Aspects of Calvin's Eschatology Part II

KENNETH YEATON

The Transformation Of Heaven And Earth: Calvin

We live in a world that has felt the effects of the fall of man, and because of this it is distressed but it still hopes. Nature has lost its proper order because of man's sin. It presently looks to the day when it shall be restored to its former state of perfection, when it shall no longer be burdened with its present 'painful' disordered condition.[1] Its hope lies in man's future glory, when man shall be like the ascended and glorified Son of man. The earth is longing for its renewal, for the very manifestation of the celestial kingdom.[2] This renewal is not limited to the physical world about us but shall also be seen in the creatures of the world. Although the creatures are 'dumb', they shall share in the same glory as the sons of God entering the kingdom of God. But how shall this be? The simplest answer is that we are presently unaware of just what is involved in the process that shall bring in this drastic change but, one day, they will exchange their present 'fallen' state for the glorious state of the kingdom, as Isaiah and Peter both clearly say.[3] The earth's absence of a present durable state is the cause of its longing for the resurrection of the sons of God. This shall be the manifestation of the heavenly kingdom and the earth's entering into a permanent state, at which time the world shall be returned to the perfect state it enjoyed prior to its present condition of corruption.[4] The glory of the newly restored planet earth will be the result of the believer coming into his glory. For nature, this will mean the glory of coming into a better condition, a perfect state that shall be without the corrupting effect caused by delay.[5] The many questions we may have relating to the extent of nature's restoration are best left until the actual time of the transformation when we shall see what nature's restoration shall involve. This is really the only answer to our question as we have no way of determining just what is to happen. Any attempt on our part to answer this question will be according to the given nature of each component part that goes into making up the earth, for God shall restore this terrestrial sphere to a perfect state. This leads to the question of whether animals are to be immortal. It is best to wait and

see; we have no information for such inferences, but whatever the new earth shall be like, it shall essentially be without deformation, shortcomings or dwindling of its brilliance.[7] There is then to be a new heaven and earth.[8] The new Jerusalem shall not have an earthly rule but it shall have a heavenly rule and yet it shall have an 'earthly' existence being 'built throughout the whole world'.[9]

Man was the original claimant of the world, God having given it to him to rule over. The forfeiture of this gift of lordship came through man's alienation to God. The outcome was that what was meant to be controlled by man, became hostile to him. Christ is able to restore this dominion to man as He has been given an inheritance consisting of all things.[10] In its fullest sense, this will only be realized at the time of the world's complete renovation at the coming of the age to come, which is the future world of the resurrection. But this earthly renewal is not only a goal but also a present reality, as 'this restoration originates from Christ as the fountainhead'.[11]

Christ came for the purpose of renovating the physical world,[12] being the only person able to do this. In the cross of Christ the glory of God is displayed in its greatest form. The subsequent change for man and the world, because of the cross, is that man has been given salvation and the world has been renewed, all things having been 'restored to order'.[13] The effect of Christ's coming was to set into motion the renovation of the world,[14] but this will only be completed at the coming of the Lord when He shall completely renovate the physical world we presently inhabit.[15]

> Hence it is now clear that the world to come is so described not only as that which we hope for after the resurrection, but as that which begins from the rise of the kingdom of Christ, and it will find its fulfilment in the final redemption.[16]

Even though nineteen hundred years have already passed and an equally lengthy period may pass before the fruition of the promised renovation of all things, we must not waver in our waiting and watching for His return to both man and the world.[17] Christ has been victorious over the ruler of this fallen and disordered world and because of this the world can look forward to being restored to its proper order, regardless of the length of time it is before the ushering-in of the renovation. But until the return of Christ and His completion of 'casting out' Satan, the world's restoration to a harmonious and well-ordered state will not be fully accomplished.[18] Strictly speaking, we do not need to wait until the resurrection because it has been in progress since the beginning of the kingdom of God, but it will only find its completion in the final redemption.

The Bible implies that heaven and earth will be purified by means of fire before the final restoration. Fire shall purge heaven and earth

of the things which have corrupted God's pure creation.[19]

> I shall say just one thing about the elements of the world, that they will be consumed only in order to receive a new quality while their substance remains the same, as can easily be concluded from Romans 8:21 and other passages.[20]

Calvin says Peter's intention in telling us how the heavens and earth are to be refined is directly related to the believer's present state, rather than trying to inform us about the cosmological transformation. In telling us that the present world shall pass away, Peter hopes to stimulate the believer to strive actively after newness of life. 'How does it come about that we indulge our flesh unless by reason of the fact that we have no thought of the near advent of Christ?'[21]

What can we expect the renewed world to be like? Will it be as it was before the fall?[22] All of the present fallen disorder and confusion in nature shall be restored to its proper harmony, as shown by the figure of the wolf and the lamb feeding together.[23] For man this new world will be without either the bringing in of new life through reproduction or, the loss of life through death.[24] However, the biblical references to the blessedness of children will not be a loss as giving birth 'refers to the progress by which God is constantly urging nature forward to its goal; in perfection itself we know that the case is different'.[25]

But what purpose is served by restoring the earth? The believer, like the angels, will not be in need of the produce of the renewed earth. 'I answer', says Calvin, 'that independent of use, there will be so much pleasantness in the very sight, so much delight in the very knowledge, that this happiness will far surpass all the means of enjoyment which are now afforded'.[26] In our present life, the pleasure of the physical world cannot be enjoyed to its full, due to nature's own disordered condition which is compounded by man's abuse of the world about him. The new earth will be renewed to a state of perfection and the believer shall also be in his perfect resurrected state, and able finally to take in, unhindered, all of God's creation.[27]

The Transformation Of Heaven And Earth: Shedd

At the end of the period of God's redemptive activity, God shall bring in a re-ordering of the physical world as we know it now.[28] Not only is the believer hoping and looking forward to the future transformation of his body at the return of Christ, but we may also say, in a metaphorical sense, that the world about us is also looking forward to the glorious advent of Christ.[29] Both man and the material creation he lives in, are looking to Christ's return and transformation, which is seen in the union that exists between them.[30] The present ecological

'curse' of decay, death and disharmony, finds its origin not in the physical realm but in man's willful disobedience.[31] Regarding fallen angels, Shedd says, 'nature as connected with the fallen angels is also cursed'. But the extent of the curse, via men and angels, is limited to their own direct spheres. The whole of the universe was not corrupted by man and the whole of the heavens was not corrupted by angels.[32]

The world which has shared in the curse will also share in the cure, and after being renewed, it will continue as the resurrection home of the believer.[33] Earth's future hope is renovation rather than annihilation.[34] Man's longed-for restored state (his resurrection body) and the earth's expectation of restitution, make for sympathy between man and creation.[35] It would not be good enough for believing man to come into a renewed body and not a renewed world as there would still be no permanent ecological state. The world would continue to be characterized by the bondage of death and destruction, and 'such an environment is unsuited to the sinless spirit and the celestial body of the risen believer'.[36] The earth will subsequently be freed from this corruption, it will be 'regenerated', fully restored and transformed, to be the home of the redeemed.[37] This transformation will take place by a 'sudden dissolution and reconstruction of this material world' and not through 'the present slow and gradual operation of natural laws'.[38] Peter refers to the heavens and earth as being burned up, but just how the purification will occur is unknown to man.[39] We are also unaware of just where the new heaven and earth shall be. Further, it is probable but uncertain, that all forms of life, plant and animal now present, will be 'required in the new heavens and earth' and thus shall not be a part of the new order.[40] Such minute interpretative details must not become a stumbling block to either our overall understanding of the event or our belief that the Bible, and particularly Romans 8, teaches such an ultimate renovation of the heaven and earth.[41]

The Eternal Vision of God

Calvin saw no reason for trying to be excessively interested in the location of heaven.[42] All that we need to know is that it is where we shall enjoy the presence of God.[43]

The Bible uses both symbols and metaphors, from time to time, in an attempt to convey a clearer picture of concepts which might not be so readily understood. Examples of this are when the believer is referred to as being symbolically buried with Christ:[44] at other times the church is metaphorically referred to as the house of God.[45] Figurative language is used of the last state of the lost,[46] so too is heaven spoken of in metaphorical terms, 'in the same manner as we do not understand the blessed and immortal life, unless it be shadowed out by some figures adapted to our capacity'.[47]

When we turn to consider the heavenly state we should not let ourselves be carried away with idle speculations.[48] This seems to be a

general principle for Calvin when he talks about heaven and hell. We are not to be taken up primarily with what either heaven or hell are like. We have biblical data that tell us there are such places, but we have not been given many real particulars as to their actual physical characteristics or the personal conditions of those who are there. It follows then, says Calvin, that all such systems which attempt to explain it comprehensively are nothing more than rash ignorance.[49]

Christians only know the reality of this world, heaven is a futuristic expectation. What is the believer's attitude to this unknown life to be? The first is that of hope. Being a follower of God has its good promises for this present life on earth, but we should be miserable if we had nothing more to hope for than this life.[50] Our hope is based on our being persuaded that we have a treasure laid up for us in heaven, the treasure of life. This hope is also used to express the idea of the glory we look forward to in heaven.[51] This hopeful looking to heaven and Christ, who is there, is then a sign that shows us where our treasures are, for our hearts are already there.[52] This attitude will naturally lead the believer into the second attitude which relates to heaven, that is, he will meditate on heaven. Meditation is true and holy thinking, it is applying our minds and intellects to Christ.[53] Why Christ? As members of Christ we shall ascend at the resurrection to heaven as Christ ascended.[54] Calvin tells us that such contemplation will do two things for us. The first is that we shall be aroused to worship God, and secondly that we shall be prompted to pursue love.[55] Finally, the believer's mental attitude will be one of patience, as he waits for the coming of Christ and heaven.[56] The reason why we hope, meditate and wait for heaven is that that is where our life is to be found.[57] Having become a follower of Christ has caused a basic shift in our loyalties. We now see ourselves as exiles from our true country, heaven, where we want to be rather than here.[58] Should we not feel that our first allegiance is to heaven? In Christ we have glory waiting for us.[59] Heaven's glory, says Calvin, is not to be limited to the heavenly aeon when we shall receive the fullness of glory as part of our inheritance. There is a here and now precursory partaking of the glory of the final state.[60] The glory of the present is not a glory relating to the earth, and thus in juxtaposition to heavenly glory; rather, the present glory relates to the future glory, as commencement and consummation relate. Those things which join the glory of heaven to the glory of earth are God's diverse gifts to individual believers. Calvin understood this to mean that there will be differences of heavenly glory based on the different gifts, different glory, given by God.[61]

> . . . God, in the varied distribution of gifts to his saints in this world, gives them unequal degrees of light, so when he shall crown his gifts, their degrees of glory in heaven will also be unequal . . . In short, as

> Christ, by the manifold variety of his gifts, begins the glory of his body in this world, and gradually increases it, so he will complete it in heaven.[62]

As a result of Adam's action, the heavenly kingdom was closed to mankind. The second Adam has, by His ascension on high, reopened access to this kingdom for man. Christ is then in effect the doorkeeper to heaven. As such, He is now seated beside the Father as our advocate and intercessor before the Father.[63] Christ is a celestial high priest who since His ascension to the right hand of the Father has reigned in glory and has also been the minister of a heavenly sanctuary.[64] In heaven the Son has dominion over angels and man. Christ's glory in heaven is then unequalled by either man's glory or the glory of the angels.[65]

What can we say of heaven? When the Bible uses the term 'heaven' it is that we might raise our minds to think of higher things, even of God Himself, that we might have a high concept of Him and not merely a low earthly one. Biblically the term 'heaven' is not used to refer to a given physical habitation of God as if He were confined there exclusively.[66] To say that God is in heaven is used to convey to us the loftiness and power of God. Earthly conceptions of Him are not adequate because He is higher than this world and He is above His creation.[67] This does not mean that there is no heaven as such for we are told that at death we go to be with the Lord, to be present with Him.[68] Paradise is then the enjoyment of being in the presence of God.[69] Heaven is the kingdom of God, which is the apex of all other power over the entire framework of the world.[70] Heaven is that place where Christ has gone, to make ready for those who believe in Him. They shall share with Him the same place He went to at His ascension. Man at the resurrection shall come into this inheritance that Christ, who is the Head of the church, has prepared for His followers.[71] The blessedness of heaven, Christ's rule, shall not be of a thousand years duration but shall be eternal in nature.[72] It shall be a place where we shall enjoy life. Heaven shall be a place where we shall not require either food or drink to sustain life.[73] The children of God, in heaven, will be like the angels who are free from the infirmities, the wants and the responsibilities related to protecting and continuing the species.[74] It is where the believer shall have the glory, of and in Christ.[75]

KENNETH YEATON is a Minister in Portland, Oregon.

Concluded

NOTES

1. Inst. 3, 25, 2, cf. Com. on Romans 8:19 Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine*, pp. 181–182. Man and his environment are united, the earth being a victim of man's default.

2. Cf. Berkouwer, *Return*, p.211. The Biblical topic of the new heavens and earth is 'often ignored out of a kind of religious and soteriological self-centredness, a parallel to the one-sided interest in "heaven" and in the intermediate state apart from the resurrection of the body'.
3. Com. on Romans 8:19, 21; C.A.M. Hall, *Spirit's Sword*, pp.139–149.
4. Com. on Romans 8:20.
5. Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine*, p.182. The basis of the earth's hope and longing for restoration is that it has suffered as a direct result of man's fall, so it too shall be glorified when man comes into his glory. A glory that shall be its 'restoration of its original innocence and immortality'. cf. pp.185–186.
6. Com. on Romans 8:21; Inst. 3, 25, 11; Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine*, p.186. Any attempt to delve into the needless and endless questions as related to the how, what and why of the coming new earth and man's new humanity, is rejected by Calvin. Calvin says that what was of importance was not our having a comprehensive awareness of what and how this new state shall operate, but rather that we understand our relationship to God who is both our foundation and our means of enjoyment of this new transformed plant, 'we can enjoy the former only in God'.
7. Com. on Romans 8:19–21; Isaiah 65:25; Hebrews 2:5–6.
8. Com. on Isaiah 66:22; II Corinthians 5:17.
9. Com. on Hebrews 12:22; Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine*, p.164. The new earth will see the perfect justice of God's kingdom prevailing throughout the whole earth.
10. Berkouwer, *Return*, pp.233–234. The 'not yet' of the New Testament does not represent a threat to the earth's future hope, but is there to increase our expectation; 'the new earth is never a strange and futuristic fantasy, but a mystery that penetrates into this existence and will make itself manifest there, where steadfast love and faithfulness meet, where righteousness and peace kiss each other (Psalm 85:10), and where the lines that seem blurred to us now will come clearly into focus'.
11. Com. on Hebrews 2:5, 6; cf. T.F. Torrance, *Kingdom*, p.121; Holwerda, *Exploring*, p.135, cf. p.136. Clearly the basis for the renovation of the world, for Calvin, is founded in the kingdom of God and thus Christ as the head of that kingdom, for it is in the kingdom that the re-ordering of all things is to be found; outside of Christ's kingdom is only to be found confusion and disorder. The first step toward world renewal is found in the present world and the believer's renewal to the image of God, by way of the Holy spirit. The second step will be the actual renewal of the physical world at the consummation.
12. Com. on Daniel 2:28.
13. Com. on John 13:31; cf. T.F. Torrance, *Kingdom*, p.115; T.F. Torrance, *Calvin's*, pp.49–50.
14. Com. on Hebrews 7:17; John 12:31; T.F. Torrance, *Kingdom*, pp.115, 120, 121.
15. Com. on I Peter 4:7; Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine*, p.183. Transformation of either this earth or man is only to be found within the close of this aeon at Christ's return. The present condition of earth and man is one of change due to their mortality. Christ's reign is one that is perpetual, this necessitates a radical change for both the earth and man that they may be a part of this kingdom; Berkouwer, *Return*, p.231. This change is not a gradual change but a change through a crisis.
16. Com. on Hebrews 2:5, 6.
17. Com. on I Peter 4:7; cf. II Peter 3:4; Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine*, pp.183–184. Man is only fooling himself if he believes in the never-ending existence of the earth and life on earth due to the longevity of the earth and history.
18. Com. on I John 12:31; Holwerda, *Exploring*, pp.124, 126. Calvin saw the renovation of the earth as related to the present in Christ who has brought in the world's renewal, but Calvin also saw the renovation of the earth as related to the future. The renewal is present in operation but will not be completed until Satan's opposing reign is vanquished. The renewal is then an event that is already having

its realization in Christ, but at the same time it is an event that is not yet but rather looks to its ushering in at the consummation (p.124). This is why we can speak of the believer 'sharing in the already, yet hidden, renovation of the world which some day will become fully visible'. p.126, cf. p.134.

19. Com. on II Peter 3:7, 10.
20. II Peter 3:10; Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine*, p.184. The renewal of the earth is similar to that of man's resurrection, its essence remains the same but its character is entirely altered. God is going to transform the earth and man, not destroy them; Berkouwer, *Return*, p.221. For Calvin the catastrophe of fire at the end of the age is a cleansing and not an annihilation, the earth's substance shall remain the same but after the judgment it shall have a new quality.
21. Com. on II Peter 3:10; Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine*, pp.184–185. Eschatological statements are not mere data meant to fill our cognitive being. For Calvin, they serve a much more important function of exhortation to personal renewal in the light of the coming eschatological age; Berkouwer, *Return*, p.222. For Calvin the Bible, in telling us of the coming 'passing away' in fire of heaven and earth, was not given that we might have a full understanding of that particular topic per se, but rather such knowledge is meant, says Calvin, to help motivate us to strive to newness of life. Berkouwer goes on to say that when the Bible uses apocalyptic imagery of the end of the world passing in fire, the Bible is trying to show the believer that as a part of God's overall redemptive work there is a place for a new heaven and earth, pp.230–231.
22. Berkouwer, *Return*, p.212. This renewal will bring nature back into harmony with itself.
23. Com. on Isaiah 65:17, 25; cf. C.G. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10 vols. trans. S. Taylor, et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 7:488.
24. Com. on Matthew 22:30.
25. Inst. 3, 25, 11; Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine*, p.186. This ultimate goal of a perfected earth and a perfected man is the glory of God Himself. 'The final purpose of the eternal consummation of the cosmos together with that of the church is that there may be universal praise to God. Nothing is asserted here (Revelation 5:13) but that the various parts of the world from the heights of heaven to the centre of the earth should in their way proclaim the honour of the Creator, "the end of the glorification of man and the world is the glory of God"'.
26. Inst. 3, 25, 11.
27. Ibid.
28. D. Guthrie, Theology, p.885. Guthrie questions whether this is to be taken literally or if it should instead be taken as a 'material interpretation of the heavenly state'; T.D.N.T. (1964–1976), s.v. 'earth'. "New heaven and new earth is merely the older way of denoting what is meant by in terms of the concept namely, the future world of eschatological expectation", cf. 5:515–516; Hoekema, *The Bible*, pp.274–275. Either way we need to keep in mind, as Hoekema says, that this doctrine is important for a proper grasp of the full dimensions of God's redemptive programme and for a proper understanding of Old Testament prophecy.
29. W. Sandy and A.C. Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2nd ed. in *The International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896), p.207. The return of Messiah and the redeemed at the resurrection, the revealing of the sons of God, is for the earth the signal of the bringing in of its transformation; Whiteley, *Theology*, p.250. The resurrection of the body and the transformation of the earth will be similar in nature and take place simultaneously. The eschatological change finding its foundation in the soteriological event. The lowly state of the earth and the humble body shall be raised from 'death' displaying God's power; cf. Sandy, Headlam, *Romans*, p.207; Williams, *True Resurrection*, p.20.
30. Shedd, *Romans*, p.251.

31. *Ibid.*, p.253.
32. *Ibid.*, p.254; J.L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, vol. 20 of *The Anchor Bible* (Grand City: Doubleday, 1968), p.201. The restoration of the corrupted earth will be a reverting to its original state; cf. Sandy and Headlam, *Romans*, pp.211–212.
33. Shedd, *Romans*, p.251; T. Mills,, *Angels*, p.371. The earth was meant to be man's home; Hoekema, *The Bible*, p.282. Not only does man look forward to the new earth but the world also looks forward to being delivered at the time of the resurrection and glorification of the saint. The world is suffering under the weight of a curse which shall only be lifted at the time of renewal.
34. Idem, *Theology*, 2:665; Berkouwer, *Return*, p.219. For a discussion on why the earth will not be annihilated see pp.219–255. Cf. 231; Hoekema, *The Bible*, pp.280–281. Gives four reasons why the world is not headed to an annihilated state; T. Mills, *Angels*, pp.375–376. The goal to which the world is going is not annihilation, but rather that a changing of condition out of which shall come a new heaven and earth that is suited to the new glorified state of 'the children of the resurrection', cf. pp.376–395.
35. Shedd, *Romans*, p.252, cf. 257.
36. *Ibid.*, p.253; Sandy and Headlam, *Romans*, p.210. We may find the root idea of man living in a renovated heaven and earth connected to the Old Testament expectation of the future Messianic age. Note the passage in Isaiah 65:17–25 where the future age is portrayed, cf. pp.210–212.
37. *Ibid.*, p.256; cf. Shedd, *Theology*, 2:665; J. Gill, *Body of*, 2:262–268; Keil and Delitzsch, *O.T. Commentary*, 7:488; Kunneth, *Resurrection*, p.288f; E. Brunner, *Eternal Hope*, trans. H. Knight (London: Lutterworth, 1954), pp.202–203. What the new heaven and earth shall be like is not really known by us. For the present time all we need to know is that there will be a world. In this connexion the dictum of F.C. Oetinger has often been quoted with approval: 'The end of the ways of God is corporeality'. In fact this saying enshrines a decisive Biblical 'motif', namely, that even the consummation does not mean the cancellation of creatureliness, of the dialogue between Creator and creature, but rather its perfecting. p.203.
38. Idem, *Theology*, 1:534; T. Mills, *Angels*, pp.376–377. The time of the renewal of heaven and earth, says Mills, is when the believer meets the Lord in the air (I Thessalonians 4:16) at His return. 'The interval of destruction and of the new creation may be brief; for though natural processes are slow, the supernatural are not necessarily the work of time.'
39. Idem, *Romans*, p.258; K. Schilder, *Heaven What It It?* trans. M.M. Schooland (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), pp.70–71. The Bible speaks of a renewed earth, not an annihilated earth and thus the coming of another earth. The coming change is drastic and will result in the change of the present order and scheme of the universe. The elements will be dissolved not being able to resist the raging fire. 'But dissolution does not mean annihilation'. Then renewed earth is not a creation where God shall, as in the beginning, call things into existence out of nothing, ex nihilo. The new earth, like the resurrection body, shall be totally different, its 'becoming' has ended, its growth completed, it will be new and glorious, being the dwelling place of the new humanity. The earth's 'newness' shall result in it being unrecognizable; 'and yet, although we shall not *recognize* the old earth, we shall by insight know it to be the old one, the earth upon which the Son of God was crucified, where He broke the bonds of death victoriously and brought immortality to light.' E. Brunner, *Hope*, p.204. The 'form' of the earth, its make-up, its physical characteristics in its new form will not be like that of its present form, beyond this we cannot say what order it shall have.
40. *Ibidem* p.258.
41. M. Green, *The Second Epistle General of Peter and The General Epistle of Jude* in *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), p.141. 'We have no means whatever of conceiving what a resurrection body or

what a restored universe will be like. Those who think they can map out a detailed progamme of what will happen at the second coming should remember that despite the prophecies of Scripture, nobody got the details of the first coming right!'

42. Com. on Luke 23:43.
43. Com. on II Corinthians 12:4.
44. Com. on Romans 6:4.
45. Com. on Hebrews 3:3.
46. Inst. 3, 25, 12.
47. Com. on Isaiah 30:33; F. Wendel, *Calvin*, pp.288–289. Heaven is spoken of as being where we shall be in glory, in the fullness of light, joy and felicity. Precisely what heaven is like has not been revealed to man. Thus we are left with the future heavenly state spoken of in images. The glorified life must wait for the coming of Christ who will show us of what the celestial condition shall consist.
48. Com. on I Matthew 20:22; cf. I Timothy 1:7; F. Wendel, *Calvin*, p.285. Calvin has followed his own advice and has refrained from writing about the last things, heaven and hell, in a sensational manner.
49. Com. on I Timothy 1:7.
50. Com. on Acts 23:8.
51. Com. on Colossians 1:5; cf. Titus 2:13; Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine*, pp.22–23. Heaven is for the believer a hope of reality in Christ regardless of our present life, for the present cannot alter our future heavenly reality. The basis of this sure hope of reality is found in the union that exists between the Christ, the Son of God, and the believer as a son of God. The fullness of this reality is not entered into in this life, real as it presently is, but is kept for us until we enter heaven; cf. F. Wendel, *Calvin*, p.286.
52. Inst. 3, 25,1.
53. F. Wendel, *Calvin*, pp.251–252. For Calvin, eschatology, meditation on the future life, was not an end in itself. 'Meditation upon the future life is to complete the renunciation of self and perfect the cross that is imposed upon the Christian, by making him feel on his pulses the vanity of earthly things. Thus he will have no hesitation in following Christ and detaching himself from the grip in which even the best are held by this world.' Meditating on the eternal future life serves the purpose of freeing us from this present but temporal world.
54. Com. on Colossians 3:1; Inst. 1, 15, 16; T.F. Torrance, *Kingdom*, p.103. Christ's ascension to heaven is 'of supreme importance in all Calvin's theology' as that event reopened heaven to man, Adam's sin having closed heaven to man. Man can now look forward to heaven since the enfleshed Christ has entered the celestial state given us, as it were, as a present possession of heaven and not just as a futuristic hope. We, through Christ, possess heaven even now (p.103). As we wait for this positional reality to come about we are to exercise faith in the warfare of the present Christian life (p.122); and this in spite of the outward appearance of the church before the world, for the believer's 'fixed seat' is in heaven (p.125); Holwerda, *Exploring*, p.125. Christ's ascension is the unifying point of His advent and return. He is now in heaven, only there can we look to Him and His return. Christ in whom the kingdom has been finalized, and in whom shall the heavenly state be brought into its visible manifestation at His coming, is our hope of the eschatological completion, as He was the hope of renovation at His advent, cf. p.127.
55. Com. on Colossians 1:5.
56. Com. on I Thessalonians 1:3.
57. Inst. 3, 25, 3.
58. Com. on II Corinthians 5:4; cf. II Corinthians 5:6; 4:16; Holwerda, *Exploring*, p.115. Man's main activity in this life is to meditate, to aspire after heaven (p.115). Our future is with the Lord in heaven, who is there even now, thus we are to give ourselves over to that world and not this terrestrial one (p.119); W. Niesel,

Theology, p.151. For Calvin, his teaching on meditation on the future life rather than our emphasizing this life was not meant to imply a despising of this world in itself.

59. Com. on I Corinthians 15:3.
60. F. Wendel, *Calvin*, p.285. There is, for Calvin, an important connexion between the future life and the present life. The believer is able in some measure to partake of the heavenly life by hope and faith now, by means of meditation upon that life which is ours to come.
61. Inst. 3, 25, 10; Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine*, p.176. All believers shall share equally in the blessedness of the eternal state, but the glory which each individual shall have shall differ. This is not due to any partiality on God's part due to the individual having been of more personal importance, but is rather based on the the different gifts which the Holy Spirit has given to different people in this present age, cf. p.174; Martensen, *Dogmatics*, p.486. These spiritual gifts, which have been used for developing the church here on earth in our service to God, may possibly continue in the next age after having gone through some metamorphosis as we continue to serve Him.
62. Inst. 3, 25, 10.
63. Inst. 2, 16, 16; cf. Hebrews 6:19; Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine*, p.66. Redemption has made heaven once again a possibility for man, and yet man's relationship to heaven does not originate in redemption but in man's original creation which was directed toward the heavenly life. Man's religious nature is an indication of our having been created to aspire to the heavenly life. Our most pressing goal in this present life is that we should aim at the heavenly life, that is 'coming nearer to God'; F. Wendel, *Calvin*, p.348; C.A.M. Hall, *Spirit's Sword*, pp.99–100.
64. Com. on Hebrews 8:1.
65. Com. on Ephesians 1:20, 21; T.F. Torrance, *Kingdom*, p.137. Heaven will lack the temporary earthly distinctions that separate 'king' from 'servant'. Even angels, in the final state, shall no longer be 'principalities' as God alone shall exercise His power and rule by Himself, and not by angels or men, cf. p.138.
66. Com. on Isaiah 66:1; cf. Matthew 5:34.
67. Com. on Matthew 6:9.
68. Com. on II Corinthians 5:6; cf. Inst. 3, 9, 5; Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine*, p.56. The future glory of heaven is such, for Calvin, that even physical death is to be looked forward to rather than feared, as is the case with the lost person, for death opens heaven and its glories to us, cf. pp.58–59; Holwerda, *Exploring*, p.119. The peace of the kingdom is entered into at death for the believer; C.A.M. Hall, *Spirit's Sword*, pp.111–112. One reason why Calvin sees death in a positive light is that Christ in His death has taken away the fear of death, having endured it for us.
68. Com. on II Corinthians 12:3; cf. Berkouwer, *Return*, p.371.
69. Com. on II Corinthians 12:2; T.F. Torrance, *Kingdom*, pp.133–134. 'It is with that in mind that Calvin says that the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God denote the *new condition of the Church*, for the church and the Kingdom are essentially correlative'.
70. Com. on John 14:2, cf. I Peter 1:5; Ephesians 4:10; Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine*, pp.171–174. The consummation, heaven, is essentially the blessedness, the felicity, the heavenly glory which is the crown of Christ's redemptive dealing(s) with man. Man shall have reached his aim in life, coming near to God. He will now be in a state of eternal communion with God, p.171. Such communion is fellowship in the fullest sense, a 'naked vision' of God, in which we shall 'taste the perfect joy of His presence'. We shall have fellowship with God, enjoying His love, glory, power, happiness and righteousness, p.173. As a direct result of this communion the believer is transformed; not partially transformed, but entirely transformed and that like unto the divine in body and soul. Heaven for the believer is a state of being like their Head for we shall resemble Him, for Christ has not reserved His glory for Himself alone but imparts it to the whole body of

believers, pp.171–172. That this perfect vision of God is complete fellowship with God is not to imply that there is no longer any difference between God and man, man having become one with God, but rather that the creator-creature relationship is a person-to-person confrontation, instead of the present relationship by 'signs and symbols', p.173.

72. Inst. 3, 25, 5.
73. Com. on Matthew 8:11.
74. Com. on Matthew 22:30; Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine*, p.175. With man changing his state from one of mortal to immortal this will end the need for the continuance of the the human race by means of marriage and the sexual union. Thus in this respect man shall be like the angels, non-sexual. This does not refer to a deliberate effort on man's part of self-denial of his sexuality but that man shall be asexual.
75. Com. on I Corinthians 15:31; cf. II Timothy 2:10.