

칼빈이 서 있는 성경적 관점에서 볼 때, 바르트는 선택과 유기의 대상을 인간 일반에서 예수 그리스도께로 명백히 혼동하고 있다. 이중예정 대상의 혼란으로 바르트는 만인구원설적인 논리적인 오류에 빠지고 있다. 바르트 자신도 거부하는 신학적 논리체계의 모순은 그의 인위적인 성서관에서 이미 시작된 것이다.

Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 류호준, 심재승 공역, 「개혁주의 신학」(서울 : 기독교문서선교회, 2002), 60.

8 Calvin's Doctrine on the Eternal Life

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1. Introduction

David E. Holwerda says that Calvin has never been famous for his eschatology.¹⁾ He rightly pointed out the fact that political and economic historians have frequently emphasized Calvin's revolutionary understanding of history.²⁾ In other words, according to Holwerda, modern interpreters of history have strong tendency to look only an intra-historical dimension without respect to the significance of the doctrine of the future life or the last things. The same applies to contemporary

1) David E. Holwerda, "Eschatology and History: A Look at Calvin's Eschatological Vision," in *Readings in Calvin's Theology*, ed. Donald K. McKim(Grand Rapids : Baker, 1984), 311.

2) Ibid.

interpretations on Christian eschatology.³⁾ In parallel with this trend, little attention has given to the study on the eternal life in the field of Calvin's eschatology. It is only too true, Very few attempts have been made at the observation like Holwerda.⁴⁾ Most of Calvin scholars tend to make light of the dimension of the future life in their discussions on eschatology.

However, in Calvin's doctrine of the eternal life, there is more to something important than meets the eye. Calvin asserted that human soul is immortal and the resurrection of the body is the final goal of our salvation. Calvin thinks that the essence of the Christian Religion is to save sinners through the ministry of the Gospel. According to Calvin, the final goal of salvation is to partake in the heavenly immortality and the glorious blessing of resurrection.⁵⁾ We can understand the real value and meaning of

3) For example, A. Ritschl's moral eschatology, C. H. Dodd's realized eschatology, R. Bultmann's existential eschatology, and K. Barth's paradoxical eschatology, etc. Cf. Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*(Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1979), 288-316 ; David E. Aune, "The Significance of the Delay of the Parousia for Early Christianity," in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne(Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1975), 87-109.

4) Charles E. Raynal's article "John Calvin's Teaching about Eternal Life" shows a via media style on Calvin's eschatology. He seeks a balance between the enjoyment and use of the things of this life and its final purpose in the life to come. See C. E. Raynal, "John Calvin's Teaching about Eternal Life," *Calvin Studies* V(Jan 19-20, 1990), 73 ; In case of Heinrich Quistorp's *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*(London : Lutterworth Press, 1955), there is clear aspect of Barthian interpretation on the human soul and the immortality.

5) John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. and tr. F. L. Battles(Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, 1960), III, 25, 3. Hereafter cited as *Inst.*, III, 25, 3.

our Religion through the teaching of Calvin on the eternal life. Especially, Christian ministers can do their preaching ministries powerfully with assurance of faith through this doctrine of the eternal life. Calvin's teaching about eternal life and resurrection gives us the practical significance and the spiritual benefits for our Christian works.

2. Main Characteristics of Calvin's Eschatology

1) Eschatology as the Consummation of Christian Salvation

Traditionally, the name "eschatology" is defined as the doctrine of the last things, in relation either to human individuals or to the whole world. In this latter respect eschatology is often restricted to the absolute end of the world.⁶⁾ Christian eschatology may therefore denote the consummation of God's purpose in relation to human being or to the world history. Generally, the Reformed dogmaticians emphasize the meaning of consummation in dealing with this doctrine.⁷⁾ It means that they want to lay stress on the eternal decree of God for the purpose of showing Reformed world-view that God

6) F. F. Bruce, "Eschatology," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell(Grand Rapids : Baker, 1984), 362.

7) For example, see Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*(Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1939), 666-67 : "The name 'eschatology' calls attention to the fact that the history of the world and of the human race will finally reach its consummation. Besides this general, there is also an individual, eschatology that must be taken into consideration. For the individual the end of the present existence comes with death, which transfers him completely from the present into the future age."

governs history by his power and wisdom.

Of course, it is true that this idea came from Calvin's God-centered theology. The Reformed theological basis originated from Calvin's historical dynamism is found either in his doctrine of the sovereignty of God or in his doctrine of predestination. Without doubt Calvin's view of the sovereignty of God and of his predetermining will gives considerable impetus to his view of history.⁸⁾ Holwerda calls it the "push-view" of history. He said that God is pushing history toward its destiny.⁹⁾

However, we can easily find the fact that Calvin always stresses the salvation of sinners in his writings. Contrary to the opinions often propounded, it is to be noted that Calvin's theology is characterized as its soteriological interpretation about every doctrine. Calvin's real concern was not in the earthly things but the "heavenly things."¹⁰⁾

It goes without saying that Calvin's theology has a deep concern for the improvements of political, economical situation of this world. We admit the fact that the theology of common grace and "sphere sovereignty" of Kuyper¹¹⁾ is very useful doctrine in our society. But Calvin's real concern was not showing an idea of social welfare but giving faith in the Gospel

8) Holwerda, 313.

9) Ibid.

10) *Inst.*, I. 8. 1; II. 7-10; III. 9-10. In the strict sense of the word, Calvin deals with the earthly things only in Book II, 2. 12-17.

11) A. Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939). Cf. W. P. Armstrong, ed., *Calvin and the Reformation*(Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980); H. Henry Meeter, *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism*(Grand Rapids: Baker, 1939); Berkhof, 446f.

and eternal salvation. It is clear that Calvin stated that we ought to seek especially the Gospel in the Bible. His main interest was to save sinners. He was not interested in producing a good piece 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.¹²⁾ For this reason we can call Calvin's eschatology also a "soteriological eschatology."

There is one other thing that is important. Calvin rearranged the order of salvation in his *Institutes*(1559 edition) book III. We can easily find the general order of theological *loci* like "predestination(election) in doctrine of God" and "general resurrection in doctrine of the last things" in common theological works of Reformed scholars. However, Calvin discussed the doctrines of predestination and resurrection in the context of doctrine of salvation.¹³⁾ Calvin wanted to emphasize the fact that our religion is a religion of salvation. For Calvin, the importance of keeping the heavenly truth of salvation cannot be overemphasized. His magnum opus *Institutes* shows the important fact that the final goal of salvation is our resurrection, namely our heavenly glorification.

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

13) Calvin explained the meaning and benefits of the doctrine of predestination in his *Institutes* book III, chapter 21-24, and discussed the doctrine of resurrection as our final goal of salvation.

Therefore, whatever has so far been explained concerning our salvation calls for minds lifted up to heaven, Accordingly, he alone fully profited in the gospel who has accustomed himself to continual meditation upon the blessed resurrection.¹⁴⁾

Therefore, we must not forget the importance of salvation in discussing of every article on Christian doctrines. There is considerable validity in our point that Christian eschatology must have a soteriological goal. The first thing we notice in our discussion of doctrine of the last things is that Calvin and the Reformed theologians always stress the accomplishment or completion(consummation) of Divine Decrees. The same applies to Calvin's individual eschatology. It is necessary to keep in mind that the consummation of salvation is the main concern of Calvin's doctrine of the last things.

2) The Immortality of the Soul and The Resurrection of the Body

It should first be noted that the idea of the immortality of the soul is not a concept peculiar to Christianity. It has been held, in some form or other, by a great number of peoples. The concept of the immortality of the soul was developed in the mystery religion of ancient Greece and was given philosophical writings of Plato.¹⁵⁾ In Plato's view, the immortality of the soul

14) *Inst.*, III, 25, 1.

15) A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*(Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1979), 86. Cf. John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*(London : Collins, 1976), 58 : "The matter-of-factness of the primitive's after-life belief is stressed

is rooted in a rationalistic metaphysics. The soul is considered a superior substance, whereas the body is of inferior substance, mortal, and doomed for total destruction. In this system of thought, there is no room for the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.¹⁶⁾

Therefore, Oscar Cullmann denies apparently this doctrine of the immortality of the soul as biblical teaching. He asserted that the idea of the immortality is simply an accommodation to the mythological expressions of the thought of ancient time.¹⁷⁾ Comparing Socrates with Jesus, he says : "there is Socrates, calmly and composedly speaking of the immortality of the soul ; here Jesus, weeping and crying."¹⁸⁾ He thinks that Jesus Christ knew the real meaning of death(namely, total death of the soul and the body), but Socrates did not know the exact meaning of death(this means that Socrates believed only death of the body).

by J. G. Frazer in his monumental three-volume work, *The Belief in Immortality*, when he says that 'it is impossible no to be struck by the strength, and perhaps we may say the universality, of the natural belief in immortality among the savage races of mankind. With them a life after death is not a matter of speculation and conjecture, of hope and fear ; it is a practical certainty which the individual as little dreams of doubting as he doubts the reality of his conscious existence'"(Cited in J. G. Frazer, *The Belief in Immortality and the Worship of the Dead*, vol. I, 468).

16) *Ibid.*, 87.

17) Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead?* (New York : The Macmillan Company, 1958), 8.

18) *Ibid.*, 24. Cullmann explains the contrast between Greek thought of the immortality and Christian doctrine of the resurrection. Immortality is a negative assertion : the soul does not die, but simply lives on. Resurrection is a positive assertion : the whole man, who has really died, is recalled to life by a new act of creation by God(p. 27).

Cullmann's main idea is that it is death and not the body which must be conquered by the resurrection.¹⁹⁾ According to Cullmann, resurrection of the body is a new act of creation which embraces everything, it is not an event which begins with each individual death, but only at the End. He cries out that Jesus died and he arose with body and soul after he was fully and really dead.²⁰⁾

Now the question must be asked, "Do the scriptures ever use the expression the immortality of the soul? Do they teach the soul of man is immortal?" Anthony Hoekema concludes that the Scriptures do not use the expression "the immortality of the soul."²¹⁾ Some Reformed theologians like Z. Ursinus, A. A. Hodge, William G. T. Shedd, and Louis Berkhof have used and defended the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.²²⁾ However, Herman Bavinck, G. C. Berkouwer, A. Hoekema, H. Hoeksema, and H. Quistorp reject the idea that the immortality of the soul is a Christian doctrine.²³⁾

19) Ibid., 26.

20) Ibid., 38.

21) Hoekema, 88. He enumerates following observations : 1) The Scriptures do not use the expression "the immortality of the soul." 2) The Scripture do not teach the continual existence of the soul by virtue of its inherent indestructibility. 3) The Scripture do not teach that mere continued existence after death is supremely desirable, but insist that life in fellowship with God is man's greatest good. 4) The central message of Scripture about the future of man is that of the resurrection of the body(pp. 89-91).

22) Z. Ursinus, *The Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, tr. G. W. Williard(Phillipsburg : Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1852), 309-12 ; A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*(Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1957), 549-52 ; W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*(New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888), 612-19 ; Berkhof, 672.

23) H. Bavinck, *Gerereformeerde Dogmatiek*, 4th ed., IV, 567(cited from

Calvin, in his commentary on the first Corinthians, teaches that the first man Adam had an immortal soul which was not derived from the earth at all.²⁴⁾ He speaks of the immortality of the soul as an acceptable doctrine. Calvin teaches that the soul is endowed with essence.²⁵⁾ He thought that unless the soul were something essential, separate from the body, Scripture would not teach that we dwell in houses of clay(Job 4 : 19) and at death leave the tabernacle of the flesh, putting off what is corruptible so that at the last day we may finally receive our reward, according as each of us has done in the body.²⁶⁾

Calvin asserted that it would be foolish to seek a definition of soul from the philosophers. He strongly holds the position that the soul is an incorporeal substance and the chief activity of the soul is to aspire the heavenly life.²⁷⁾ Holwerda shows that Calvin did hold to what is essentially a philosophical doctrine of the immortality of the soul.²⁸⁾ But like most of the early church

Hoekema, 89) ; G. C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics, Man : The Image of God*(Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1962), 276 ; H. Hoekema, 86-91 ; H. Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*(Grand Rapids : Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1966), 747-49 ; H. Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*(London : Lutterworth, 1955), chapter 2(Korean edition, 102-104).

24) J. Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries : A New Translation*, ed. D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, tr. J. W. Fraser(Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1960), 15 : 47. Hereafter cited as *Comm.* on 1 Cor. 15 : 47.

25) *Inst.*, I. 15. 2. But Karl Barth denies the independent essence of the human soul. He thinks that human being(soul and body) as a whole itself is a soul. He explains as follows : For in the language of the Bible the soul is simply the earthly life of man, and not at all divine or heavenly component of his being." K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/2, 16.

26) Ibid.

27) *Inst.*, I. 15. 6.

fathers, Calvin modified the Platonic doctrine by means of the doctrine of creation. The soul is not immortal in and of itself.

According to Plato, the soul is eternal and must have had a pre-existence in the ideal world where it learned about the eternal Ideals.²⁹⁾ Plato taught that beings other than man possess souls, but only man's soul is immortal.³⁰⁾ Aristotle also believed that man possesses an immortal soul, and by its very nature human soul is immortal.³¹⁾ But Calvin stressed the fact that immortality is a gift of God and the life of the soul is continually dependent on the grace and will of God.³²⁾

He(Paul) now says that God alone is immortal, that we may know that we and all his creatures do not live of ourselves, but only borrow life from him. From this it follows that when we look up to God as the source of immortality, we should hail this present life as of no worth. For if you take away God's strength which is instilled in the human soul, it will immediately fade away Thus, strictly speaking, immortality does not have its seat in the souls either of men or angels, but it imparted from another source—the secret inspiration of God,

Calvin emphasized the doctrine of the immortality due to the

28) Holwerda, 315.

29) W. S. Sahakian, *History of Philosophy*(New York : Barns & Noble Books, 1968), 56.

30) *Ibid.*, 59.

31) *Ibid.*, 71.

32) Holwerda, 315.

33) *Comm.* on 1 Tim. 6 : 16.

importance of Christian soul's continual fellowship with God after death. He was invited by friends to refute the strange opinion that the soul falls asleep at the death of its body and wakes up at the final resurrection. He then considered it his duty to take up the pen in defense of the true doctrine, namely that the soul neither sleeps nor dies at bodily death, but remains fully alive as it is taken up in the Lord.³⁴⁾ There were also the mortalists who admit that the human soul was given with the gift of immortality when it was originally created. Yet they maintained that this gift was withdrawn after the fall, as a punishment. Calvin, however, had little difficulty showing that this idea did not come from the Scripture.³⁵⁾

At the time of Calvin, the Anabaptists in general all held that souls being departed from the body, cease to live until the day of the resurrection. There is, however, some difference between them. For some do not think that the soul is a substance, or an entity having essence, but solely the power that a man possesses while alive. The others, acknowledging the soul is an essence, nevertheless imagine that the souls of the deceased sleep without any feeling or consciousness, until the day of judgment.³⁶⁾ For

34) George H. Tavard, *The Starting Point of Calvin's Theology*(Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 2000), 1. The doctrine of soul sleep was actually of Italian origin. It had been condemned at the Lateran Council of 1513, and was advocated by Renato and Servetus. Even Luther was inclined in the direction of this concept, and that was why Bucer and Capito advised Calvin against publishing his treatise on the subject. See Wilhelm Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, tr. W. Heyen(Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1981), 31f.

35) *Ibid.*, 84-85.

36) Benjamin Farley, tr. and ed., *John Calvin : Treatises Against the*

this reason, he wanted to refute the Anabaptists teaching, he must first of all demonstrate that souls have a proper essence, and, secondly that after death, souls sense and recognize their condition and state.³⁷⁾

Calvin thinks that Jesus Christ cannot rule over us if we are not alive. For this reason, if his empire extends to the dead, it follows that believers after death subsists in some form of essence.³⁸⁾ Besides, when it is said that souls cry in asking vengeance of God(Revelation 6 : 9), it is thereby shown that they can't be sleeping souls.³⁹⁾ In case of Luke 23 : 43, the word "paradise," Calvin said, is not a figure of speech referring to a specific place, but rather the joy and happiness that those experience who live with Christ. Jesus Christ did not defer the sinner until the day of the resurrection, but he appointed that very same day as the one for him to live eternally in fellowship with Christ.⁴⁰⁾

Calvin asserted that the word "sleep" does not belong to the soul but ought to be attributed entirely to the body.⁴¹⁾ He considers it is proper to attribute immortality to the soul by the grace of God, and it is appropriate for us to consider what particular quality and nature God has given to souls : which is to subsist by His hand in order to enjoy immortal blessedness.⁴²⁾

Anabaptists and Against the Libertines(Grand Rapids : Baker, 1982), 119-120.

37) Ibid., 120.

38) Ibid., 126.

39) Ibid., 127.

40) Ibid., 128.

41) Ibid., 144.

Calvin maintains that the soul of man is not of the earth. It was made by the mouth of the Lord, i.e., by his secret power.⁴³⁾ The spirit or soul of man is a substance distinct from the body. And the soul, after the death of the body, still survives, endued with sense and intellect.⁴⁴⁾ Calvin asked, "If an entrance has been given into eternal life(John 5 : 24), why do they interrupt it by death? He promises us two things—eternal life, and the resurrection."⁴⁵⁾ Depending upon the Apostles' Creed, which is the Compendium of our Faith, Calvin emphasized the resurrection, not of the soul, but of the body.⁴⁶⁾ It is reasonable to suppose that Calvin wanted to build up the doctrine of the immortality of the soul in an attempt to stress the eternal fellowship with God.

Calvin's defense of the immortality of the soul is a part of his larger teaching about the eternal life. He thinks that to limit the purpose of God to the physical body was to deny eternal life.⁴⁷⁾ Proponents of the hellenization thesis frequently charge that to emphasize the immortality of the soul undercuts the hope for the final resurrection. For Calvin, to the contrary, the two are aspects of the same teaching. Calvin relates personal immortality

42) Ibid., 151. See Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, in *Selected Works of John Calvin : Tracts and Letters*, vol. 3, Tracts, Part 3, ed. and tr. Henry Beveridge(Grand Rapids : Baker, 1983), 419-20 : "We, on the other hand, maintain both that it is a substance, and after the death of the body truly lives, being endued both with sense and understanding."

43) *Psychopannychia*, 423.

44) Ibid., 427.

45) Ibid., 440.

46) Ibid., 470.

47) Raynal, 79.

and resurrection by saying that the beatitude of those souls who at death live in the presence of God is the hope of a blessed resurrection.⁴⁸⁾ The Scots Confession, following Calvin, said :

The chosen departed are in peace, and rest from their labors ; not that they sleep and are lost in oblivion as some fanatics hold, for they are delivered from all fear and torment, and all the temptations to which we and all God's chosen are subject in this life, and because of which we are called the *Kirk Militant*.⁴⁹⁾

The Westminster Confession of Faith, which is totally Calvinistic, also said :

The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption ; but their souls(which neither die nor sleep), having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they beheld the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies ; and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torment and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none. At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed ; and all the dead shall be raised up with the selfsame bodies, and none other,

48) Ibid.

49) *The Scots Confession*, Chapter XVII.

although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls forever.⁵⁰⁾

For Calvin, the immortality of the soul has a deep connection with the blessed resurrection. For this reason, he rejected two delusions—one is a thought that, as if the whole man were to die, that souls would be resurrected with bodies, and another is a thought that while conceding the immortality of the soul, but souls are to be clothed with new bodies, namely, denied the resurrection of the body.⁵¹⁾ Calvin concluded his doctrine of resurrection with the following words :

“Let us always have in mind the eternal happiness, the goal of resurrection—a happiness of whose excellence the minutest part would scarce be told if all were said that the tongues of all men can say.”⁵²⁾

3. Reality and Benefits of the Future Life

1) The Goal of Faith and the Purpose of the Knowledge of God

Dr. Chul-Ha Han, in his article “The goal of faith in John Calvin,” asserted that Calvin concentrated on the only one problem, i. e., the religion of ‘salvation by faith.’⁵³⁾ His

50) *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter XXXII, art. 1 and 2.

51) *Inst.*, III. 25. 6.

52) *Inst.*, III. 25. 10.

salvation-centered interpretation on Calvin is based upon especially *Institutes* IV. 1. 1. He thinks that *Institutes* IV. 1. 1. is Calvin's own summary statement about *Institutes* book III.

As explained in the previous book(*Institutes* III), it is by the faith in the gospel that Christ becomes ours and we are made partakers of the salvation and eternal blessedness brought by him.⁵⁴⁾

In this short sentence, Dr. Han points out 3 elements about the central truth of Christian Religion :

- 1) Christianity is the religion of "sola fide" as taught by the Reformers, that is, the religion of "faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ."
- 2) The purpose of the gospel preaching is to bring Christ to the believers so that they may embrace by faith Christ and all his benefits.
- 3) The benefits which Christ brings to us is summarized as "salvation and eternal blessedness."⁵⁵⁾

According to Calvin, "salvation and eternal blessedness" is the ultimate goal of faith. Calvin, in his *Institutes* III. 2. 1., says about the true nature and the ultimate goal of faith :

53) Chul-Ha Han, "The Goal of Faith in John Calvin," A Paper read at the 8th Asian Congress on Calvin Research(Seoul : Jan. 22-24), 1.

54) *Inst.*, IV. 1. 1.

55) Han, 1.

But now we ought to examine what this faith to be like, through which those adopted by God as his children come to possess the Heavenly Kingdom, since it is certain that no mere opinion or even persuasion is capable of bringing so great a thing to pass.⁵⁶⁾

At the very outset of the chapter 2(doctrine of faith) of book III(soteriology), Calvin states clearly what the ultimate goal of faith is, that is, "being adopted by God as his children and coming to possess the heavenly kingdom." Indeed this is the ultimate goal of believers.⁵⁷⁾ This goal of faith must be such a kind by which such a great thing happen, that is, a sinner being adapted a son of God and coming into eternal life.⁵⁸⁾ Dr. Han, in his article, concludes his investigation on Calvin's view of "the goal of faith" as follows :

- 1) There is a center in our faith(saving faith or faith in the gospel), that is, God's good will toward us.
- 2) The true nature of faith is such faith by which we are made true believers : all our sins forgiven and adapted as God's children and come to possess the kingdom of heaven, namely, we are made partakers in the salvation and eternal blessedness brought by Christ.⁵⁹⁾

56) *Inst.*, III. 2. 1.

57) Han, "The Goal of Faith," 4.

58) *Ibid.*

59) *Ibid.*, 16.

Calvin's doctrine of faith clearly shows that the goal of faith is obtaining the eternal life. Calvin emphasizes the fact that Christ came endowed with the Holy Spirit to separate us from the world and to gather us unto the hope of the eternal inheritance.⁶⁰⁾ Calvin's definition of true faith shows that it is a faith which distinguishes us from the unbelievers, by which we call upon God as Father, by which we cross over from death into life, and by which Christ, eternal salvation and life, dwells in us.⁶¹⁾ Citing Hebrews 3:7, Calvin says that the author of Hebrews considers that no one hopes well in the Lord except him who confidently glories in the inheritance of the Heavenly Kingdom.⁶²⁾

According to Calvin, faith assures us not of earthly prosperity but of God's eternal blessedness in heaven. Faith does not promise itself either length of years or honor or riches in this life, since the Lord willed that none of these things be appointed for us. Rather, the chief assurance of faith rests in the expectation of the life to come.⁶³⁾ Calvin explains the very nature of faith as looking to a future immortality after this life.⁶⁴⁾ In his discussion about the relationship between faith

60) *Inst.*, III, 2, 2.

61) *Inst.*, III, 2, 14.

62) *Inst.*, III, 2, 16.

63) *Inst.*, III, 2, 28.

64) *Inst.*, III, 2, 40: "Then, how absurd it is that the certainty of faith be limited to some point of time, when by its very nature it looks to a future immortality after this life is over! Since, therefore, believers ascribe to God's grace the fact that, illumined by his Spirit, they enjoy through faith the contemplation of heavenly life,"

and hope, Calvin stresses again the importance of the eternal life.

Yet, wherever this faith is alive, it must have along with it the hope of eternal salvation as its inseparable companion. Or rather, it engenders and brings forth hope from itself. faith believes that eternal life has been given to us, hope anticipates that it will some time be revealed.⁶⁵⁾

In Calvin's doctrine of faith, it is enough to prove that the goal of faith is eternal life. It should also be added the fact that the purpose of the knowledge of God is also to possess eternal life. Calvin shows that the final goal of the blessed life rests in the knowledge of God,⁶⁶⁾ and that the purpose of this kind of knowledge ought not only to arouse us to the worship of God but also to awaken and encourage us to the hope of the future life.⁶⁷⁾ Calvin thinks that the examples that the Lord shows us both of his clemency and of his severity in this world are imperfect and incomplete. Therefore, he lay stress on the fact that we must consider this to presage even greater things, and the manifestation and full exhibition of which are deferred to future life.⁶⁸⁾

In his doctrine of the Bible, Calvin uses such expressions so many times, namely, "the heavenly truth," "the heavenly

65) *Inst.*, III, 2, 42.

66) *Inst.*, I, 5, 1.

67) *Inst.*, I, 5, 10.

68) *Ibid.*

doctrine," "the heavenly mystery," and "the heavenly teaching" etc.⁶⁹⁾ Criticizing the fanatics, Calvin proclaims that the use of Scripture is to lead us to the final goal, namely, the eternal life.⁷⁰⁾ It is necessary that we should scrutinize *Institutes* book II for the purpose of confirming our thesis. Calvin asserted that the Old Testament patriarchs participated in the same inheritance and hoped for a common salvation with us by the grace of the same Mediator.⁷¹⁾ He holds that carnal prosperity and happiness did not constitute the goal set before the Jews to which they were to aspire. Rather, they were adopted into the hope of immortality.⁷²⁾ Surely the gospel does not confine men's heart to delight in the present life, but lifts them to the hope of immortality. Likewise, Calvin teaches us that the Old Testament also looks to the future life.⁷³⁾ Calvin's interpretation on the Old Testament apparently shows that it always had its end in Christ and in eternal life.⁷⁴⁾

In his exposition of the moral law, Calvin said that God promised both blessings in the present life and everlasting blessedness to those who obediently keep his commandments.⁷⁵⁾

69) *Inst.*, I. 6-8.

70) *Inst.*, I. 9. 1.

71) *Inst.*, II. 10. 1.

72) *Inst.*, II. 10. 2.

73) *Inst.*, II. 10. 3: "It(the gospel) does not fasten them to earthly pleasures, but by announcing a hope that rests in heaven it, so to speak, transports them thither. When the apostle says that the promises of the gospel are contained in it, he proves with utter clarity that the Old Testament was particularly concerned with the future life."

74) *Inst.*, II. 10. 4.

75) *Inst.*, II. 8. 4.

Calvin believed that without doubt the Old Testament fathers entered into God's immortal Kingdom. For theirs was a real participation in God, which cannot be without the blessing of eternal life.⁷⁶⁾ Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and other patriarchs believed in God's promises and cleaved to God, but they experienced such troubles as do not permit a man to be happy on earth. Generally, their days upon earth have been not good. Rather, they have passed their lives in continual misery.⁷⁷⁾

In a nutshell, Calvin's main thesis is that the blessedness of the ancient people was not earthly, but heavenly. The patriarchs sought for everlasting life. Calvin cited many passages from the Psalms, Job, and the writings of the prophets for the purpose of showing the fact that the hope of the ancient believers rises above present calamities to the future life.⁷⁸⁾ In his own summary and conclusion about the doctrine of Scripture(especially the relationship between the Old and New Testament), Calvin said :

- 1) the Old Testament fathers had Christ as pledge of their covenant,
- 2) and put in him all trust of future blessedness,
- 3) the Old Testament or Covenant that the Lord had made with the Israelites had not been limited to earthly things, but contained a promise of spiritual and eternal life. Christ the Lord promises to his followers today no other "Kingdom of Heaven" than that in which they may "sit at

76) *Inst.*, II. 10. 7.

77) *Inst.*, II. 10. 10-19.

78) *Inst.*, II. 10. 15-22.

table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”(Mt. 8 : 11).⁷⁹⁾

In addition to the above mentioned testimonies, Calvin stressed the central truth about eternal life in the whole Scripture through the discussion of the difference between the two Testaments. Calvin strongly said that he admit the difference in Scripture, to which attention is called, but in such a way as not to detract from its established unity. He thinks that the promises of the Old and the New Testament are fundamentally same. The Lord of old willed that his people direct and elevate their minds to the heavenly heritage ; yet, to nourish them better in this hope, he displayed it for them to see and, so to speak, taste, under earthly benefits. But now that the gospel has more plainly and clearly revealed the grace of the future life.⁸⁰⁾ It follows from what has been said thus far that the purpose of our Lord written in the Old and the New Testament is our blessed eternal life in heaven.

2) Spiritual Benefits of Meditation on the Future Life

For Calvin, the doctrine of the essence of the soul and the doctrine of the immortality made an impact upon his famous “meditation on the future life.”⁸¹⁾ The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is especially important in Calvin’s teaching about eternal life. Calvin followed the doctrine of creationism in the

79) *Inst.*, II. 10. 23.

80) *Inst.*, II. 11. 1.

81) Holwerda, 318.

discussion of the origin of the human soul. And he emphasized the preeminence of the soul.⁸²⁾ His thought on the preeminence of the soul is based upon his special interest on the immortality of the soul and eternal life. Calvin can say that without any doubt “man was made for meditation upon the heavenly life.”⁸³⁾ The first man had an immortal soul which was not derived from earth at all, it is the chief activity of the soul to aspire to heaven.⁸⁴⁾ Therefore, the preeminence of the soul is ultimately rooted in redemption.⁸⁵⁾ The soul is clearly preeminent, and because it is immortal “salvation is properly ascribed to it.”⁸⁶⁾

According to Calvin, in the beginning God made us after his image that he might arouse our minds both to zeal for virtue and to meditation upon eternal life. Calvin, therefore, says that it is proper for us to recognize that we have been endowed with reason and understanding(faculties of soul) so that, by leading an holy upright life, we may press on to the appointed goal of blessed immortality.⁸⁷⁾ Calvin encourages us to think upon not only our first condition but also the purpose we were formed, that is, to be prompted to meditate upon immortality, and to yearn after the Kingdom of God.⁸⁸⁾ In relation to this, Calvin

82) *Inst.*, I. 15. 2 : “Now I understand by the term ‘soul’ an immortal yet created essence, which is his nobler part. Sometimes it is called ‘spirit.’ … the soul is endowed with essence.”

83) *Inst.*, I. 15. 6.

84) *Ibid.*

85) Holwerda, 316.

86) *Comm.* on 1 Pet. 1 : 9.

87) *Inst.*, II. 1. 1.

88) *Inst.*, II. 1. 3.

refers to the original order in God's creation of the universe. The natural order which God had in mind was that the frame of the universe should be the school in which we were to learn piety, and from it pass over to eternal life and perfect felicity.⁸⁹⁾

According to Raynal, the particular way Calvin emphasized eternal life in his theology appears in three important and related judgment: 1) Eternal life is central because the resurrection is the foundation of our faith. 2) A typological interpretation of the events of salvation in which he affirms the figural or analogical relationship between events and persons in the different dispensation of Old and New Covenants. 3) The covenantal nature of redemption—the continuing integrity of the human self in the life to come.⁹⁰⁾

Calvin's argument for the centrality of eternal life in the Bible is a coherent part of his use of relational, covenantal categories to characterize Christian faith and cannot be explained away simply as an independent metaphysical commitment to the immortality of the soul.⁹¹⁾ The decisive foundation for Calvin's eschatological vision was the conviction of the Christian community that meditates continually upon the resurrection, understands the Christian life in its light, and so embodies eternal life in "self-denial"(*Inst.*, III. 7.), "bearing the cross"(III. 8.), "meditation on the future life"(III. 9.), and "the grateful and obedient use of the things of this life"(III. 10.).⁹²⁾

89) *Inst.*, II. 6. 1.

90) Raynal, 80.

91) *Ibid.*, 83.

92) *Ibid.*, 83-84.

In other words, aspiration to eternal life determines aright our outward conduct of earthly life. Calvin's reasons for advocating contempt for the present life are not rooted primarily in Greek conception of the body-soul dichotomy, but are to be found rather in a contrast between the present life under the cross and the future life of the heavenly kingdom.⁹³⁾ Calvin's view of contempt for this world does not lead to a withdrawal from the secular world. His view of life is accurately reflected following word: "But let believers accustom themselves to a contempt of the present life that engenders no hatred of it or ingratitude against God."⁹⁴⁾ The present life is for his people as a pilgrimage on which they are hastening toward the Heavenly Kingdom. If we must simply pass through this world, there is no doubt we ought to use its good things in so far as they help rather than hinder our course.⁹⁵⁾

Therefore, Calvin is not a man of Gnosticism. Calvin, from another perspective, said that believers ought to lead a heavenly life in this world.⁹⁶⁾ Calvin's 4 main principles of Christian man's earthly life clearly show the real pattern of Christian life in relation to meditation of the future life: 1) living as if they have not earthly possessions, 2) living by keeping the rule of moderation, 3) living of the stewardship, and 4) living that looks to God's calling.⁹⁷⁾ Therefore, Calvin's doctrine of the Christian

93) Holwerda, 320.

94) *Inst.*, III. 9. 3.

95) *Inst.*, III. 10. 1.

96) *Comm.* on Phil. 3:20.

97) *Inst.*, III. 10. 4-6.

life shows the proper balance between the present life and the life to come.⁹⁸⁾ Meditation on the future life must not be conceived in the sense of otherworldly speculation. It is essentially a life of communion with God.⁹⁹⁾

The tone of Calvin's meditation of the future life sounds harsh and negative to contemporary theologians, both because of his soteriological tendency and because he uses the language of *contemptus mundi*(a contempt of the present life) from the spiritual tradition which he inherited.¹⁰⁰⁾ But Calvin wanted to express not a mere balance between the secular life and the eternal future life, but the essence of the real biblical Christianity. Calvin thinks that the blessedness of the future life in heaven is much better than the earthly riches, honor, power, fame, and secularly valuable ethics.

Let the aim of believers in judging mortal life, they may with greater eagerness and dispatch betake themselves wholly to meditate upon that eternal life to come. When it comes to a comparison with the life to come, the present life can not only be safely neglected but, compared to the former, must be utterly despised and loathed.¹⁰¹⁾

Whatever kind of tribulation presses upon us, we must ever

98) John Leith, *John Calvin : The Christian Life*(New York : Harper & Row, 1984), xi.

99) John Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*(Louisville : Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 155.

100) Raynal, 85.

101) *Inst.*, III. 9. 4.

look to this end : to accustom ourselves to contempt for the present life and to be aroused thereby to meditate upon the future life, For it is a shame for us to be no better than brute beasts, if there were not left to us hope of eternity after death.¹⁰²⁾

According to Calvin, compared with the life to come, the blessings of this life are but shadows, incapable of expressing the fulfillment of the glory of God.¹⁰³⁾ A more definite concern must be given to Calvin's concept of sin and his stress on the spiritual dimension of faith. Raynal said :

Our human tendency is to forget our mortality because "we are inclined by nature to a brutish love of this world"(*Inst.*, III. 9. 1). The trouble with us is not that we are limited, but that we seek to compensate for our limitations by overreaching our limits to provide security for ourselves(we seeks happiness on earth). This is the tendency of the human mind to be "a factory of idols." The problem with humanity is not simply finitude, but that finitude causes us to be disobedient.¹⁰⁴⁾

We must not forget the importance of "repentance and forgiveness of sins" in Calvin's theology. It is necessary to keep in mind that "faith in the gospel" is surely a starting and ending point of his theology. We must recall that Calvin discussed his

102) *Inst.*, III. 9. 1.

103) Raynal, 86.

104) *Ibid.*

eschatology for building up soteriology. Therefore, meditation on the future life or the immortality of the soul without hope of salvation will be a mere phantom. Scripture informs us that the life of the spirit depends on the hope of resurrection, and to this souls released from the body look with expectancy. Whoever destroys the resurrection is also depriving souls of immortality.¹⁰⁵⁾ Calvin relates meditation on the future life to the heavenly glorification and immortality of the soul ultimately to the resurrection of the body.¹⁰⁶⁾ Calvin, in his commentary on 1 John, said :

For he does not tell us that we shall be like Him because we shall enjoy the sight of Him, but proves that we shall be partakers of the divine glory because, unless our nature were spiritual and endued with a heavenly and blessed immortality, it could never come so near to God.¹⁰⁷⁾

Calvin highly estimates the value of salvation from the fact that we will become like glorified Christ in heaven. He pointed out the fact that our whole man will be changed like Christ. As the soul is immortal, salvation is properly ascribed to it, as Paul sometimes is accustomed to say—"That the soul may be saved in the day of the Lord"(1 Cor. 5 : 5). It is the same as though he had said "Eternal salvation." At the same time, the body is not excluded from participation in glory in so far as it is connected

105) *Comm.* on Mt. 22 : 23.

106) Holwerda, 322.

107) *Comm.* on 1 Jn. 3 : 2.

to the soul.¹⁰⁸⁾ Here, in this context, Calvin thinks about the ascended Christ in heaven. Holwerda pointed out very important fact that the ascended Christ dominates Calvin's thinking about eschatology.¹⁰⁹⁾ In Calvin's Christology, ascension goes along with resurrection. Christ was received up into heaven, that He might draw us up with Him.¹¹⁰⁾ Therefore, meditation on the future life is not a flight from this world in favor of another heavenly world, but it is always a seeking Christ in heaven. Calvin said that we must seek Christ nowhere else but in heaven, while we wait the final restoration of all things.¹¹¹⁾

It will be the most important benefit for us to use this doctrine in our pastoral or teaching ministries. Because contemporary Christian societies generally have no faith in God's spiritual power and do not know his heavenly riches. Especially, it is the most serious problem for Christian leaders today that they have no interest in the spiritual benefits of this doctrine, and do not know the value of the future life in heaven. For this reason, we must stress and teach this doctrine diligently in our churches and seminaries.

4. Conclusion

Calvin asserted that human soul is immortal and the

108) *Comm.* on 1 Pet. 1 : 9.

109) Holwerda, 326.

110) *Comm.* on Col. 3 : 1.

111) *Comm.* on Acts. 3 : 21.

resurrection of the body is the final goal of our salvation. He thinks that the essence of the Christian Religion is to save our souls through the ministry of the Gospel(here, according to Calvin, the sum of the gospel is held to consist in repentance and remission of sins). According to Calvin, the final goal of our salvation is to partake in the heavenly immortality(of the soul) and the glorious blessing of resurrection(of the body) like our Lord Jesus Christ.

Calvin rejected the Anabaptist theory of "soul-sleep"(soul is unconscious until the final resurrection), and the other theory that the soul dies with the body at the time of death(so-called total death like Cullmann's view). However, Calvin strongly maintained that human soul is an independent substance(Barth denies it), and after death of the body truly lives, being endowed both with sense and understanding for the purpose of having real fellowship with God. Calvin thinks that Adam had an immortal soul and the chief activity of the soul is to aspire to heaven. Calvin said that man was made for meditation upon the heavenly life with his soul. Of course, we need the grace of Christ to get eternal life after the fall. Calvin's defense of the immortality of the soul is a presupposition of his teaching about eternal life.

Many proponents of the hellenization thesis concerning this doctrine often charge that to emphasize the immortality of the soul is a great mistake about the Christian conception of the final resurrection. However, for Calvin, the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body are two aspects of the

same biblical teaching. He relates immortality and resurrection by saying that the beatitude of those souls who at death live in the presence of God is the hope of a blessed resurrection. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul(including resurrection) made an impact on Calvin's doctrine of meditation on the future life. Here comes his doctrine of contempt for the world. But Calvin's view of *contemptus mundi* does not lead to a withdrawal from the world. He maintains that compared with the eternal life, the blessings of this life are but sinful shadows. Therefore, believers ought to lead a heavenly life in this world. Meditation of the future life is not a rejection of this world, but it is always a seeking of Christ in heaven. We must ascend into heaven with the faith of resurrection, because when He had been raised from the dead, He was received up into heaven, that He might draw us up with Him(*Comm.* on Col. 3:1).

Contemporary liberal theologians generally are inclined to dismiss eternal life and the spiritual dimension of Scriptural truths. However, if Christian workers today take Calvin's doctrine of eternal life as biblical, they will do their preaching ministries more powerfully than ever with certainty. It is our firm belief that Calvin's teaching about eternal life gives us spiritual benefits and practical power in our pastoral ministry.