

# 10 Calvin's Doctrine of the IMAGO DEI

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## I. Introduction

Calvin's doctrine of the Imago Dei has been occupied an outstanding position in the history of Reformed anthropology. A great deal of effort has been made on this topic, however, what seems to be lacking is the investigation of the Imago Dei theme in the light of Calvin's own soteriological view.

According to the Bible, God's main interest is to save sinners by applying the Gospel to them through the ministry of God's Word.<sup>1)</sup> It is crystal clear that Calvin's main concern is the same as that of the Bible. Calvin stated that we ought to seek especially the Gospel, that is, the good news of salvation of sinners in the Holy Scripture.<sup>2)</sup> He was not interested in producing a good piece

1. Esp. Jn. 3:16, 20:31, 1 Tim. 1:15, 2 Tim. 3:15, etc.

2. Han Chul-Ha, "An Explanation of ACTS 'Theological Synopsis': A United Confirmation and Propagation of the Central Truth of Christian Religion in the Respective Field of Specialization." Unpublished Article (ACTS : Nov. 17, 1998), 1.

of dogmatic works, but wanted to help theological students to understand the Bible correctly and apply its essential point, the "Gospel," to the salvation of sinners.<sup>3)</sup>

"Gospel" is indeed the central point upon which Calvin's whole 'Institutes' and his all theological works concentrates. According to him, "Gospel" means the clear manifestation of the mystery of Christ.<sup>4)</sup> The word "Gospel," in the broad sense, includes those testimonies of God's mercy and fatherly favor which He gave to the patriarchs of old. But, in a higher sense, the word refers, Calvin says, to the proclamation of the grace manifested in Christ.<sup>5)</sup> Calvin regards "Gospel" as 'the doctrine of faith' in parallel with St. Paul.<sup>6)</sup> Therefore, "sola fide" is the main point which Calvin attempted to establish. It is the same truth of salvation through the "faith in the gospel"(or gospel faith). It was John Calvin who made it very clear that there is a centrality in the teaching of the Bible and the Church.<sup>7)</sup> The Bible and the orthodox historical creeds asserted that the central theme of Christianity is the salvation of man who is totally depraved before God. This means that God sees man as a sinner who needs salvation through the faith in the gospel.<sup>8)</sup> Therefore, according

3. Ibid.

4. John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, ed. John McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (The Westminster Press, 1960), II. 9. 2. (Hereafter cited as *Inst.*, II. 9. 2); OS(Johannis Calvinus Opera Selecta), III. 399: "Porro Evangelium accipio pro clara mysterii Christi manifestatione."

5. Ibid.: "Unde sequitur, vocem Evangelii large sumendo, sub ea comprehendere que olim testimonia Deus misericordiae suae paternique favoris Patribus dedit; verum per excellentiam aptari dico ad promulgationem exhibitarae in Christo gratiae; ....."

6. Ibid.

7. Han, 2.

8. Calvin calls this important doctrine of "Justification by faith" as the main hinge on which religion(Christianity) turns. *Inst.*, III. 11. 1; OS IV, 182:

to Calvin and the Bible, it is necessary for us to deal with the doctrine of Imago Dei in the light of soteriological perspective.

Calvin insists that we must receive the renewed image of God by the faith in the gospel through the secret operation of the Holy Spirit.<sup>9)</sup> Of course, he uses Imago Dei in various senses: (1) In a general sense, in which all creation is said to reflect as in a mirror the glory of God.<sup>10)</sup> (2) In a particular sense, in which man is said to reflect the glory of God, by an faithful response to God.<sup>11)</sup> (3) The Imago Dei is to reflect all the fullness of God's glory in the humanity, setting man(soul and body) apart from and above the rest of God's creation.<sup>12)</sup>

In our time, we can easily find the fact that Barthianism occupies the central place in the field of systematic theology. It is to be noted that in case of this doctrine of Imago Dei most of Calvin scholars already are affected(or infected) by Neo-orthodoxy. They are inclined to interpret the Imago Dei as a moral relationship between God and man, or between man and woman.<sup>13)</sup>

Therefore we must now discuss these matters thoroughly. And we must so discuss them as to bear in mind that this is the main hinge on which religion turns, so that we devote the greater attention and care to it. (Ea ergo nunc penitus discutienda: et ita discutienda ut meminerimus praecipuum esse sustinendae religionis cardinem; quo maiorem attentionem curamque afferamus.)

9. *Inst.*, I. 15. 4; III. 1. 1; III. 3. 9.

10. T. F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*(Westport: Greenwood Press, 1957), 35. Susan Schreiner discusses more widely this universal interpretation about the Imago Dei in her book. See S. E. Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin*(Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), esp. Chap. III, 55-72.

11. Torrance, 52ff.

12. N. de Oliveira, "Calvin's Philosophical Anthropology of the Imago Dei," Originally published in the review *Theophilus* 1/2(2001): 385-404; <http://www.geocities.com/nythanmar/calvin.htm>, 7.

13. We will discuss the relational view in chap. III.

But Calvin's real concern was the restoration of the image of God. In other words, he wanted to explain this doctrine from a soteriological viewpoint. Calvin emphasizes the fact that it is from our regeneration that we see what the Imago Dei really is and in what it truly consists. It is very important to note the crucial issue of Christian anthropology in Calvin is the restoration of the Imago Dei with the meaning of heavenly blessedness.<sup>14)</sup>

Therefore, we will discuss Calvin's doctrine of the Imago Dei in the eyes of creation-fall-redemption principle including the central truth of Christianity.

## II. Various Interpretations about the Imago Dei

There have been many and varying interpretations as to what it means that man is created in God's image through the history of the Church. In this chapter we shall look at some representative proposals given by Christian theologians from the ancient era of Church Fathers to the present time.<sup>15)</sup>

The early Church Fathers were generally agreed that the image of God in man consisted primarily in man's rational and moral characteristics, but some were inclined to include bodily traits. Irenaeus and Tertullian drew a distinction between the Imago and the Similitudo of God, finding the former in bodily traits, and

14. *Inst.*, I. 15. 4.

15. About the brief history of doctrine of the Imago Dei, cf. E. Brunner, *Man in Revolt: A Christian Anthropology*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), 499-515; L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 202-203; A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 33-65; Schreiner, 55-60. More detailed are the historical chapters in David Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*, rev. ed. (London: Collins, 1973).

the latter in the spiritual nature of man.<sup>16)</sup> His famous distinction between the Imago and the Similitudo determined subsequent interpretation of Genesis 1:26. According to Irenaeus, the Similitudo or likeness was lost in the fall, while the Imago or image remained.<sup>17)</sup> Clement of Alexandria and Origen, however, rejected the idea of any bodily analogy, and held that the word "Imago" denoted the characteristics of man as man, and the word "Similitudo," qualities which are not essential to man, but may be cultivated or lost.<sup>18)</sup>

Augustine asserted that since God is a Trinity, the Imago Dei must be a trinitarian structure within the human being. He argued that this trinity must be located in that which is immortal.<sup>19)</sup> Augustine held that the trinitarian structure of man's psychological faculties is an image of God because it can remember, understand, and love God.<sup>20)</sup> Therefore, the divine image is equated with the rational nature of the soul and defined in terms of a relationship between the soul and God.<sup>21)</sup>

The distinction made by the early Church Fathers between the Imago and the Similitudo, was continued by Thomas Aquinas and the Scholastics. The Schoolmen generally thought that the Imago means the intellectual powers of reason and freedom, and the Similitudo consists of original righteousness. To this was added another point of distinction that between the Imago as a natural

16. Berkhof, 202.

17. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, IV. 4. 3, V. 6. 1, V. 16. 1. in *Anti-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953).

18. Berkhof, 202. This view also found in Athanasius, Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, and John of Damascus.

19. Schreiner, 56; Augustine, *De Trinitate* XIV. 4.

20. *Ibid.* Augustine, XIV. 8.

21. Cairns, 102-103.

gift to man, something belonging to the very nature of man as man, and the Similitudo as a supernatural gift, which served as a check on the lower nature of man.<sup>22)</sup> Thomas, however, did not share the view that many medieval theologians taught—that through the Fall man lost the Similitudo but retained the Imago. While granting that Imago and Similitudo may have somewhat different meanings, he said that “there is nothing wrong in something being called Imago in one context and Similitudo in another.”<sup>23)</sup> Thomas identified the Imago with rationality ; only intellectual beings(angels and humans) are made in the image of God. But he distinguished three degrees of the Imago.<sup>24)</sup>

The Reformers rejected the distinction between the Imago and the Similitudo, and considered original righteousness as included in the image of God, and as belonging to the very nature of man in its original condition.<sup>25)</sup> Luther regarded this original righteousness as the unique Imago Dei in man. He used the term “justitia originalis” as a synonym of “imago Dei.”<sup>26)</sup> The Socinians

22. Berkhof, 202.

23. Hoekema, 36 ; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 93. 9 ; About the difference between Imago and Similitudo more detailed, see St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 13(New York : McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1963), 81-85.

24. Schreiner, 56 ; *Summa*, Ia. 93. 4. Thomas said that God's image can be considered in man at three stages : the first stage is man's natural aptitude for understanding and loving God. The next stage is where a man is actually or habitually knowing and loving God, but still imperfectly. The third stage is where a man is actually knowing and loving God perfectly ; and this is “the image by likeness of glory.”(imago similitudinem gloriae).

25. Berkhof, 202.

26. Won Yong Ji, *Luther's Thought : Theology and Education*(Seoul : Concordia Press, 1961), 101 ; Weimar Ausgabe, 42. 63 ; Gen. 2 : 7 ; Cf. H. T. Kerr, ed., *A Compend of Luther's Theology*(Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, 1964), 79-83, “The Image of God in Man.” Esp. p. 82 : “Wherefore I, for my part, understand the image of God to be this ; —that Adam

and some Arminians taught that the image of God consists only in man's dominion over the lower creation.<sup>27)</sup> This means that the image of God in neither something that man is(substantive view), nor the experiencing relationship with God or with fellow man (relational view), but something that he does particularly his exercise of dominion over the creation(functional view). This functional view of the Imago Dei was popular in the Socinians and some Reformed circle.<sup>28)</sup>

Schleiermacher did not want to discuss about the Imago Dei as a necessary doctrine. He dealt with doctrine of man under the title of “the original perfection of mandivine in relation to” God-consciousnessdivine without regard to the Imago Dei theme.<sup>29)</sup> Because moral perfection or righteousness and holiness can only be the result of development, he regards it as contradiction in terms of speak of man as being created in a state of righteousness and holiness. Hence the image of God in man can only be a certain

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possessed it in its moral substance, or nature ; —that he not only knew God, and believed Him to be good, but that he lived also a life truly divine : that is, free from the fear of death and of all dangers, and happy in the favour of God. ….” According to Luther's commentary on Genesis, 87-93, he used this term “the Imago Dei” as a restricted meaning of “the original righteousness.” But he discussed it in light of soteriological viewpoint like Calvin.

27. Berkhof, 203.

28. This functional view, which we find, for instance, in the Socinian Catechismus Raconviensis, ed. G. I. Oederus, 48. It says that the image consists of man's “postestas et dominium in omnes res a Deo conditas supra terram,” as Gen. 1 : 26 patently affirms. Cf. G. C. Berkouwer, *Man : The Image of God*, Studies in Dogmatics(Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1962), 70. The perspective that the exercise of dominion is the very essence of the image of God has given to a strong emphasis upon what is sometimes called in Reformed circles the cultural mandate. M. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids : Baker, 1998), 510.

29. F. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*(Edinburgh : T. & T. Clark, 1989), 244-256.

receptivity for the divine, a captivity to answer to the divine ideal, and to grow into God-likeness.<sup>30)</sup>

Bavinck, a famous Dutch Reformed dogmatician, strongly asserted that a human being does not bear or have the image of God but that he or she *is* the image of God. According to Bavinck, while all creatures display vestiges of God, only a human being is the image of God.<sup>31)</sup> The whole human being is image and likeness of God, in soul and body, in all human faculties, powers, and gifts. Nothing in humanity is excluded from God's image; it stretches as far as our humanity does and constitutes our humanness.<sup>32)</sup> But Berkhof suggested that the image of God should contain original righteousness, intellectual power, natural affection, moral freedom, spirituality, immortality, and man's dominion over the lower creation.<sup>33)</sup>

Barthian assumption that the Imago Dei must not be interpreted as something resident within man's nature, but as the experiencing of a relationship is now widely accepted within contemporary Calvin scholars. They asserted that Calvin's intention in his interpretation of the image of God must be a being-in-fellowship. They show a tendency to interpret Calvin's doctrine of the Imago Dei from a viewpoint of Barth.

30. Berkhof, 203.

31. Herman Bavinck, *In the Beginning: Foundations of Creation Theology*, a translation of *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, vol. 2, chap. 5., ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 186-7.

32. Ibid., 194.

33. Berkhof, 204-205.

### III. Barthian Influence on Calvin Research

Karl Barth stated that the image of God in man is not to be found in his intellect or reason. The fact that we were created male and female means for Barth that the human being was endowed by God with the possibility of confrontation between man and woman. He calls this confrontational relationship the image of God because this same confrontational relationship exists between God and man. Between God and man there is not an analogy of being but an analogy of relation (*analogia relationis*).<sup>34)</sup>

Barth calls this "confrontational relationship" the Imago Dei.

We have argued already that it (Imago Dei) is the relationship and differentiation between the I and the Thou in God Himself. Man is created by God in correspondence with this relationship and differentiation in God Himself: created as a Thou that can be addressed by God but also as an I responsible to God; in the relationship of man and woman in which man is a Thou to his fellow and therefore himself an I in responsibility to this claim.<sup>35)</sup>

Therefore, in Barth, the image of God is defined in formal terms: the possibility to exist in confrontation with God and other men. He explained the image of God by means of encounter and relationship. And these encounter and relationship require us to be a "being for other men" as true humanity. According to Barth, this true humanity as the Imago Dei can be seen in the being and life of Jesus Christ.

34. Hoekema, 49-50; Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), 195.

35. Barth, 198.

That real man is determined by God for life with God has its inviolable correspondence in the fact that his creaturely being is a being in encounter—between I and Thou, man and woman. It is human in this encounter, and in this humanity it is likeness(similitudo) of the being of its Creator.<sup>36)</sup>

His(Christ) humanity, in correspondence and similarity with His determination for God and therefore with God Himself, as God's image, consists in the fact that, as He is for God, He is also for man, for His fellows.<sup>37)</sup>

Jesus is the man for His fellows, and therefore the image of God.<sup>38)</sup> In Barth's doctrine of man, the Imago Dei means to be true man in relation to other man. In other words, being like Christ(formation or sanctification of the Imago Dei) means imitation of Christ morally in this world.<sup>39)</sup>

Under the influence of Barthian theology, so many Calvin scholars today have a tendency to show relational interpretation of the Imago Dei. Wilhelm Niesel also has a relational view. In his book he insists that the Imago Dei is the right orientation of man towards his Creator.<sup>40)</sup> According to Niesel's interpretation, the Imago Dei in man implies something more than his psycho-physical constitution, it signifies his right attitude towards his Creator and thus his right attitude towards all other

36. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/2, 203.

37. Barth, CD III/2, 222.

38. Ibid.

39. About Barth's interpretation of justification and sanctification as a realization of the Imago Dei, see CD IV/1, 634-6.; IV/2, 511.

40. W. Niesel, *The Theology of John Calvin*, trans. H. Night(Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, 1956), 67.

creatures.<sup>41)</sup> In a word, the Imago Dei depends upon man's relation to his Lord.<sup>42)</sup>

How does man know that the Imago Dei in him consisted in the original orientation of his being towards his Creator? Niesel rightly cites Calvin :

Calvin says that the restoration of the image of God in man shows plainly in what it originally consisted.<sup>43)</sup>

But Niesel here follows Barth's side.

In Christ, the incarnate Word of God, we see in what this divine image in man consists. The true being of man is disclosed to us in Him alone ..... through Him who is Himself the image of God we are restored and brought again into a true relation with our Creator.<sup>44)</sup>

Of course, Niesel admits that we are redeemed by being made like unto Christ.<sup>45)</sup> However, his understanding of it(being like Him, Jn 3:2) is quite different from that of Calvin. Niesel emphasizes the "right"(claim) of man in the conception of restored humanity in Christ.

Whatever is taught about humanity in disregard of this sovereign claim of Christ is nothing but a conspicuous error ..... There is no theological anthropology which can exist apart from Christology.<sup>46)</sup>

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., 69.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.



For this reason, we can draw a conclusion that Niesel's view of the Imago Dei is very similar to that of Barth. Niesel and Barth pay attention to relationship and restoration of human right on the basis of Christological concentration in their discussions of doctrine on the image of God.

Frannçois Wendel says that the Imago Dei imprinted on man consists of the integrity and righteousness which were the attributes of Adam when he came from his Creator's hands, the perfect example of which has been shown in Christ the second Adam.<sup>47)</sup> Wendel gives an explanation of the restoration of the Imago Dei with the commentary on Eph. 4 : 24. He interprets the end of regeneration as the restoration of the image of God in its primitive integrity.<sup>48)</sup> But he does not go further for the purpose of attaining perfect meaning of the image of God.

Compared with Calvin's own view of "being like Him"(Christ) theme, Wendel's interpretation on Calvin is very limited. In Calvin, to investigate this doctrine of the Imago Dei having nothing to do with our heavenly splendor is meaningless. In the discussion of the restoration of the Imago Dei the most significant issue is not a restoration of original humanity of Adam on earth, but our real being like Him(Christ) in heaven. Wendel also shows a moral tendency to understand Calvin's doctrine. Like Barth, he did not want to pay attention to the supernatural dimension of Christian doctrine including the Imago Dei.

T. F. Torrance is interested in the Word of God(Christ) and in the relationship between man and God.<sup>49)</sup> In his discussion of the meaning of the Imago Dei, he insists that Calvin's doctrine of

46. Ibid., 69-70.

47. F. Wendel, *Calvin : The Origin and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. P. Mairet(New York : Harper & Row, 1963), 176-177.

48. Ibid., 242.

49. Torrance, 35-82.

the Imago Dei in man sums up the whole of this relation between man and God. Of course, before he starts his discussion, first of all, he deals with this doctrine with a viewpoint of God's images in nature within all creation as a mirror of God's glory like Susan Schreiner.<sup>50)</sup> However, because of his epistemological concern he lays stress on the problem of the knowledge of God in relation to doctrine of the Imago Dei. He often insinuates that the Word of God is Christ as true Imago Dei in his book.<sup>51)</sup> But it is necessary to affirm that in the Bible the Word is not always Christ. St. John used this word(Logos) for the purpose of indicating Christ as God(Jn. 1 : 1-3). However, Barth and Torrance frequently used this term "Word" as a synonym of Christ for theoretical basis of their epistemological theology. Moreover, Torrance continues to emphasize the importance of "imago-relation" between man and God, and of imago-relation between man and man.<sup>52)</sup> He interprets the reparation of man's corrupt nature, i. e., regeneration as the active response of love and obedience.<sup>53)</sup> In

50. Schreiner, 55-72. She wants to show that in Calvin's understanding, universe itself is the Imago Dei, and sin neither annihilated the natural realm nor thwarted God's purpose in creation. Torrance, 35 : "All creation is said to reflect as in a mirror the glory of God. God images Himself in nature, by beholding the works of His hands."

51. Torrance, 57-60 : "Thus, properly speaking, it is only in man who has been made to know God and hear His Word that the image of god is truly reflected. And all the stress is laid by Calvin on the Word as mediated by Christ."(57) ; "In a real sense the image of God in man is the communicated Word in which God's glory shines forth. This is not to confuse the imago dei in man with the original and lively image of God which is Christ Himself or the eternal Word."(58) ; "However, man's Imago Dei is generated only over against that prime image of God in a knowledgeable relation of faith and obedience, so that knowledge of the Word of God is an essential part of the Imago Dei in him."(Ibid.) ; "Calvin thought of Christ as bearing the image of God in virtue of His human nature in addition to the fact that He was the image of God in the sense of the eternal Word."(60).

52. Ibid., 35, 59, 60, 61, 73, etc.

his discussion of Calvin's anthropology, Torrance has an epistemological-relational tendency.<sup>54)</sup> In other words, we cannot find out the clear understanding of "being like Him" *faith* in his studying the Imago Dei theme. He is not so much concerned with the heavenly splendor of salvation as the existential response of man to the Word of God on earth in his discussion.

This epistemological-relational interpretation can be found also in B. A. Gerrish's article "The Mirror of God's Goodness."

In Calvin's view, the image of God in man denotes not an endowment only, but also a relationship. .... man was created to image God's glory in an act of thankful acknowledgment, .....<sup>55)</sup>

Gerrish explained the Imago Dei doctrine of Calvin using some conceptions of "mirror,"<sup>56)</sup> "response,"<sup>57)</sup> "relationship,"<sup>58)</sup> and "acknowledgment."<sup>59)</sup> From what we can see he also discussed this doctrine on the ground of Barthian pre-understanding. Although he knew Calvin's soteriological structure and various use of the Imago Dei he never earnestly stressed the significance of our restoration of the Imago Dei in spiritual-eschatological sense.

53. Ibid., 52.

54. In my opinion, the great 3 characteristics of Barth's theology are : 1) Christomonism, 2) epistemological interpretation, and 3) moral-relational stress on orthodox supernatural doctrines.

55. B. A. Gerrish, "The Mirror of God's Goodness : A Key Metaphor in Calvin's View of Man," In *Realings in Calvin's Theology*, ed. D. K. McKim (Grand Rapids : Baker, 1984), 115 & 119.

56. Ibid., 114.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., 115.

59. Ibid., 116-119.

Richard Prins discussed Calvin's Imago Dei doctrine on the basis of Barthian method of dialectic approach. He used so-called "complexio oppositorum" for his interpretation on Calvin.<sup>60)</sup> At the same time, he accepted Christ-centered principle in his paper.<sup>61)</sup> He frequently used the method of "complexio oppositorum" for explaining Calvin's intention by showing several contradictory statements of Calvin. But in his article, Calvin's main concern of "being like Him" theme appears nowhere else.

The present writer thinks that Calvin's real concern in discussion of doctrine of the Imago Dei is to say an importance of our real glorification at the time of resurrection. However, most of Calvin scholars today only try to seek the moral-epistemological value without the least idea of getting "being like Him" (glorification) theme in Calvin.

#### IV. Calvin's Doctrine of the Imago Dei

The purpose of this paper is to clarify Calvin's real intention in his doctrine of the Imago Dei. Calvin wanted to show God's great salvation and the necessity of "Gospel Faith" for attaining heavenly blessedness. It is often pointed out that in Calvin's works whoever can find his piety and faith in God. He believed in God and God's promise in the Bible not in vain but in reality. He knew the great value and heavenly riches of our salvation. He discussed the Imago Dei doctrine on the basis of Heb. 2 : 3 and 1 Jn. 3 : 2.<sup>62)</sup> The point I want to make is that we must

60. Richard Prins, "The Image of God in Adam and the Restoration of Man in Jesus Christ : A Study in Calvin," In *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism*, ed. Richard Gamble (New York : Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992) : 274-286.

61. Ibid., 286.



interpret Calvin's theology for the purpose of increasing "faith," and teaching an importance of our salvation in keeping pace with Calvin's theological method.<sup>63)</sup> Therefore, in case of studying Calvin's doctrine of the Imago Dei, it is necessary for us to continue to emphasize the importance of our salvation and the final glory of heavenly blessedness.

#### A. Calvin's main concern in His Doctrine of the Imago Dei

There have been so many interpretations on Calvin's Imago Dei theme.<sup>64)</sup> Because Calvin explained the meaning of Imago Dei in

62. Heb. 2 : 3 "If we neglect so great salvation"; Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, *Hebrews and I and II Peter*, ed. D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, and trans. W. B. Johnston(Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1974), 19 : "..... he (John) says—so great salvation. God wishes His gifts to be valued by us at their proper worth. .... In accordance with the greatness, so will be the severity of God's vengeance on all despisers of the Gospel. Notice that the word 'salvation' is applied here by metonymy to the doctrine, because, just as God wills that man should be saved in no other way than through the Gospel, so when it is neglected the whole salvation of God is rejected." ; I Jn. 3 : 2 "when he shall be manifested, we shall be like him" ; Calvin Comm. *The Gospel According to St. John*, trans. T. H. L. Parker, 267 : "..... we shall be partakers of the divine glory because, unless our nature were spiritual and endowed with a heavenly and blessed immortality, it could never come so near to God."

63. Han, "Necessity ..... " 2-3 : (We have taken the ground and possibility of this proposal from the hermeneutical principle of John Calvin. According to Calvin, the purpose of writing the Institutes was to provide the students of the Scriptures some "necessary tools" by which they can digest the Scriptures without difficulty. "The necessary tools" which Calvin intends to provide is in one word "the only true God saves sinners by faith in Jesus Christ, and the faith comes from hearing the gospel preached by the Church.")

64. About various interpretations of Calvin's doctrine of the Imago Dei, cf. W. Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin* ; T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin : An Introduction to His Thought*(Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, 1995) ; D. T.

various ways in his Institutes, at the first glance, it seems inconsistent to us. Moreover, Calvin extends to the image of God in man, in its general sense, all things which differentiate man from all other creatures.<sup>65)</sup>

In Calvin's Institutes(Book I, chapter 15), we can see, first of all, that he introduces our subject in a strangely abrupt way, apparently to clinch his argument for the place of the image.<sup>66)</sup> And then, he wants to include under "image of God" the fact that man has been given a face uplifted, bidden to gaze heavenward.<sup>67)</sup> This means that he regards human body also as a part of the

McIntosh, "The Doctrine of Man in Calvin's Institutes,"(S. T. M. thesis, 1947) ; W. E. Stauer mann, "The Image of Man : The Perspectives of Calvin and Freud," In *Interpretation* 14(1960) : 28-42 ; J. M. Kennedy, "A brief study of Calvin's concept of the Image of God,"(Th. M. thesis at Columbia Theological Seminary, 1969) ; D. Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*(London : Collins, 1973) ; H. Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness : Calvin Between Humanism and Reformation," *Essays in Honor of Charles Trinkaus. Studies in the History of Christian Thought*, Vol. 51(New York : E. J. Brill, 1993) : 253-283 ; G. C. Berkouwer, *Man : The Image of God*, Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1962) ; L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* ; A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* ; R. Prins, "The Image of God in Adam and the Restoration of Man in Jesus Christ" ; T. F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* ; B. J. van der Walt, *Heartbeat : Taking the pulse of our Christian theological and philosophical heritage*(Potchefstroom : Potchefstroom University, 1978), 242-246 ; B. A. Gerrish, "The Mirror of God's Goodness" ; Luke Anderson, "The *Imago Dei* Theme in John Calvin and Bernard of Clairvaux," In *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, ed. W. H. Neuser(Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1994), 178-198 ; S. Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory* ; J. Taylor, "The Image of God,"(<http://users2.evl.net/~providencechurch/image-of-god.htm>) ; N. de Oliveira, "Calvin's Philosophical Anthropology of the Imago Dei,"(<http://www.geocities.com/nythamar/calvin.htm>).

65. Taylor, 11 ; *Inst.*, I. 15. 3.

66. *Inst.*, I. 15. 3 : "For although God's glory shines forth in the outer man, yet there is no doubt that the proper seat of his image is in the soul."

67. *Ibid.*

Imago Dei.<sup>68)</sup> But he lays stress on the fact that the actual seat of the image lies in the soul. Arising from that he employs the word seat(sedes), it appears that he sees the state of being an image of God as there being something in man. That this something is considered to be divine or heavenly is also evident from his criticism of Osiander who applies the idea of the image of God without distinction to body and soul.<sup>69)</sup>

In his Institutes III, Calvin builds his theological ethics partly on the endurance of the divine image even in fallen man. The sacredness and dignity of human life are guaranteed by the fact that man was created in the image of God, and that the remnants of the image persist.<sup>70)</sup> This meant, for him, that the Imago was not lost but remained regulative of man's social relationships.<sup>71)</sup>

In addition, as we already pointed out, it is necessary for us to confirm the fact that Calvin rejects the distinction of Irenaeus between the Imago(אִמָּגוֹ) and the Similitudo(דְּמוּיָהוּ) of God. Calvin thinks that Irenaeus did not understand the nature of Hebrew parallelism.<sup>72)</sup> For Calvin, even Augustine went to astray by

68. Ibid. "And although the primary seat of the divine image(divinae imaginis) was in the mind and heart, or in the soul and its powers, yet there was no part of man, not even the body itself, in which some sparks(scintillae) did not glow."

69. van der Walt, 242-3. Therefore, many theologians regard Calvin's position as "substantive theory." We can include Irenaeus, Calvin, and Bavinck as representatives of this view. Calvin wishes to make a distinction between heaven and earth. According to Calvin, the soul is clearly regarded as something transcendent.

70. Gerrish, 110. But Gerrish did not debate Calvin's moral theology or principles of his theological ethics on the ground of the doctrine of the Imago Dei. We can find Calvin's discussion about Christian life on the basis of Imago Dei theme in Institutes III, chapter 7, article 6.

71. Ibid.

72. *Inst.*, I. 15. 3. Cf. Gerrish, 113. Calvin does not mention Irenaeus by name, but Cairns shows that the distinction Calvin rejects can in fact be traced

suggesting that the image refers to the psychological trinity of man's intellect, will, and memory. This, Calvin concludes, is mere speculation.<sup>73)</sup>

On the other hand, Calvin apparently criticizes Chrysostom's view that the Imago Dei is man's dominion over nature.<sup>74)</sup> Although "dominion" is part of it, but it is not unique mark by which man resembles God, and the image is to be sought more properly within man as an inner good of the soul.<sup>75)</sup>

Recently, most of Calvin scholars mainly point out following 2 points : (1) There is no doubt that Calvin always thinks of the Imago in terms of "mirror." The whole of universe had been represented as a mirror in which the glory of God is to be viewed.<sup>76)</sup> (2) In Calvin's view, the image of God in man denotes not an endowment only, but also a relationship.<sup>77)</sup>

back to Irenaeus(Cairns, 74-75).

73. Gerrish, 113 ; *Inst.*, I. 15. 4 : "For that speculation of Augustine, that the soul is the reflection of the Trinity because in it reside the understanding, will, and memory, is by no means sound."

74. *Inst.*, I. 15. 4 : "Nor is there any probability in the opinion of those who locate God's likeness in the dominion given to man, as if in this mark alone he resembles God, that he was established as heir and possessor of all things ; ..... ." ; *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries*, Genesis Vol. I, trans. J. King (Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1948), 94. Here in his commentary of Gen. 1 : 26, Calvin says : "The exposition of Chrysostom is not more correct, who refers to the dominion which was given to man in order that he might, in a certain sense, act as God's vicegerent in the government of the world. This truly is some portion, though very small, of the image of God."

75. Ibid. "whereas God's image is properly to be sought within him, not outside him, indeed, it is an inner good of the soul." OS III, 181 : "quum penes ipsum non extra proprie quaerenda sit : imo interius sit animae bonum."

76. This view, especially was taken by Torrance and Schreiner. See Torrance, 36 ; Schreiner, 65.

77. Gerrish, 115 ; This Barthian preference has accepted by Parker, Brunner, Berkouwer, Torrance, Gerrish, Niesel, etc. But van der Walt and Bavinck

But Hoekema summarizes Calvin's doctrine of the Imago Dei as follows :

(1) The integrity of the original image of God—there was no deficiency in man at the beginning that had to be kept in check by a superadded gift of grace, (2) The devastating results of the Fall on the image of God in man—for Calvin fallen man is not just deprived but depraved, (3) Fallen man is, however, still an image-bearer of God, (4) The rejection of the distinction between image and likeness, (5) The renewal of the image of God is both God's work in man and man's response to God, (6) The renewal of the image of God is progressive and dynamic, and will not be completed until the life to come.<sup>78)</sup>

Hoekema rightly pointed out the real intention of Calvin. Because Calvin himself said that the true nature of the image of God is to be derived from what Scripture says of its renewal through Christ.<sup>79)</sup> Of course, we are in need of some ideas of "relationship," "mirror," "response," and "rectitude" for getting broader understanding in Calvin's doctrine. But the core of all questions in relation to Imago Dei theme is "What is Calvin's main concern in his discussion?" As Hoekema pointed out, Calvin's doctrine of the image of God is better understood in the restoration of the fallen image. But we must add the following point: "Its conforming to God's likeness in the believer's

think that man is the image of God. The image and likeness of God is not in man but man *is* His image and likeness(Walt, 245 ; Bavinck, 186-194).

78. Hoekema, 48.

79. *Inst.*, I. 15. 4 : "That, indeed, can be nowhere better recognized than from the restoration of his corrupted nature. .... Consequently, the beginning of our recovery of salvation is in that restoration which we obtain through Christ, ...."

sanctification and glorification in Christ."<sup>80)</sup> Therefore, Calvin's main concern can be found not in "mirror" idea or in "ethical relationship" theme, but in realization of "salvation(restoration) from sins." It is very significant for us to know the fact that Calvin always pays attention to the following principle. Namely, the proper seat of the image is in our soul. Calvin says that although the soul is not man, yet it is not absurd for man, in respect to his soul, to be called God's image.<sup>81)</sup> Therefore, we can draw conclusion that from Calvin's repeating stresses of the soul and the restoration of the Imago De, his main concern is salvation of fallen soul. In other words, his main intention in discussing the Imago Dei doctrine is to show us the importance of salvation and give us faith in the Gospel.

#### B. Imago Creationis-Deformitatis-Recreationis

According to Luke Anderson, something of an echo of the Imago Dei's threefold distinction as found in the ninth-century *Glossa Ordinaria* is heard in Calvin.<sup>82)</sup> He used this conception for the purpose of making a comparison between Bernard and Calvin. But this theme of creation-fall-redemption can be found in every creed and theologian in the orthodox church history. Especially it is noteworthy that H. Dooyeweerd said that creation, fall, and

80. Oliveira, 8. But he failed to describe Calvin's soteriological anthropology rightly. Because he did not deal with "being like Him" theme. Rather he concluded as follows : "..... the restoration of the imago is not a utopian ideal nor an eschatological factum : it is rather the realistic fulfillment of God's Providence towards the manifestation of His Glory in the humanitas, as we freely respond to the ethical, cultural mandate imposed upon us by the Word of God."(12).

81. OS III, 178 : "Quavis ergo anima non sit homo, absurdum tamen non est, eum animae respectu vocari Dei imaginem :"

82. Anderson, 178.

redemption, which lies at the root of a scriptural philosophy.<sup>83)</sup> Likewise, Calvin's doctrine of the Imago Dei can be understood from three different distinction, namely Imago creationis(before the fall), Imago deformitatis(after the fall), and Imago recreationis (regeneration and sanctification).

Before the fall, man possessed the Imago Dei in its perfection. About its original state, Calvin stated as follows :

Accordingly, the integrity with which Adam was endowed is expressed by this word(Imago), when he had full possession of right understanding, when he had his affections kept within the bounds of reason, all his senses tempered in right order, and he truly referred his excellence to exceptional gifts bestowed upon him by his Maker.<sup>84)</sup>

From this(Eph. 4 : 24, Col. 3 : 10) we infer that, to begin with, God's image was visible in the light of the mind, in the uprighteousness of the heart, and in the soundness of all the parts.<sup>85)</sup>

Because Calvin thought that the human soul consists of two faculties, understanding and will,<sup>86)</sup> he stressed the original conditions of the image of God *in luce mentis, in cordis rectitudine, and in partiumque omnium sanitate*. In his Commentary of Genesis 1 : 26, he added the thought that Adam truly excelled in

83. H. Dooyeweerd, *Transcendental Problems of Philosophic Thought*(Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1948), 62-77. Cf. R. H. Nash, *Dooyeweerd and the Amsterdam Philosophy*(Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1962), 26.

84. *Inst.*, I. 15. 3.

85. *Inst.*, I. 15. 4.

86. *Inst.*, I. 15. 7.

everything good. Therefore, Adam had the original righteousness : true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.<sup>87)</sup> Adam was able to communicate with and respond to God through the original righteousness.

For Calvin, the purpose of referring the Imago Dei is to show us the importance of soul's faculties and its activities. And the image of God is properly to be sought within man, not outside of him. It is an inner good of the soul. Why he pays attention to soul and its activity? Calvin says :

This human soul is an incorporeal substance ; ..... it dwells in its body as in a house ; not only that it may animate all its parts and render its organs fit and useful for their actions, but also that it may hold the first place in ruling man's life, not alone with respect to the duties of his earthly life, but at the same time to arouse him to honor God. The beginning and cause of this is that men understand themselves to have been born to cultivate righteousness, in which the seed of religion is enclosed. But, without controversy, just as man was made for meditation upon the heavenly life, so it is certain that the knowledge of it was engraved upon his soul, ..... Thus, also, the chief activity of the soul is to aspire thither.<sup>88)</sup>

Before the Fall, Adam possessed the perfect image of God. He was able to know God, follow God's will, and answer Him. At that time man truly was able to use his soul's faculties according to their original function. In man's first state, understanding and will are subjected to God, the lower powers are subjected to reason, and the body subjected to the soul. In other words, human

87. *Inst.*, I. 15. 4 ; *Comm. Eph.* 4 : 24, Col. 3 : 10.

88. *Inst.*, I. 15. 6.

soul came into effect to its original goal. Because Adam possessed the Imago Dei in its perfection.

But after the Fall, Calvin says, the image of God was not totally annihilated by sin, but was frightfully deformed.<sup>89)</sup> According to Calvin, fallen man still has some remnants of the image of God. He insinuates that in human being, some of traces of the image of God are still found in fallen man.<sup>90)</sup> However, Calvin did not discuss this question of “remnants” in detail. Rather he lays stress on the necessity of restoration of the image of God. In his *Institutes*, Calvin had no sooner referred “remnants” than he stressed the restoration.<sup>91)</sup> He, in his commentary on Ephesians, also takes his same line. We can see here his good example of “creation-fall-redemption” theme in discussion of the image of God.

Adam was at first created in the image of God, so that he might reflect, as in a mirror, the righteousness of God. But that image, having been wiped out by sin, must now be restored in Christ. The regeneration of the godly is indeed, as is said in 2 Cor. 3 : 18, nothing else than the reformation of the image of God in them.<sup>92)</sup>

89. *Inst.*, I. 15. 4. Calvin speaks of the image of God as having been destroyed by sin(Comm. Gen. 1 : 26), obliterated by the Fall(Comm. Gen. 3 : 1), wiped out or lost by sin(Comm. Eph. 4 : 24), cancelled by sin(Comm. 2 Cor. 3 : 18), as it were, blotted out by Adam's sin(Sermon on Job 14 : 16-7), or utterly defaced by sin(Sermon on Job 32 : 4-5). Quoted by Hoekema, 43.

90. Comm. Ps. 8 : 5 ; *Inst.*, III. 7. 6 ; Comm. Gen. 1 : 26, 9 : 6 ; Comm. Jms. 3 : 9.

91. *Inst.*, I. 15. 4. “Therefore, even though we grant that God's image was not totally annihilated ..... Consequently, the beginning of our recovery of salvation is in that restoration which we obtain through Christ, .....”

92. Comm. Eph. 4 : 24 ; Comm. Gen. 1 : 26 : “Since the image of God has been destroyed in us by the fall, we may judge from its restoration what it originally had been. Paul says that we are transformed into the image of

Therefore, we can conclude that Calvin's main concern on the doctrine of the Imago Dei not lied in mirror theme or remnants question, but in our restoration through Christ.

### C. Imago Similitudinis(Christi)

Calvin, in his commentary on Genesis 1 : 26, clearly said that we are transformed into the image of God by the “Gospel.” *Institutes* III. 3. 1 teaches us that the sum of the Gospel is held to consists in repentance and forgiveness of sins. He interprets repentance as regeneration. And he thinks here of regeneration as a restoration of the Imago Dei.

the sole end of repentance is to restore in us the image of God that had been disfigured and all but obliterated through Adam's transgression.<sup>93)</sup>

This renewal of the image of God is the goal of regeneration. It involves our true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. But Calvin added : “though this is the chief part, it is not the whole of God's image.” He declared that these forms of speaking are “synecdoches.” Synecdoche is the figure which puts a part for the whole, or the whole for a part.<sup>94)</sup> Why Calvin regards the original righteousness as “synecdoch?” Because there is a more rich and powerful grace of God in the second creation than in the first.<sup>95)</sup> And because our blessed state of future life as “being like Him” is more important than our present salvation or Adam's first state. Therefore, Calvin was able to say :

God by the gospel.”

93. *Inst.*, III. 3. 9.

94. Comm. Gen.1 : 26, note 2 ; *Inst.*, I. 15. 4.

95. Comm. Eph. 4 : 24.

Now we see how Christ is the most perfect image of God ; if we are conformed to it, we are so restored that with true piety, righteousness, purity, and intelligence we bear God's image.<sup>96)</sup>

Of course this restoration does not take place in one moment or one day or one year. In order that believers may reach this goal, God assigns to us a race of repentance, which we are to run throughout our lives. The closer any man comes to the likeness of God, the more the image of God shines in him.

we should be transformed into God's image ; ..... neither or these things happens all at once, but by continual progress we increase both in the knowledge of god and in conformity to His image. That is the meaning of "from glory to glory." ..... the purpose of the Gospel is the restoration in us of the image of God which had been cancelled by sin and that this restoration is progressive and goes on during our whole life, because God makes His glory to shine us little by little.<sup>97)</sup>

In his commentary on Colossians, Calvin says that the end of our regeneration is that we may be made like God and that His glory may shine forth in us. Therefore, Paul said that there is nothing better for the Colossians to aspire to, for our highest perfection and blessedness is to bear the image of God.<sup>98)</sup> Then, when will this restoration of the Imago Dei be completed? Calvin answered that the image of God was only shadowed forth in man

96. *Inst.*, I. 15. 4.

97. *Comm.* 2 Cor. 3 : 18.

98. *Comm.* Col. 3 : 10.

till he should arrive at perfection.<sup>99)</sup> The Imago Dei will attain its full splendor in heaven.<sup>100)</sup> For Calvin, there is a strong conviction of the notion of "being like God" as heavenly supernatural reality.

so we will conform to Christ in His heavenly nature ; and when that happens our restoration will be complete. For now begin to bear the image of Christ, and we are daily being transformed into it more and more ; but that image depends upon spiritual regeneration. But then, it will be restored to fullness, in our body as well as our soul ; what has now begun will be brought to completion, and we will obtain in reality what as yet we are only hoping for.<sup>101)</sup>

Especially, Calvin's firm faith on "being like God" theme is revealed apparently in his commentary on 1 John 3 : 2.

we shall be like Him in that He will conform our lowly body to His glorious body, as also Paul teaches in Phil. 3 : 21. For the apostle wanted to show us briefly that the ultimate aim of our adoption is that what has, in order, come first in Christ, shall at last be completed in us. .... we shall be partakers of the divline glory.

Thus we can understand Calvin's teaching of the Imago Dei in the context of soteriology. In other words, Calvin's view of man is "man who stands in urgent need of salvation." Calvin is not so much concerned with the nobility or remnants of man's image as with the restoration of fallen man. This Calvin's view is in

99. *Comm.* Gen. 1 : 26.

100. *Inst.*, I. 15. 4.

101. *Comm.* 1 Cor. 15 : 49. Cf. *Comm.* Col. 1 : 15.

harmony with God's original intention of making our soul.

In the beginning God fashioned us after his image that he might arouse our minds both to zeal for virtue and to meditation upon eternal life. . . . it behooves us to recognize that we have been endowed with "reason and understanding" (soul) so that, by leading a holy and upright life, we may press on to the appointed goal of blessed immortality.<sup>102)</sup>

## V. Conclusion

Calvin made it clear that the proper seat of man's image lies in the soul. He does not deny that whole universe and man's outward form are also contained in the Imago Dei as mirrors. But he understands the soul as immortal yet created, which is man's nobler part.<sup>103)</sup> He emphasizes that the Imago Dei has its own seat in the soul, and he maintains that the preeminent function of the soul is to meditate upon God and to aspire to the perfect restoration of the Imago Dei. Therefore, it is to be noted that the most important point of Calvin's understanding of the Imago Dei is the restoration of it through the Gospel. The final goal of our regeneration is our glorification of soul and body. This means that the final state of our restoration is to be like Christ. Because Christ Himself is to be our righteousness in our salvation (1 Cor. 1 : 30).<sup>104)</sup>

Contrary to the notion of "being for other men" in modern scholars, Calvin emphasizes the theme of "being like Him." It

is very important to note that the crucial issue of Christian Anthropology in Calvin is the restoration of the Imago Dei including the meaning of heavenly blessedness. He put the significance of heavenly blessedness and eternal salvation before everything. For him, salvation means to restore the image of God.<sup>105)</sup> And this means to possess Christ and to participate in all His benefits.<sup>106)</sup> In brief, according to Calvin, since we possess Christ as our Saviour and we have all benefits with Him, we will attain the full splendor of the image of God in heaven like Him in reality.

102. *Inst.*, II. 1. 1.

103. *Inst.*, I. 15. 2.

104. *Inst.*, III. 15. 5.

105. *Inst.*, III. 3. 9.

106. *Inst.*, III. 1. 1.