it rests, not upon a conviction and a decision of men, but solely upon the saving work of Christ exerted toward us."<sup>7</sup> Although Niesel opens an important theological discussion on Calvin's ideas of the Church, his study fails to take enough account of the two distinct ways in which Calvin speaks about the Church. Niesel does not fully evaluate the significant position of ecclesiology in Calvin's theology by understanding every important topic in Calvin's ecclesiology in terms of christology.

In his study of Calvin's theology in 1950, Wendel warns that "If we want to speak of a 'system' of Calvin, we must do so with certain reservation, owing to the plurality of themes that imposed themselves simultaneously upon its author's thinking."<sup>8</sup> In observing the "plurality" of Calvin's doctrine of the Church, Wendel notes the twofold identity of the Church.

5. Niesel, *Theology of Calvin*, 185.

6. Ibid., 186.

7. Ibid., 188.

8. Wendel, *Calvin*, 357. Against the "Christocentric" interpretation of Calvin's theology, Wendel argues that a dominant preoccupation "to present the divinity of Jesus Christ in the strongest light and guard it against the slightest depreciation" is not "the central idea of his system from which all the rest of it could be deduced." Ibid., 358.

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He argues that for Calvin the Church is of “divine institution, not only inasmuch as it is the body of the faithful, but also in its ministries and the functions assigned to them.”<sup>9</sup> Concerning Calvin’s functional idea of the Church as the mother of believers, Wendel states, “we depend upon it for the whole of our spiritual life and all our sanctification.”<sup>10</sup> He indicates Calvin’s idea of “a collective sanctification” of the Church as the body of Christ: “To the sanctification of the individual there corresponds, on the plane of the Church, a collective sanctification. The Church is indubitably the body of Christ, but because of the fact that its members are at present sinners, it must be ever striving to become that body of Christ.”<sup>11</sup> Although he developed the understanding of Calvin’s ideas of the Church by clearly noting the twofold identity of the Church in his ecclesiology, Wendel does not proceed to explore further either the theological basis of Calvin’s ideas of the Church or the connection between the two identities of the Church.<sup>12</sup>

In 1968, the Dutch scholar Marijn de Kroon took Wendel’s work further by proposing the divine-human relationship as a theological framework within which Calvin’s ideas of the Church can be analysed: “In sum, we are saying that in Calvin’s discussion of the church, God and man are sketched as being in a mutual relationship, a relationship expressed in God’s election and human salvation.”<sup>13</sup> He argues that “it is fascinating to see how Calvin forges the link between the individual believer and the community which is the church.”<sup>14</sup> With regard to the functional identity of the Church as mother in Calvin’s ecclesiology, Kroon states, “the children whom God chooses are placed under her motherly care. In the church the Father’s constant care has its continuation and concretisation.” In respect of the spiritual identity of the Church, Kroon says, “in the church of Christ God and man come very near to each other, establishing a profound and intimate bond. God’s glory indwells the church: it is clothed with God’s

9. Ibid., 293.

10. Ibid., 294.

11. Ibid., 301.

12. In 1964, Ganoczy offered a useful study on Calvin’s idea of the Church and ministry. Although Ganoczy’s study mainly treats Calvin’s doctrine of ministry from a dialectical perspective, he provides a valuable analysis of the development of Calvin’s ecclesiology throughout the consecutive editions of the *Institutes* and suggests Calvin’s christological idea of the unique priesthood of Christ-Mediator as the theological basis of his ideas of the Church and ministry. Ganoczy, *Calvin*, 141ff.

13. Kroon, *Honour of God and Human Salvation*.

14. Ibid., 148.

authority.”<sup>15</sup> Kroon tries to understand other ecclesiological issues, such as church discipline and the ministry of the Church, in terms of “the bipolar orientation” between the honour of God and human salvation in Calvin’s theology.<sup>16</sup> For Kroon, the dominant anthropological concern in Calvin’s ecclesiology is “inexperienced, slothful and vain people” who need “an external support system by which faith can take root and develop in them.”<sup>17</sup> One of the significant contributions of Kroon’s study is its observation that Calvin’s anthropological idea of “human weakness and laxity” forms the theological basis of his ideas of the Church. But Kroon’s treatment of Calvin’s ideas is too brief to explore sufficiently the relationship between the two identities of the Church in relation to Calvin’s anthropological ideas.

While Niesel, Wendel and Kroon deal with Calvin’s ecclesiology as part of their interpretations of Calvin’s theology as a whole, Milner’s monograph of 1970 is fully devoted to a theological analysis of Calvin’s doctrine of the Church. In contrast to the previous studies, Milner attempts to interpret the important doctrines of Calvin’s theology, such as creation, fall and salvation, from his ecclesiological idea of “the dialectical and absolute correlation between the secret work of the Holy Spirit and the diverse manifestation of the order of the Word (*ordinationem Dei*).” Milner’s understanding of the relation between the order of the Word and the secret work of the Spirit in Calvin’s dialectical ecclesiology can be summed up thus: “*non separatio* because the Spirit is inseparable from the Word which we have (ordinarily) only in the ordained means: *sed distinctio* because the Spirit is not bound to the means, but exercises a sovereign freedom over them.”<sup>18</sup> To prove his dialectical interpretation of Calvin’s ideas of the Church, Milner argues that for Calvin the Kingdom of Christ is ruled by God’s Word, but that this Kingdom exists only within the elect in whom the Spirit works secretly and dynamically. In a similar vein, Milner argues that in his idea of the Church as the body of Christ Calvin speaks not only of the stability, unity and continuity of the Church on account of Christ’s headship over every member, but also of the variety and dynamic of the work of the Spirit from the diversity of spiritual gifts among members to the Spirit’s works of daily renewal.<sup>19</sup> Milner’s study is significant because it tries to interpret

15. Ibid., 150–51.

16. Ibid., 152, 154.

17. Ibid., 149.

18. Milner, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Church*, 191.

19. Ibid., 173–83.

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Calvin's ideas of the Church from a perspective coherent with the rest of Calvin's theology. Furthermore, this study shows that Calvin regards the Church not as a static institution, but as a sphere of the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit in the world. However, while he tries to prove his hypothesis of the dialectical relation between the order of the Word and the secret work of the Holy Spirit in the Church, Milner's study does not sufficiently treat the functional identity of the Church as the means through which grace is given to believers. He thus ignores the important identification of the Church as the mother of believers and its anthropological basis in Calvin's ecclesiology.

After Milner, Loeschen's study *The Divine Community* (1981), which compares the theologies of Luther, Menno Simons and Calvin, suggests a variety of useful perspectives from which we can understand Calvin's idea of the Church in the *Institutes* (1559), including trinitarian, eschatological and ethical perspectives. However, Loeschen does not fully deal with the functional identity of the Church and its relationship with the Church's spiritual identity in Calvin's ecclesiology. He focuses mainly on the ethical implications of the spiritual identity of the Church, considered in the *Institutes* III. In Loeschen's study, accordingly, the term "Church" can generally be interpreted as "Christians."<sup>20</sup>

While studies of Calvin's ecclesiology before the late 1980s generally attempted to interpret the theological implications of his ideas of the Church, studies since then have predominantly engaged with their historical and practical aspects. Bouwsma's study on Calvin's life and theology in 1988 signals this shift. Since Bouwsma's study, there have been few theological analyses of Calvin's doctrine of the Church.<sup>21</sup> As Selderhuis points out, recent research on Calvin's ecclesiology has laid much stress on "the more organizational aspects of the church, such as church discipline, church offices, the church-state relation and the unity of the church."<sup>22</sup>

20. Loeschen, *Divine Community*. Similar use of the term "Church," which is identical to (the fellowship of) Christians, had already appeared in Wallace's study of Calvin's idea of the two ministries of the Church. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*.

21. Before Bouwsma, Schüümmer produced theological studies of Calvin's ideas of the Church, which focused on the mystical identity of the Church as the "mother" in Calvin's thought. Schüümmer, *L'Ecclesiology de Calvin à la lumière de l'Ecclesia Mater*. Wiley also analysed the development and maintenance of the idea of the invisible Church as the elect throughout the editions of the *Institutes*. Wiley, "Church as the Elect," 96–117.

22. Selderhuis, "Church on Stage," 46. Significantly, with the exception of Selderhuis's paper, all the articles in *Calvin and the Church* deal with the historical, ethical, and institutional aspects of Calvin's ecclesiology.

Bouwsma argues that “chiefly concerned with its effectiveness in the world, he [Calvin] gave little attention to the church as a subject of theological reflection; his program for the church was again thoroughly practical.”<sup>23</sup> To advance his argument, Bouwsma points to Calvin’s emphasis on the particularity of the local: “When Calvin laid down regulation for ‘the church,’ then, he had in mind chiefly a church based on a town such as Geneva.”<sup>24</sup> He therefore argues that Calvin is mainly concerned with the establishment of the visible and institutional Church, the effective means by which the Christians’ spiritual needs are provided. He identifies two tendencies in Calvin’s proposals for church government which support his argument: “clericalism” in his stress on the congregation’s obligation of obedience to their pastor; and flexibility in allowing each local Christian community to choose a suitable government according to its circumstances.<sup>25</sup> Bouwsma seems to offer the best understanding of the anthropological basis of Calvin’s ecclesiology. According to him, Calvin’s idea of the Church as a “school,” his emphasis on “zeal” in the teaching role of the Church, and his concept of “the mixture of the wicked and the faithful” in the Church reflect his concern for the spiritual needs of individual Christians.<sup>26</sup> However, Bouwsma focuses too exclusively on the functional identity of the Church. His claim that Calvin does not consider the Church as a subject of theology overlooks Calvin’s identification of the Church with the body of Christ.

In 1990s, there have been a number of studies which dealt with the practical and historical aspects of Calvin’s ecclesiology. Kingdon and his colleagues have painstakingly produced editions, translations and studies of the registers of the Consistory of Geneva, which shed light on Calvin’s

23. Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 214.

24. *Ibid.*, 216

25. “Still another tension in his program for the church arose from his awareness, along with the needs of community, of the individuality of Christian experience. Even when Christians sit together as a body to hear the Gospel, he declared, God ‘speaks to individuals,’ each of whom is ‘to apply to himself whatever God promises to his church collectively.’” *Ibid.*, p. 227.

26. “As ‘God’s school,’ Calvin’s church was more like a humanist academy than a school of theology, and he imagined God now looking over the shoulders of his pupils watching ‘their gestures, walking, words, and everything else.’ . . . He gave much attention to what makes teaching effective in the church. It must be practical . . . It must also be presented with fervor.” *Ibid.*, 227. “But Calvin could also be less grudging. He knew well enough that the problem of ‘mixture’ was deeper than the mingling of reprobate and elect in the church, that every Christian, even among the elect, is also a mixture of good and evil.” *Ibid.*, 229.

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ideas and practices of church discipline in Geneva.<sup>27</sup> Historical investigations of Calvin's Geneva church have uncovered not only the historical background of his theological ideas of the Church but also on their application in practice.<sup>28</sup> Scholars who approach Calvin's ecclesiology from the viewpoint of political science have offered fresh insights into his ideas of church government, the church-state relationship, and other political and social issues concerned with his ecclesiology.<sup>29</sup> Those who have examined the hermeneutical and historical contexts of his ecclesiology have illustrated the significance of Calvin's doctrine of the Church in the history of Christian theology.<sup>30</sup> Calvin's doctrine of the sacraments is still one of the most popular areas of research and we can find material on his ideas of the Church in studies of this.<sup>31</sup>

In his study of Calvin's ecclesiology, Selderhuis raises again the question of the identities of the Church in Calvin's ecclesiology. Analysing the dynamic understanding of the Church in Calvin's commentary on Psalms, Selderhuis posits five identities of the Church in Calvin's ecclesiology: the church as the community of the covenant, as *corpus mixtum*, as the body of Christ, as *ecclesia militans*, and as *ecclesia ministrans*. Selderhuis believes that firstly, Calvin thinks of the Church as the community of the covenant which is always the "church-in-action" because "God has entrusted the covenant of eternal life to the church; hence the heavenly splendor shines most clearly in the church."<sup>32</sup> Secondly, with regard to the identity of the Church as *corpus mixtum*, in Calvin's ecclesiology "a church can even be decayed in large part, but when there are some sincere believers—even when they are

27. For further details on the Geneva Consistory, see Kingdon, "Geneva Consistory in the time of Calvin," 21–34. See also Kingdon, *Registers of the Consistory of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*.

28. Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva and Reformation*; Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation*.

29. Höpfl, *Christian Polity of John Calvin*; Hancock, *Calvin and the Foundations of the Modern Politics*; Stevenson, *Sovereign Grace*; Pattison, *Poverty in the Theology of John Calvin*.

30. McKee, *John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving*; McKee, *Elders and the Plural Ministry*.

31. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*; Elwood, *Body Broken*; Riggs, *Baptism in the Reformed Tradition*; Wandel, *Eucharist in the Reformation: Incarnation and Liturgy*.

32. Selderhuis, "Church on Stage," 50. He argues that "the church for Calvin is not just an organization but a demonstration; it is not something passive, just standing there. It is dynamic, it is a show on the road, it is a show in progress—yet, even a 'travelling salvation show.'" *Ibid.*, 46.

only a small group—you may not withhold from them the name ‘people of God.’”<sup>33</sup> Thirdly, from the identity of the Church as the body of Christ, Calvin finds the theological basis of the unity, existence, and richness of the church in the bond between Christ and the church. At this point, Selderhuis argues that the communion between Christ and the church “is invisible, but that it does not result in an invisible church. Just as Christ’s body was visible and tangible, so is the church.”<sup>34</sup> Fourthly, from Calvin’s idea of the *ecclesia militans* illustrates his understanding of the suffering of the Church in history as “the sign of progress in the Kingdom of Christ.” According to Selderhuis, Calvin tries to comfort the struggling church by recalling its relationship with Christ, because in this relationship “God acts in protection.”<sup>35</sup> Fifthly, Selderhuis argues that in the idea of *ecclesia ministrans* Calvin stresses the benevolence of God in inviting believers to salvation by the testimony of the preacher, and “ascribes great value to the official proclamation of the Word, but without making the office the ‘owner’ of Word and Spirit.”<sup>36</sup> Selderhuis reminds us of the importance of the issue of Calvin’s identifications of the Church. In elaborating his own fivefold model of Calvin’s ideas of the Church, however, he does not examine clearly how these five identities are distinguished and related to each other in Calvin’s ecclesiology. Among the five identities of the Church that Selderhuis indicates, the community of the covenant, we may say that the body of Christ, and the *ecclesia militans* belong to the spiritual or invisible Church, and the *corpus mixtum* and the *ecclesia ministrans* pertain to the functional and visible Church. Without a proper understanding of the theological perspectives that connect these two identities, how can Calvin write of the Church as “a travelling show” of God’s glory and at the same time write of the Church that is *corpus mixtum*? How can Calvin hold the view that “the spiritual unity of believers,” which belongs to the identity of the church as the communion of the covenant, cannot exist without the visible unity of the church, in which hypocrites surely exist? How can Calvin assure believers of God’s protection by positing that “God does not always protect the church in a visible way,” and at the same time state that “the church is sure of God’s continuous protection” without contradiction?

33. Ibid., 54.

34. Ibid., 55. “For Calvin the spiritual unity of believers cannot exist without the visible unity of the church. But unity for Calvin is not static, since it is always a ‘unity under construction’ or better put ‘the church on the road of unity.’” Ibid., 57.

35. Ibid., 60.

36. Ibid., 63.

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Although the various studies surveying the theological, historical and practical aspects of Calvin's ecclesiology have contributed much to our knowledge, the questions about the theological basis of Calvin's idea of the Church seems not to have been sufficiently answered. The theological task of finding an answer to these crucial questions in Calvin's ecclesiology should be carried out because without a proper understanding of the theological foundations of Calvin's practical ideas of the Church, it is difficult for us either to understand precisely or to evaluate effectually those practical ideas. Calvin's proposals for the government, ministry, and discipline of the Church are not merely responses to historical situations and to the practical needs of his Church, but rather the results of efforts to realise his vision of the godly community in Scripture in the institutional Church. Therefore, in the opening chapter of the *Institutes* IV (1559), he makes it clear that the major subjects of the ecclesiological discussions in this book are to be the practical aspects of the institutional and visible Church: "Accordingly, our plan of instruction now requires us to discuss the church, its government, orders, and power; then the sacraments; and lastly, the civil order."<sup>37</sup> Yet, as a theologian and an exegete who made a great effort to embody his biblical vision of the Church in practice, Calvin always tries to discuss his idea of the Church from a theological perspective. Therefore, the need for a theological investigation of Calvin's idea of the Church remains, and is crucial for evaluating the success or failure of the reformation of the Church in Geneva according to Calvin's vision of the Church.

## Methodological Points

Three methodological points will be used to investigate Calvin's doctrine of the Church in this study: a focus on Calvin's anthropological ideas; an analysis of the *Institutes* and related passages in Calvin's other writings; and an examination of his theological use of metaphors.

As the first methodological point, in investigating Calvin's idea of the Church, I will examine Calvin's theological anthropology among the various *loci* in his theology which may open a useful perspective on the relationship between the two identities of the Church in his ecclesiology. This choice arises simply from the view that it is necessary for anyone who tries to analyse a theologian's ecclesiology to pay attention to his or her

37. *Institutes*, IV.1.1, OS 5:1. Cf. "[I]t is now our intention to discuss the visible church." *Institutes*, IV.1.4, CO 5:7.

understanding of the Christian identity and the Christian life because the Church can be regarded as the divinely appointed community of and for Christians. It means that a theologian who discusses both the theoretical and the practical aspects of the Church should deal with the nature and the needs of Christians in the Church.

Calvin is no exception. Just before outlining his plan in the *Institutes* IV, he describes the condition of Christians on account of which the outward aids of the Church are required: "Since, however, in our ignorance and sloth (to which I add fickleness of disposition) we need outward helps to beget and increase faith within us, and advance it to its goal, God has added these aids that he may provide for our weakness."<sup>38</sup> The significance of the anthropological ideas in Calvin's doctrine of the Church is obvious in his definition of the Church: "By the term 'church' it means that which is actually in God's presence, into which no persons are received but those who are children of God by grace of adoption and true members of Christ by sanctification of the Holy Spirit."<sup>39</sup> In this statement, Calvin tries to explain the Church from his idea of who Christians are in the grace of the Triune God. Who is the Christian? A more elaborate way of asking this is: what happens in the Christian self and life by the grace of God? The attempt to find an answer to this question is key to understanding Calvin's idea of the Church. The examination of Calvin's anthropology occupies the first half part of this study because there are many important issues to be discussed in his anthropology with regard to the ecclesiological themes in the second part. Furthermore, we can observe the close connection between Calvin's anthropology and his ecclesiology if it becomes clear that he presents his discussion in both doctrines from the common and penetrating perspectives, such as teleological, trinitarian and eschatological perspectives. Among the many controversial and significant issues in Calvin's anthropology, however, I will focus mainly on the matters of the identity and the life of Christians after a preliminary examination of Calvin's idea of the *imago Dei*, the key concept to his anthropology, in the first chapter.

As the second methodological point, I will investigate Calvin's anthropology by focusing on the *Institutes* III, and his ecclesiology in the *Institutes* IV. This is not because I agree with Wendel's claim that Calvin's theology is completely presented in the *Institutes*,<sup>40</sup> but because the fourth book of

38. *Institutes*, IV.1.1, OS 5:1.

39. *Institutes*, IV.1.7, OS 5:12.

40. Wendel, *John Calvin*, 111.

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the *Institutes* is the most mature and organised presentation of Calvin's ecclesiology, and his writing here is closely related to the anthropological (soteriological) discussion of the previous book. Although the development through successive editions of the *Institutes* will not be ignored, it should be noted that there is no drastic change or revision in the *Institutes* IV. I will additionally refer in this study to diverse passages in Calvin's commentaries, sermons, treatises and letters, but I will try to restrict these references to passages in which Calvin explicitly handles material relevant to his anthropology and ecclesiology. These references are chiefly to be found in Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, because his explanation of the Church by means of metaphors is chiefly based on his interpretation of New Testament passages.<sup>41</sup>

As the third methodological point, in investigating Calvin's anthropology and ecclesiology, I will focus on certain core metaphors used by Calvin in the presentation of his explanations. In the first part of this study, I will focus on three biblical concepts significant for Calvin's anthropology: the image of God; Christians as children of God; and the Christian life as pilgrimage and warfare. For the investigation of Calvin's ecclesiology, I will examine Calvin's use of the following metaphors of the Church: the mother of all believers, the body of Christ, and the Kingdom of Christ. I have chosen these metaphors because these are the ones Calvin predominantly and effectively appeals to in his presentation of the Christian and the Church. Calvin's use of these metaphors reflects the underpinning theological focus of his ecclesiology. Of course, he uses these metaphors in part for rhetorical effect. However, this does not imply that his metaphorical understanding of the Church is empty rhetoric without any coherent theological foundation. Instead, for Calvin, the metaphors are effective tools with which to deliver his theological ideas.<sup>42</sup> As we shall see, it is his consistent theological

41. I shall quote the *Institutes* from Battles's English translation, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* [1559]. The quotations from Calvin's commentaries come from *Calvin's Commentaries*, which was originally published in Edinburgh, 1844–1855. I will refer to the original Latin texts of Calvin's writings in CO in the footnotes when I think that English translation are not clear and it is useful for us to see the original Latin terms and expressions for some important concepts.

42. Noting a possible influence of the rhetorical tradition of the Renaissance on Calvin, Willis suggests the rhetorical characteristics of Calvin's thought can be summarised in three points: Calvin's view of faith as persuasion, of knowledge as efficacious truth, and of revelation as God's persuasive accommodation. Willis, "Rhetoric and Responsibility in Calvin's Theology," 45, 50–51. There have been studies that shed light on the rhetorical characteristics of Calvin's thought. Girardin, *Rhétorique et théologique*; Millet, *Calvin*

perspective and concern that determine his use of these metaphors, including their rhetorical usage. Thus I will focus on Calvin's theological idea of the Church, as explained through these metaphors, rather than investigate the intellectual background or the rhetorical style of his ecclesiological discussions.

## Contents and Arguments

The first part of this study analyses Calvin's anthropology, and in particular his ideas of the identity and the life of the Christian. Although plausible ways to understand or resolve certain controversial issues in Calvin's anthropology are suggested, more detailed discussion about these issues is dealt with relatively briefly because this initial anthropological investigation aims principally to find and expound the three focal points of Calvin's anthropology: the restoration of the image of God in humanity in the course of regeneration; the grace of the triune God for Christian regeneration; and the consolation and hope of Christians in God's promise of protection and their future perfection. Each point shows that Calvin presents his anthropology from a relational, trinitarian and eschatological perspective.

As a preliminary examination of Calvin's anthropology, chapter 1 will review the previous studies of Calvin's idea of the image of God to outline the problems and the recent bias in the research of Calvin's anthropology. In this chapter, I will argue that Calvin's anthropology is an explanation of the restoration of the *imago Dei* in humanity in its relationship with God. This means that although Calvin deals with the "structural" aspects of the image of God, such as the immortality of the soul and the rational dignity of humanity, the essential focus of his anthropology is the restoration of the "relational" aspects of the image, which have been totally destroyed by sin.

In chapter 2, Calvin's idea of the identity of Christians as children of God will be examined. For Calvin, Christians cannot be assured of this

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*et la dynamique de la parole*; Jones, *Calvin and the Rhetoric of Piety*. Concerning the rhetorical characteristics of Calvin's thought, Higman argues that "it is the subject which determined the choice of words and rhythms; they have not been selected in order to convey a certain effect so much as because they are only fitting ones." Higman, *Style of John Calvin in his French Polemical Treatises*, 121. Similarly, after analyzing and evaluating the interest of current studies in the rhetorical characteristics of Calvin's through, Wright argues that Calvin was "so acutely sensitive to the biblical style of plain simplicity and to the implications he drew from it that we should be very surprised to detect him, as we may from time to time, getting so carried away in flights of rhetoric as to lose sight of coherence and truth." Wright, "Was John Calvin a 'Rhetorical Theologian'?", 68-69.

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identity through anything they do themselves because they are imperfect: they experience a struggle between the two conflicting parts of their “divided self” in the course of regeneration. Calvin insists that Christians nonetheless can be assured of their identity only from their union with Christ in which they are justified and regenerated by the grace of the triune God.

Chapter 3 will attempt to show that Calvin explains the present life of Christians from an eschatological perspective: in describing the Christian life as “warfare” and “pilgrimage,” Calvin concentrates not only on the present imperfection of the Christian, but also on the certainty of God’s promise of the future perfection of the Christian at death and in the final resurrection. It will be argued that Calvin’s discussion of the last things is directed by his concern to provide Christians with consolation in their present life. To show how Calvin’s pastoral concern is applied to his explanation of the Christian life, I will deal with his consideration of three spiritual exercises, which affect the personal dimensions of the Christian life, and the duty of love toward neighbours, which concerns its communal dimensions.

The second part of this study will examine Calvin’s ecclesiology to show how his anthropological idea of the Christian identity and the Christian life direct his idea of the Church. To do so, I will investigate Calvin’s idea of the twofold identity of the Church: its functional and the spiritual identities. I will also investigate his idea of the three important practical aspects of the Church: its ministry, its government, and its discipline.

The main purpose of chapter 4 is to argue that Calvin calls the Church “the mother of all believers” and uses this idea to support his arguments for the necessity, the unity and the authenticity of the Church in order to emphasise the teaching and caring functions of the Church. This investigation aims to show that Calvin’s functional understanding of the Church as “mother” is based on his anthropological idea that Christians are God’s children and need therefore the motherly care of the Church. I will also investigate three foci of Calvin’s idea of the ministry of the Church: God’s grace of accommodation, the imperfection of human instruments, and the dynamic between the effectuating work of the Holy Spirit and the human response to grace. This investigation will show that it is not the nature or authority of the Church but God’s grace of regeneration that occupies the centre of Calvin’s ecclesiology, and is especially central to his ideas of the two main ministries of the Church—preaching and the sacraments.

In chapter 5, I will examine Calvin’s use of the biblical metaphor of the body of Christ to argue that in Calvin’s theology the spiritual identity of

the Church as the body of Christ is nothing but an extension of the identity of the individual Christian to the communal level: as the identity of individual Christians is established and maintained in their union with Christ, so too the spiritual identity of the Church is established and maintained in the relationship of Christians with Christ and with each other. Christ is the Head of this body and Christians are the members. As a result of this concept of the spiritual identity of the Church, Calvin stresses that it is the grace of the triune God which distinctively but harmoniously operates in the relationship between Christ and members, just as it is this grace which allows the identity of the individual Christian, in union with Christ, to be defined. Calvin finds three spiritual dimensions of this understanding of the body of Christ in Ephesians 4:16, which he tries to apply to his outline of church government in the *Institutes* IV and the *Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances* (1541): the headship of Christ, the communication of the diverse gifts, and the necessity of mutual love. This chapter will show that Calvin's idea of the Church as the body of Christ is the theological principle upon which he bases his directions for church government.

The final chapter will examine Calvin's eschatological understanding of the Church as the Kingdom of Christ, and argue that from this eschatological perspective, Calvin's two identities of the Church, as "the mother of all believers" and as "the body of Christ," are finally brought together. To show this, it will be argued that Calvin pays attention to the present imperfection and future perfection not only of the individual Christian but also of the Church, and from the same eschatological perspective. It will be seen that Calvin's eschatological understanding of the Church is offered with the underlying concern of providing believers with consolation in their Christian life. Next, I will examine the special relationship between the Church and the Kingdom of Christ in Calvin's ecclesiology in order to show that Calvin connects the Church with Christ's Kingdom because he thinks that the eschatological manifestation of the Kingdom of Christ, namely, the rule of Christ by means of the Word, happens not only in the invisible Church but also in the visible Church. Finally, I will examine Calvin's view of church discipline and try to prove that Calvin's idea of the eschatological relationship between the Church and Christ's Kingdom directs the important points of Calvin's idea of church discipline, such as the necessity of discipline, the omission of discipline from the marks of the true church and the emphasis on moderation in the administration of discipline.

The ultimately aim of this study is to show that Calvin's ecclesiology is presented in a close connection with his anthropological ideas of Christian

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identity and of the Christian life in the eschatological course of regeneration through the grace of the triune God. In his ecclesiology, Calvin associates the spiritual identity of the Church as the body of Christ with its functional identity as the mother of believers in order to highlight the grace of the triune God who regenerates His children in an eschatological way through the ministries of the Church. It will also be demonstrated that the common purpose of Calvin's anthropology and ecclesiology is his pastoral concern of providing Christians with consolation and hope in God's promises of protection and perfection.

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