

Part Three:
The Holy Spirit

The Spirit in Bezalel (Exodus 31:3)

When we as students arrived in Kampen, the chair in diaconiology was vacant until the arrival of Dr. Trimp the following year. For that reason we still numbered among his students, for which I am thankful. Over the course of the years, I have often re-consulted this lecture material. Remarkably, after I sustained the classical examination and became a candidate for the ministry, the contact between us only increased. I say remarkably because I did not pursue further studies in diaconiology, but in Prof. Trimp's first choice, dogmatics. Our discussions and correspondence often touched on redemptive-historical preaching and on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, bound as we were by calling and interest. For this Festschrift I would like to offer Prof. Trimp a flower from the many-coloured bouquet that is the work of the Spirit.

From dogmatics...

In *Institutes* 2.2 on the results of sin, Calvin devoted special attention to the work of the Spirit in Bezalel. First, he posits that humanity is completely corrupt (§1–11). This does not mean, however, that man is no longer man. He still has the gifts of knowledge and understanding, of art and science (§12–14). This leads Calvin to ask how it is possible that the human race, which is totally corrupt, can still accomplish so much in science and in art. He answers that people are still endowed with many excellent gifts. According to Calvin, these gifts are from the Holy Spirit:

Meanwhile, we ought not to forget those most excellent benefits of the

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divine Spirit, which he distributes to whomever he wills, for the common good of mankind. The understanding and knowledge of Bezalel and Oholiab, needed to construct the Tabernacle, had to be instilled in them by the Spirit of God [Ex. 31:2–11; 35:30–35]. It is no wonder, then, that the knowledge of all that is most excellent in human life is said to be communicated to us through the Spirit of God.¹

The position taken by Calvin has important implications. For the doctrine of the Holy Spirit it means that the Spirit is more than the Spirit of sanctification, as he also operates outside of the circle of believers in all those who have a special measure of knowledge or artistic skill. Another important consequence relates to the life of the believers in this world. Should they neglect art and the sciences, they would be spurning the gifts of the Spirit and be punished for that by God. Calvin does, of course, acknowledge and take into account that these gifts are often misused.

In Calvin's argument, the two passages in Exodus concerning Bezalel and Oholiab take a central place (Ex. 31:2–11; 35:30–35). It is first of all on them that Calvin bases his conclusion that science and art are gifts from the Spirit. He also mentions other texts in his exposition, such as the Spirit of the Lord coming upon the leaders of Israel as recounted in Judges (e.g. Judg. 6:34), upon Saul's valiant men (1 Sam. 10:26), Saul himself (1 Sam. 10:6), and on David (1 Sam. 16:13).²

In Calvin's commentary on Exodus 31:2–11 we can find a very similar picture.³ The same transition is made from the particular to the general, from Bezalel to all artists: "Still, although the call of Bezaleel was special, because...God entrusted to him an unusual and by no means ordinary work, we gather that no one excels even in the most despised and humble handicraft, except in so far as God's Spirit works in him."

Compared to the *Institutes*, one new element is the reference to 1 Corinthians 12:4: "Nor is this only the case with respect to the spiritual gifts which follow regeneration, but in all the branches of knowledge which

¹ J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (2 vols.; ed. J. T. McNeill; trans. F. L. Battles; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) 2.2.16.

² Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.17. Remarkably, Calvin here also refers to Homer. This subsection forms the end to this part of Calvin's argument, and in 2.2.18 he again returns to the main theme of human corruption.

³ *Calvini Opera*, 25.57–59. The translation has been taken from J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses, Arranged in the Form of a Harmony* (trans. C. W. Bingham; Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1854; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 3.291.

come into use in common life.”⁴ Calvin appears here not to set himself against the same view as in the *Institutes*. He is contesting not so much the neglect of the gifts, as a kind of dualism which would suggest that our means of existence come partly from nature and God, and partly from human effort. According to Calvin, a person can only do his or her work on account of God’s gifts. Because the gifts received by us are to be attributed to God’s fatherly care, we must thank him for them.

The view that human gifts of knowledge and art derive from the Spirit of God became an integral part of Calvin’s theology. Numerous times in his commentaries and sermons—when the text itself makes no mention of it—does Calvin emphasize that people owe their abilities to the Holy Spirit.⁵

Abraham Kuyper built on this notion in one of his most voluminous works, *Het werk van den Heiligen Geest* (‘The Work of the Holy Spirit’). In his treatment of creation, Kuyper speaks also about talents and gifts. He remarks: “Separate attention must yet be devoted to the work of the Holy Spirit in and on our *talents, gifts and abilities* in both *vocation [ambacht]* and *office [ambt]*.”⁶

The passage concerning Bezalel and Oholiab is then also the first text to be treated, and rather extensively at that, in order to illustrate what Kuyper means in terms of “vocation.” Kuyper emphatically points out that this work of the Spirit is not limited to one or two persons: “This work of the Holy Spirit on talent for artistic work is extended by Holy Scripture to *all workers*,” and as proof he points to Exodus 31:6.⁷

According to Kuyper, this work of the Holy Spirit is not limited to a particular time period, either. After illustrating how the Spirit works in judges (=vocation) and kings (=office), he draws the following conclusion:

And if we pull together what Scripture teaches us about Bezalel and

⁴ This is an element that is absent from Calvin’s commentary on 1 Cor. 12:4.

⁵ See the survey of Calvin’s commentaries on this point in Simon van der Linde, *De leer van den Heiligen Geest bij Calvijn* (Wageningen: Veenman & Zonen, 1943) 50–51; this list was supplemented by material from Calvin’s sermons in Werner Krusche, *Das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes nach Calvin* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957) 95ff., 102ff.

⁶ Abraham Kuyper, *Het werk van den Heiligen Geest* (3 vols.; Amsterdam: Wormser, 1888) 1.47. [Translator’s note: The English *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (trans. Henri de Vries; New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1900) suffers from a number of inaccuracies which make it unsuitable for use in this article. All citations have been newly translated from the Dutch.]

⁷ Kuyper, *Het werk van den Heiligen Geest*, 1.48.

Oholiab, about Othniel and Samson, about Saul and David, about Cyrus and Zerubbabel, it must be concluded that there is indeed a separate work of the Holy Spirit that shines in every *vocation* and in every *office*, and that a work of the Holy Spirit is for that reason to be honoured in every special talent or in every higher genius through which it is given to some to stand out in special measure in their *vocation* or *office*.⁸

Kuyper does not speak as explicitly as Calvin about the knowledge and skill of unbelievers, but the fourfold repetition of the word “every” makes it clear that Kuyper does not differ from Calvin on this point. Yet the quotation above still does show that Kuyper’s emphasis is somewhat different.

Calvin’s goal is practical. His point is that Christians must not neglect the accomplishments of unbelievers in the field of science and art. They are, after all, gifts of the Spirit. In using them, we are rather to honour him. This emphasis is absent in what Kuyper writes. His goal is more theoretical. He wants to show that all of God’s work, also in creation, is Trinitarian:

It is a specification of the divine work that, just as with creation, is to be understood in this way: also the talents and gifts of office and vocation do indeed have their *origin from* the Father and are *sent through* the Son to the personal disposition of each person, but as they are now *in* every person they have been set on fire through a spark from above by an operation of the Holy Spirit.⁹

At the end of this chapter Kuyper adds another surprise. This work of the Holy Spirit concerns not only the call to science and art, but also renewal: “And for that reason there is at work in the operation of the Holy Spirit in Bezalel and Oholiab, in Othniel and Samson, in Saul and David, something other than skill and talent and consciousness of calling; there is also a marvellous restoration and a sanctification of what sin has defiled.”¹⁰

What Kuyper writes here makes his position rather precarious, for there are now two possibilities. The first is that humanity, understood generally and as those outside of the circle of the people of God, receives artistic gifts through the Holy Spirit as well as the sanctification needed for

⁸ Kuyper, *Het werk van den Heiligen Geest*, 1.49.

⁹ Kuyper, *Het werk van den Heiligen Geest*, 1.49. This thought is then further developed on pp. 50–52. Remarkably, the work of the Son is not referred to separately anymore. Did Kuyper sense that he was falling into speculation already here? The Holy Spirit and calling are connected as follows: “And because the Holy Spirit is now the one who ignites the spark of light in his personality, the Holy Spirit also determines the personal calling of everyone for their vocation and office,” 1.52.

¹⁰ Kuyper, *Het werk van de Heiligen Geest*, 1.53.

that purpose. Yet this would mean that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and renews apart from Christ's work of grace. The second possibility is that this sanctifying and renewing work of the Holy Spirit takes place only among the people of God. Yet in that case Bezalel and Oholiab can no longer be used as an example of the general gift of the Holy Spirit for all those who have a vocation or office. In order to solve this problem, Kuyper later found a solution in the notion of "common grace."¹¹

Calvin and Kuyper gained both adherents and opponents in the attention they gave to this work of the Holy Spirit. Hendrikus Berkhof followed them in the lectures he gave in the United States on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit: "The Spirit of God also inspires man's *culture*. The Old Testament connects him with agriculture, architecture, jurisdiction, and politics (Cyrus as God's anointed one!). In general all human wisdom is the gift of God's Spirit." For architecture Berkhof refers specifically to Exodus 31:3 and 35:31.¹²

In his book on the Holy Spirit, Edwin H. Palmer devotes one chapter to the Spirit and creation. In the attention he gives to the Trinity rather than to the use of the gifts of unbelievers, he shows himself more a follower of Kuyper than of Calvin.¹³ He comes back to this in the next chapter when he argues that the Holy Spirit also gives to non-Christians intellectual abilities, technological skills, artistic gifts, and other abilities. Remarkable about Palmer's exposition is the fact that he does follow the tradition of Calvin and Kuyper, yet departs from that tradition in omitting a reference to Bezalel and Oholiab. The only example he mentions is Cyrus, the Lord's anointed (cf. Isa. 45:1).¹⁴

Yet, this is not as remarkable as it may first seem. From the entire list of texts traditionally appealed to, Palmer has kept the only one that explicitly concerns an unbeliever. It would seem, therefore, that Palmer found it difficult to use Bezalel and Oholiab as an example of the common distribution of gifts by the Holy Spirit since these men were part of the people of God.

¹¹ See the three-volume *De gemeene gratie* (3rd ed.; Kampen: Kok, 1932). Here the example of Bezalel and Oholiab is referred to only in a different context; cf. Kuyper, *Het werk van de Heiligen Geest*, 3.432–33.

¹² Hendrikus Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (2nd ed.; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976) 95–96, and 126 n. 6.

¹³ Edwin H. Palmer, *The Holy Spirit: His Person and Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958; repr., Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1984) 19ff.

¹⁴ Palmer, *The Holy Spirit*, 38.

Palmer's implicit hesitancy is expressed as explicit criticism in Werner Krusche. He questions whether Scripture really does speak of gifts of the Spirit distributed commonly to the human race. He does not mean to deny in this way that the Spirit works also among unbelievers in the providence of the triune God. Yet he points out that the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in connection with the prototypes of cultural activity, namely, Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-Cain. On the other hand, where the Spirit *is* mentioned (e.g. Bezalel and Oholiab) it concerns men who belong to God's people.¹⁵

Jelle Faber followed and expanded this criticism. According to him, the problem is not only that Bezalel and Oholiab are not unbelievers but of the tribes of Judah and Dan, but also that they received their gifts for a specific purpose. After all, it concerned the preparation for God's dwelling-place among the people of Israel.¹⁶

A. N. Hendriks likewise agreed with this criticism. It is indeed true that the Holy Spirit endowed men with skill and artistic insight in order to be able to complete the great task of the construction of the tabernacle. Yet Hendriks also argues that "Calvin makes a rather easy transition from Bezalel and Oholiab to the human race. Bezalel and Oholiab were in a special situation and were powerfully equipped with the Holy Spirit for a very special purpose."¹⁷ He also considers it unwarranted for Calvin to have referred to all kinds of sciences as "gifts of the Spirit." Not only does Scripture not speak in this way, it also tends to undermine the effect of sin on science. In the final analysis, however, Hendriks does end up standing with Calvin. After referring to Exodus 31:3 and Job 32:8, he writes: "It is the Spirit of God who causes men to discover truth, adorns them with artistic ability, and makes them capable of great accomplishments."¹⁸

In his book on the Holy Spirit, L. Floor again shows himself to be fully in the Calvin-Kuyper-Berkhof line when he writes: "The Old Testament connects the Holy Spirit with agriculture (Isa. 28:26), the architecture of the tabernacle (Ex. 31:3), the administration of justice (Num. 11:17) and politics (Isa. 45:1-5)."¹⁹

¹⁵ Krusche, *Das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes*, 123.

¹⁶ Jelle Faber, "Kosmisch geesteswerk," *De Reformatie* 35 (1959-1960) 277-278. Faber here also reacts to later speculations concerning the anointing to office with the Holy Spirit for all people.

¹⁷ A. N. Hendriks, *Die Here is en levend maakt. Schriftstudies over de Heilige Geest en zijn werk* (Kampen: Van den Berg, 1984) 15.

¹⁸ Hendriks, *Die Here is en levend maakt*, 17.

¹⁹ L. Floor, *Persoon en werk van de Heilige Geest* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1988) 13.

To summarize the survey above, it would appear that in spite of criticism Calvin's view that artistic gifts in general derive from the Holy Spirit is being maintained.

...by way of exegesis...

From a look at the commentaries, however, one does not get the impression that Exodus 31:3 is important in any special context. While this text may well have been overemphasized in dogmatics, in exegesis it has certainly been overly neglected. Martin Noth, for one, treats only two issues in connection with this passage: whether the passage is authentic or represents a later addition, and the meaning of the names.²⁰ Moreover, a more recent commentary like that of John I. Durham (1987), which precedes every pericope treated with a bibliography, does not list any special literature on Exodus 31:1–11.²¹

Before we consider whether or not Calvin and Kuyper made proper use of this text, we would do well first to gain a good grasp of the context. The end of Exodus 24 notes that Moses went up to God and remained with him for forty days and that during this time God gave Moses instructions. These instructions pertained particularly to the sanctuary that was to be built in order that God might live in the midst of the nation of Israel. God gives careful instructions as to how the final product of the tabernacle, its layout, and even the priestly garments, should look (Ex. 25:10–30:38). He goes so far as to give Moses a pattern, and impresses on him that everything must be made according to this pattern (Ex. 25:9, 40). Then, in the passage about Bezalel and Oholiab (Ex. 31:1–11), God specifically appoints those who are to carry out the work. This passage thus forms

Since in what follows I will deal only with Ex. 31:3, it seems fitting at this point to make several brief remarks on the other texts. Isa. 28:26 does not mention the Spirit, but only God. Isa. 45:1–5 merely calls Cyrus the “anointed”; one wonders whether it is justified to base a special gift of the Spirit on this passage. Further, the general concepts of “administration of justice” and “politics” are not proven from Num. 11:17 and Isa. 45:1–5.

²⁰ Martin Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary* (Old Testament Library; trans. J. S. Bowden; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962) 239–240. Virtually the same treatment of this text can also be found in Gerardus te Stroete, *Exodus* (De boeken van het Oude Testament; Roermond and Maaseik: Romen, 1966) 214.

²¹ John I. Durham, *Exodus* (Word Biblical Commentary; Waco: Word Books, 1987) 409.

a fitting end to the instructions given to Moses concerning the tabernacle.²²

The first question that needs to be addressed is whether Calvin and Kuyper were correct in speaking about the *Holy Spirit* in this text. The expression found here, the “s/Spirit of God,” is a word pair that occurs 21 times in the Old Testament.²³ Aside from the text we are dealing with and in Genesis 1:2, this phrase is used for the evil spirit that came upon Saul (1 Sam. 16:15–16, 23; 18:10), the breath of life that God gives (Job 27:3; 33:4) and for the Spirit who gives prophetic gifts and practical wisdom to Joseph (Gen. 41:38), Balaam (Num. 24:2), Saul (1 Sam. 10:10; 11:6; 19:20, 23), Azariah (2 Chron. 15:1), Zechariah (2 Chron. 14:20) and Daniel (Dan. 4:8–9, 18; 5:11, 14). This is already a clear indication that the expression does not always have the same meaning, and that it must be determined in each case who or what is being referred to. What is clear, at any rate, is that the addition “of God” shows that the s/Spirit comes from God.

According to J. H. Scheepers, one cannot understand Exodus 31:3 as a reference to the Holy Spirit. “Spirit of God” does not mean the spirit that supplies a special gift, but it is the special gift itself. Scheepers thus translates the verse as follows: “I have filled him...with a divine spirit: with wisdom and insight and knowledge and every skill.” “Spirit” means something like “ability.”²⁴

²² The only passage that follows is a further explanation of the Sabbath commandment (Ex. 31:12–18) before Moses comes down from the mountain and sees that the people have begun worshipping the golden calf.

²³ R. Albertz and Claus Westermann, “*ruab, spirit*,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (3 vols.; ed. E. Jenni and Claus Westermann; trans. Mark E. Biddle; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997) 3.1213. The word pair occurs sixteen times in Hebrew, and another five times in Aramaic. The intention here is not to give a full overview of the use of this expression; in that case, also such expressions as “my s/Spirit” and “his s/Spirit” would have to be considered.

²⁴ Johannes H. Scheepers, *Die gees van God en die gees van die mens in die Ou Testament* (Kampen: Kok, 1960) 103–104. He comes back to this point on p. 232, where he argues that his translation depends on the fact that the Hebrew preposition *be* can mean “consisting in,” referring to Wilhelm Gesenius and Emil Kautsch, *Hebraische Grammatik* (28th ed.; Leipzig: Vogel, 1909) §119.i. Scheepers also takes other examples from this grammar (Gen. 7:21; 9:10; Hos. 4:3) to prove that the Hebrew *be* can mean “consisting in.” However, as Gesenius and Kautsch itself notes, in these texts it concerns collective concepts, which is even more clear from the addition of “all.” This is not the case in Ex. 31:3. For that reason Scheepers is also not justified in appealing to this paragraph in Gesenius and Kautsch in order to defend his translation.

There are, however, a number of arguments against the identification of the “s/Spirit of God” with “wisdom.” In the first place, in the other cases in the Bible where the expression “s/Spirit of God” occurs, it concerns not a spirit that *is* something (here: wisdom), but a spirit that *does* something. In most cases, it is the Spirit who brings about prophecy and wisdom. One such example is found in Numbers 24:2–3: “And the Spirit of God came upon him [Balaam] and he uttered his oracle.”²⁵

A second argument is based on the last of the four-word series, which is commonly translated as “craft” or “craftsmanship.” Scheepers translates it with “skill.” However, a look at a dictionary will reveal that the word should rather be understood as “work” or “labour”; the same is true several verses later, in Exodus 31:5.²⁶ Scheepers of course cannot use this meaning for then the “s/Spirit of God” would be identical to “work.” The natural definition of this word as found in Gesenius-Buhl can be maintained, however, if we understand “s/Spirit of God” as the Spirit who works in the wisdom, etc., of Bezalel. This passage then means that the Spirit of God is active in the entire process from design to execution.

A possible objection to this view could be raised on the basis of Exodus 28:3, where God says to Moses: “Tell all the skilled men to whom I have given a spirit of wisdom in such matters that they are to make garments for Aaron....” Would this not lend support to the consideration that

²⁵ The situation is different in Gen. 1:2 and Job 27:3; 33:4. However, these texts do not support the view that “Spirit of God” could point to an ability or capacity either. When the term “Spirit of God” is understood as the Spirit who produces something, the preposition *be* in Ex. 31:3 keeps its usual local function as indicating that in which the presence and work of the Spirit is apparent.

²⁶ Scheepers argues that the word means “*dit waarmee werk uitgevoerd word*,” noting the construction of the word (*Die gees van God*, 103 n. 33). More important, however, is the *actual* use, as is also suggested in the dictionaries. Wilhelm Gesenius and Frants Buhl, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das alte Testament* (Berlin: Springer, 1962) gives the meaning “Arbeit” for *mel’akah*, but also gives Ex. 31:5; 35:5, and 1 Kings 7:14 as examples for “Handwerk und Kunstgewerbe.” For Ex. 31:3 he provides a special meaning: “Fertigkeit im Arbeiten.” This modification does bring the word closer in meaning to the other three, but it is not necessary. In the English translation of this dictionary, Ex. 31:3, 5; 35:29, and other texts are all combined under the definition “workmanship”; see Wilhelm Gesenius, Edward Robinson and Francis Brown, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968 [reprint of 1909 ed.]) 522. See also Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (5 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000) 2.586: “handiwork, craftsmanship.”

also in Exodus 31:3 the “s/Spirit of God” must be understood as the gift of wisdom?²⁷ However, these two texts from Exodus must not be conflated. Even if in Exodus 28:3 “spirit of wisdom” means nothing but the gift of wisdom, this does not have anything to say about the “s/Spirit of God” in Exodus 31:3, for the two are not the same. After all, the two are distinguished in Exodus 31. God says that he has given all craftsmanship: “in the hearts of all who are skilful I have placed wisdom” (Ex. 31:6; translation mine, NHG). Yet in addition to this, Bezalel *also* receives the “s/Spirit of God” for all the work.

One could conclude that “s/Spirit of God” does not refer to a gift of wisdom, but to a s/Spirit who works in and with the wisdom as well as with all the labour of Bezalel. The text itself provides no answer as to whether or not the Holy Spirit is here in view. On the basis of this text alone, this cannot be proven, but neither does it contain an argument that would argue to the contrary. In view of the further revelation in the Old and New Testament concerning the Holy Spirit,²⁸ there is no objection to seeing in this passage the work of the Holy Spirit.

This leads us now to consider whether Exodus 31:3 can be used to support the notion that special gifts, in this case craftsmanship, derive from the Holy Spirit. That question must be answered negatively.

In the first place, this text does not say that everyone who has artistic skills has received them from the Holy Spirit. As has been pointed out above, those who receive these skills are not unbelievers. However, we have more to add to this objection, for this text does not even say that *all craftsmen* among the Israelites received their gift from the Holy Spirit. The passage says that only *one* person received the Spirit: “See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God” (Ex. 31:2–3). This is not said of Oholiab, or of the other skilled craftsmen among the Israelites. When Moses passes this command on to the Israelites precisely the same is said (Ex. 35:30–35). Bezalel is appointed as leader, and Oholiab is given to him as his assistant. They must teach the people (Ex. 35:34). All artists and craftsmen work under their supervision. But it is *only* the leader who is filled with the Spirit of God.

Moreover—and this, too, has been pointed out above—the text in Exodus 31 also does not say that *every artistic skill* derives from the Spirit.

²⁷ This is also suggested by Scheepers when he treats Ex. 28:3 and 31:3 together; see *Die gees van God*, 103.

²⁸ See, e.g., H. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (4 vols.; ed. J. Bolt; trans. J. Vriend; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003–2008) 2.277–278.

The endowment with gifts is on the one hand more limited, on the other hand more extensive. It is more limited because it is not a matter of all craftsmanship in general, but specifically the work on the tabernacle. The tabernacle, the place where God wished to dwell in the midst of Israel, was so important to him that he gave the Spirit to Bezalel who was to lead this project. On the other hand, there is more involved here than what we would today understand with “art.” Not only the tabernacle with all its furnishings, but also the priestly garments and the preparation of the oil is included (Ex. 31:10–11). In other words, everything pertaining to the tabernacle must be made under the direction of Bezalel, under the direction of the Spirit.

Finally, it is inaccurate to say that God gives his Spirit for the conception and production of works of art. It should not escape our attention that the artistic works, including the anointing oil, did not have to be conceived or thought up. God had given Moses a pattern (Ex. 25:9, 40) as well as further instructions (Ex. 25:10–30:38). These instructions are so detailed that we today have a fairly clear understanding of how everything must have looked. For what purpose was the Spirit then needed? Exodus 31:6 says that the craftsmen are to make “everything I have commanded you”; and verse 11 is more precise: “They are to make them just as I commanded you [Moses].” The gift of the Spirit is not so much connected with the artistic result as with God’s will for the tabernacle. In its result, the artistic work must fully reveal God’s intention.

That was not so simple. Moses had to pass on the pattern he had seen and the instructions he had received from God. But it was up to the craftsmen to solve all kinds of problems involving design. Yet the final, visible product, in its symbolism had to say much about God. In order to make this possible, God filled the project supervisor with his Spirit who was at work in the design (“skill, wisdom, knowledge”) and in the execution (“work”). The Spirit that filled Bezalel in the making of the tabernacle worked so that the tabernacle matched God’s will down into the smallest details.²⁹

²⁹ Cf. Durham, *Exodus*, 411: “To this end, artisans already both skilled and gifted had their abilities enhanced and were to be guided by an ideal artist, one made wise and practical and facile by Jahweh himself. The resulting Tabernacle and equipment were thus to be the undoubted result of a divine-human partnership, but one which left by divine intention no possibility of a human error or wilful aberration.”

...to liturgics.

In light of the above, we must conclude that the application of Exodus 31:3 to the work of artists in general is a typical case of “exemplarism.”³⁰ Then Exodus 31:3 is seen as an example of the general work of the Spirit in the field of art. And so the general truth that is sought from the text is used and not its specific application. Also in this case it has become clear that justice was not done to the text.

Yet what result does a “redemptive-historical” approach to this text deliver? To answer this question, we must give attention to what is *specific* to this event. The Spirit is here specially given for the preparation of the tabernacle, the meeting place of the Lord and his people. This meeting had in all respects to speak in symbolic language of the way God dealt with his people. This brings us to the field of liturgics, a central component of diaconiology where the relationship between church and art demands our attention on a number of levels.³¹

Here the difference between the old and new administration must be taken into account. The church of the new covenant was not given detailed instructions concerning its church building, symbols, and rites as in the old covenant. The meeting between God and his people requires an entirely different environment and design because of the one sacrifice accomplished by Jesus Christ. The old instructions do indeed contain teaching for the new covenant, but they cannot be put into effect anymore. The church of the new covenant is now still bound to God’s will, but has more freedom in bringing to expression how God may be worshiped.

There is also a difference in the work of the Holy Spirit. He is no longer given to one particular person in order that the liturgical result may unerringly reflect God’s intention. Yet the church of the new covenant can

³⁰ I use the terms “exemplaric” and “redemptive-historical” in the technical sense these words came to have in the debate in the Reformed churches in The Netherlands over preaching method. See Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Kampen: Kok, 1970); and Cornelis Trimp, *Heilsgeschiedenis en prediking: Hervatting van een onvoltooid gesprek* (Kampen: Van den Berg, 1986). The latter has also been translated into English under the title, *Preaching and the History of Salvation: Continuing an Unfinished Discussion* (trans. N. Kloosterman; Scarsdale, N.Y.: Westminster Book Service, 1996).

³¹ Cornelis Trimp, *Inleiding in de ambtelijke vakken* (Kampen: Van den Berg, 1978) 62ff. For the defence (against Kuyper) of the central place liturgics should be attributed within the diaconiological discipline, see Trimp, *Inleiding*, 70. The quotation was taken from p. 74.

never complain that it has received less than the church of old. The church now has the riches that God gives his Spirit to everyone who believes in Christ (Acts 2:17–18, 38), that the church is sealed with the Spirit of the promise (Eph. 1:13). This has consequences for liturgy: believers are encouraged to let the Spirit fully reign in the liturgy (Eph. 5:18–20).

Here one also finds support for the call to liturgical development.³² Exodus 31 shows that God gives art and beauty a rightful place in the meeting with his people. But that does not mean that all possible forms of artistic expression have a rightful place in the liturgy. All human gifts, also artistic gifts, are indeed from God, but they are used and misused in many different ways. In liturgy we can use only that which is in accordance with God's revelation. Here the church has no detailed instructions as Moses had, nor the Spirit as Bezalel received the Spirit. Yet the church of today is not poorer, but richer than the church of the old covenant. In God's completed revelation, the church has sufficient knowledge of God's will. And even if the Spirit works in a different way, his work is certainly not smaller. It must be possible, in submission to that revelation and under the leadership of the Spirit, to continue the work of giving artistic expression to all that pertains to liturgy.

³² Timp has repeatedly pleaded for this, most recently several months before this article was written in the series “‘Ontwikkeling’ van het gereformeerde leven,” *De Reformatie* 65 (1989–1990) 465–467, 485–487, 517–520, esp. 537–540, 565–580.