

Calvin's Anthropological View and the Development of the Third World Theology of Mission with Special Reference to Kosuke Koyama's Doctrine of Human Beings

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Introduction

Calvin's anthropology is a part of his theological stance that has unfortunately received little attention from theologians, even those of Calvin's scholars. This fact shows that the majority of scholars tend to show a preference to research and expose Calvin's other views, such as his doctrine of God and soteriology. Mary Potter Engel precisely points this out when she wrote this comment, "Calvin's anthropology has been one of the doctrines most neglected by scholars." After saying these words, she directly points out its reason, "One reason for this [is] . . . Calvin's theocentrism which has drawn most attention and praise."¹

This essay will examine Calvin's anthropological view, especially three aspects of it: (a) the image of God (*imago dei*), (b) the sense of divinity (*sensus divinitatis*), and (c) human freedom. It is assumed that these three aspects of humanity have great influence in the future of the development of a theology of mission in general and an Asian theology of mission in particular. It is necessary to mention as well that this theology of mission has a close relationship with the construction of the theology of world religions. Since there are a great number of Calvin's writings and other secondary literatures related to them, this research would be focused

¹Mary Potter Engel, *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1982), 1.

only on his magnum opus, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Before addressing the contribution of Calvin's anthropological view to the theology of mission in Third World (Asian) context, a brief comparison to a prominent Asian theologian as well as missiologist, Kosuke Koyama, will be drawn. The aim of this comparison is to broaden and deepen the issue with which this paper deals.

The contour of this essay will be as follows. The first chapter will expose Calvin's view of humanity, with particular attention given to its three aspects: the image of God, the sense of divinity, and human freedom. In the second chapter, Kosuke Koyama's anthropological view will be addressed. I will also make a brief comparison between his view and Calvin's anthropological views. Before the conclusion, the fourth chapter will draw some implications from these two theologians' views of human being, which contribute to the development of Third World (Asian) theology of mission.

John Calvin's View of Human Beings

In general, the majority of theologians state that the anthropological view of John Calvin is characterized by its pessimistic-negativistic nature. Furthermore, his anthropology cannot be separated from his doctrine of God. All aspects of Calvin's theology, including its anthropology, have been centered in the doctrine of God—specifically in the sovereignty of God. David Smith underlines this fact when he says, "Calvin's theology began and ended with the sovereignty of God."² As we examine Calvin's *Institutes*, it is obvious that Calvin states the same matter, "... since God's will is said to be the cause of all things, I have made his providence the determinative principle for all human plans and works ..."³ For this reason, in dealing with Calvin's view of humanity we must always put it into the context of the doctrine of God.

There are many aspects of Calvin's doctrine of human being that

²David L. Smith, *With Willful Intent: A Theology of Sin* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1994), 73-74.

³John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religions*, ed. J.T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1.18.2, 232.

we can examine. In this paper, however, I am choosing only three aspects of his doctrine, which I suppose have the most relevance in the development of the theology of mission, especially in an Asian context. They are (1) the image of God, (2) the sense of divinity, and (3) human freedom (freewill).

1. The image of God (*imago dei*)

Calvin's exposition of the image of God is found both in his first and second books. In the first book, *imago dei* is discussed quite extensively in parts 1.1.5 and 1.1.15, and is placed in a broader context of the knowledge of God. In 1.1.5 *imago dei* is exposed in general scope whereas in 1.1.15—the passage on man as originally created—Calvin gives extensive treatment to the subsequent topic. In the second book, he addresses the image of God in the context of the falling of humankind.

Before we come to the detailed analysis of the image of God, it is advantageous for us to understand how Calvin describes this term. Calvin explicates *imago dei* as “the perfect excellence of human nature which shone in Adam before his defection, but was subsequently so vitiated and almost blotted out that nothing remains after the ruin except what is confused, mutilated, and disease-ridden. Therefore in some part it now is manifest in the elect, in so far as they have been reborn in the spirit; but it will attain its full splendor in heaven.”⁴ It is apparently a brief and simple definition. We, however, need to know that Calvin then follows this definition with insightful expositions, which are neither so simple nor so easy to comprehend. Calvin's concept of the image of God and its complicated exposition is realized and confessed by some theologians as one of the most difficult doctrines to solve. Richard Stauffer, as quoted by Mary Engel, is one of those who admit this fact, “Richard Stauffer recently declared the problem of *imago dei* to be ‘one of the most difficult problems in Calvin's theology.’”⁵

As we pay more attention to how Calvin dealt with this topic, we may detect his two notions of *imago dei*. The first is the general or wider

⁴Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.15.4, 190.

⁵Engel, *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology*, 1.

sense of this concept. In this sense, *imago dei* could refer to “anything in the universe created by God.”⁶ This meaning, thus, deals with all creation and serves as “a sort of mirror in which we can contemplate God.”⁷ Torrance gives further explanation of this as follows:

There is no doubt that Calvin always thinking of the *imago* in terms of a mirror. Only while the mirror actually reflects an object does it have the image of that object. There is no such thing in Calvin’s thought as an *imago* dissociated from the act of reflecting. He does use such expressions as *engrave* and *sculptured*, but only in a metaphorical sense and never dissociated from the idea of the mirror. Where the thought is of the mirroring of God, properly speaking the mirror is always the Word. “The Word itself, whatever be the way in which it is conveyed to us, is a kind of mirror in which faith beholds God. In this, therefore, whether God uses the agency of man or works immediately by his own power, it is always by His Word that He manifests Himself to those whom he designs to draw to Himself.” It is not often that Calvin uses the expression *imago dei* except in this intimate association with mirror and the word.⁸

Secondly, *imago dei*, in a narrower sense, is related to human beings exclusively, that people reflect God in a specific way, i.e., that they live in a close and unique relationship with God. In this paper, it is this second understanding of *imago dei* that will particularly be examined since it has a strong link and relevance to the theology of mission.

Going back to the definition of *imago dei*, which Calvin has proposed, we can ask some more questions about it. What exactly is the *imago dei*? Is it substantial or relational? Where does this *imago dei* settle or where can it be found in human beings? How does the fall affect this *imago dei*? How can the *imago dei* be restored? These are the questions that usually come out when many Christians are being faced with the topic of the *image of God*. Calvin seems to have these questions in his mind when he addresses the topic of *imago dei* since we could trace his expositions of such questions in his *Institutes*.

⁶T. F. Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Man* (London: Lutterworth, 1952), 37.

⁷Calvin, *Institutes* 1.5.1, 52-53.

⁸Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Man*, 36-37.

Calvin seems to hold both the substantive and relational views of the image of God. In general, the substantive view considers that "the image consists of certain characteristic within the very nature of man, characteristic which may be physical or psychological / spiritual."⁹ Related to this, we also notice these words of Calvin: "Also, a reliable proof of this matter may be gathered from the fact that man was created in God's image.... 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."¹⁰

From here we can draw some implications. First, the image of God resides in the soul of the human being. Second, since Calvin says that the soul is just a seat of the image of God, so the soul itself cannot be identified as the image of God. There exists within human beings "something" which is endowed inherently and exclusively by God. He describes it as "something divine has been engraved upon it (the human mind)"¹¹ This proves that he holds the substantive view of the image of God.

In previous discussion, we know that in Calvin's view, the human soul and its faculties (intellect and will) are not the image itself but the "seat" of the image. He proposes again this notion in these words, "the primary seat of the divine image was in the mind and heart, or in the soul and its power."¹² Calvin further describes this image as "spiritual" since it "comprehends everything which has any relation to the spiritual and eternal life."¹³ What does Calvin mean by "spiritual" in this matter? He seems to say that *imago dei* exists not in human nature itself but is "the entire excellence of human nature which shone in Adam before his defection."¹⁴ This *imago dei* is also denoted "the integrity which Adam was endowed is expressed by this word, when he had full possession of right understanding, when he had his affections kept within the bounds of reasons, all his senses

⁹Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology vol. 2* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 498.

¹⁰Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.15.3, 186.

¹¹Ibid., 1.15.2, 185.

¹²Ibid., 1.15.3, 188.

¹³Ibid., 1.15.4, 190.

¹⁴Ibid., 190.*

tempered in right order, and he truly referred his excellence to exceptional gifts bestowed upon him by his Maker."¹⁵ Calvin proceeds to specify this as knowledge of true righteousness and holiness or as a kind of light of intellect, rectitude of heart, and soundness of every part. Thus, the spiritual character of the image of God has two implications: (1) that it is the good of the soul and (2) that it is the knowledge or light of intellect. By this explanation, it is clear that Calvin's view of the soul itself is not *imago dei*. It is rather the mirror, which reflects *imago dei*. As a result, *imago dei* is the spiritual relationship of knowledge between the mirror, i.e., the human being, and whom it images, i.e., God. This endorses Calvin's relational view of the image of God. To sum up Calvin's stance in the previous matter, I quote Engel: "In Calvin's summary description of the *imago dei* in humankind the image is presented as both a natural endowment and an ordering of those endowments to that for which they were intended, namely, the glory of God. The *imago* is both a natural possession and a supernatural gift of a peculiar relationship to God; it is both a substantial endowment of the human creature and a dynamic relation between God and the human creature."¹⁶

As we proceed to examine the *Institutes*, it will be clear for us that the seat of the image of God cannot be limited to reside in the soul since he also says:

"And although the primary seat of the divine image was in the mind and the heart, or in the soul and its power, yet there was no part of man, not even the body itself, in which some sparks, did not glow."¹⁷ This means that Calvin, on the other hand, also saw the body (as well as the soul) as a locus of the image of God. Thus, borrowing Richard Prins' words, it can be proposed that "the body only participates in the image after the fashion that a candle participates in its flame by the warm glow we see in it."¹⁸

¹⁵Ibid., 1.15.3, 188.

¹⁶Engel, *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology*, 50.

¹⁷Ibid., 188.

¹⁸Richard Prins, "The Image of God in Adam and the Restoration of Man in Jesus Christ: A Study in Calvin," in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 25/1 (1972), 34-35.

Now we want to reveal what the image of God exactly is. Does it refer to reason, natural gifts, or supernatural gifts?¹⁹ From the book of Genesis we know that something happened to this image of God in the Fall. What is Calvin's view of this matter? Does he maintain that after the Fall the image of God is actually destroyed? If so, then no sinful human being possesses the image of God. Or, is it still present in humanity yet is only defected?

Reading the *Institutes*, we sense that Calvin accepts the fact that the human being is completely despoiled of his or her spiritual image. However, this does not mean that the natural gifts endowed by God are totally destroyed ontologically.²⁰ Torrance points this out when he says, "Sin does not mean an ontological break with God, for Calvin does not hold a doctrine of evil as the privation of being."²¹ He then wraps up the discussion in the following words: "There can be no doubt here the *remnant* refers to the natural gifts, while spiritually the *imago dei* is wholly defaced."²² Even after committing sin (the Fall), the human being still retains the reflection of the image of God. He or she is still a rational creature with mind and will. The natural gifts endowed by God still remain.

2. The Sense of Divinity (*Sensus Divinitatis*)

Sensus divinitatis is a theological term used for the first time by Calvin, as N.H. Gootjes says, "a term coined in all probability by John Calvin."²³ As we know, Calvin begins his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* with an exposition of the knowledge of God the Creator. In this

¹⁹Engel, *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology*, 48 ff.

²⁰It is actually not so easy to figure out what Calvin exactly said about the nature of the *imago dei* in humanity after the Fall since there are some paradoxical statements made by Calvin in this particular subject. I deliberately do not discuss this long and complicated matter because of the space limitation. The excellent account of this issue can be found in Engel's book on pages 54-61.

²¹Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, 83.

²²*Ibid.*, 95.

²³N.H. Gootjes "The Sense of Divinity: A Critical Examination of the Views of Calvin and Demarest," in *WTJ* 48/2 (1986), 337.

passage Calvin exposes *sensus divinitatis*, demonstrating it as the source of the knowledge of God in humankind. It seems that he borrowed some thoughts of past theologians such as Augustine in constructing his exposition on this subsequent topic. Nevertheless, we can say that it was Calvin who first dealt systematically with the matter *sensus divinitatis* in the broader context of the knowledge of God.

I will sketch briefly Calvin's exposition of the sense of divinity. First, he deals with the problem of the knowledge of God that is in what sense it (the knowledge of God) should be taken. For Calvin, the true knowledge of God recognizes God as He manifests himself. This also deals with some corresponding attitudes, which should follow such knowledge like: holy fear, reverence, expectation, and gratitude.²⁴ Second, he focuses on the sources of human knowledge of God as the first means by which God makes himself known to humanity—*sensus divinitatis* is discussed.²⁵ In the next discussion, Calvin explains that this kind of revelation cannot bring the intended outcome of the true knowledge of God. The sole reason for this is that it has been corrupted by sin.²⁶ Fourth, the topics such as another source of knowledge, the revelation of God in His creation, and ruling / providence of the world are explored.²⁷ Finally, still in the same chapter, Calvin proves that this revelation is inadequate to guide human beings to God in terms of faith and piety. In this situation, therefore, the word of God / scripture is absolutely necessary. From here, he proceeds to explain the significance of scripture as the sole source of knowledge of God the Creator.²⁸

What is *sensus divinitatis*? Calvin himself never set a definition of this term. To come to a definition of *sensus divinitatis* as what Calvin meant, we need to examine his explanation of this subject. In the *Institutes*, the discussion about Calvin's view of sense of divinity or *sensus divinitatis* is found in 1.1.3. In the very beginning of this part, we find his explanation

²⁴Calvin, *Institutes* 1.2.1-1.2.2, 39-43.

²⁵Ibid., 1.3.1-1.3.3, 43-47.

²⁶Ibid., 1.4.1-1.4.4, 47-51.

²⁷Ibid., 1.5.1-1.5.15, 51-69.

²⁸Ibid., 1.6.1-1.9.3, 69-96.

of the sense of divinity as follows: "Men of sound judgment will always be sure of this, that a sense of divinity (*sensus divinitatis*) which can never be effaced is engraved upon human minds. Even the recalcitrance of the impious, who have struggled furiously are unable to extricate themselves from the fear of God, is abundant testimony of conviction that God exists, is naturally inborn in all, and is fixed deep within, as it were in the very marrow."²⁹

Therefore, it is clear that the sense of divinity is something endowed at birth. Thus, all human beings without distinction have this quality or ability. We need not learn this quality in order to obtain it. Calvin goes on explaining this: "From this we conclude that this is not a doctrine that must first be learned in school, but one of which each of us is master from his mother's womb, and which nature itself permits no one to forget, although many strive with every nerve to this end."³⁰

Besides the inborn nature, Calvin also claims that the sense of divinity has been engraved upon our mind. This means that it comes from outside the human being yet becomes his or her integral as well as permanent part. "... that seed (*sensus divinitatis*) remains which can in no wise be uprooted: that there is some sort of divinity ... but this seed is so corrupted that by itself it produces only the worst fruits."³¹ This adds another quality, that is, the sense as the intuitive awareness of the existence of God in the world has been contaminated or corrupted by sin and unable to guide humanity to holy living by their own ability.

Let us set aside this contaminated *sensus divinitatis* for a while and try to examine Calvin's other comments about it in order to draw out more implications. Having had the sense of divinity engraved inbornly in their minds, human beings can perceive the existence of God as the Creator of the universe without complaint. This implies that "no nation so barbarous, no people so savage, that they have not deep-seated conviction that there is a God."³² The various world religions and beliefs embraced by humanity

²⁹Ibid., 1.3.3, 45-46.

³⁰Ibid., 1.3.3, 46.

³¹Ibid., 1.4.4, 51.

³²Ibid., 1.3.1, 44.

are the undeniable proof. Even idolatry supports what Calvin proposed. At the bottom line, it can be said that world religions are not the corrupt inventions of the devil. On the contrary, they are the natural result of the sense of divinity. We indeed did find some people abusing religion for their own benefit that caused various terrible tragedies, but this does not mean that religions in themselves are evil.

... in order to hold men's minds in great subjection, clever men have devised very many things in religion by which to inspire the common folk with reverence and to strike them with terror. But they would never have achieved this if men's mind had not already been imbued with a firm conviction about God, from which the inclination toward religion springs as from a seed. And indeed it is not credible that those who craftily imposed upon the ruler folk under pretense of religion were entirely devoid of the knowledge of God.³³

If this is so, could we step ahead saying that all religions are basically the same? Calvin obviously refused this notion as he said, "As experience shows, God has sown a seed of religion in all men. But scarcely one man in a hundred is met with who fosters it, once received, in his heart, and none in whom it ripens."³⁴ It is very clear now that the corrupted sense of divinity cannot bring humanity to salvation. Hence, what is the benefit or the worth of it? Before tackling this question, it is good for us to have a summary Calvin's view of the sense of divinity in *Institutes*. Concerning this, I want to quote Gootjes' comment below: "The sense of divinity is certain knowledge of God that God directly places into the hearts of all men. This knowledge precedes all reflexion and experience through the senses and is indestructible. It should lead to faith, but since the fall it brings man only to perverted religions".³⁵

In spite of its weakness and corruptible nature of it, the sense of divinity in humankind still has value. At least, we can say, it is the starting point from which humanity could acquire the knowledge of God. Furthermore

³³Ibid., 1.3.2, 44-45.

³⁴Ibid., 1.4.1, 47.

³⁵Gootjes, "The Sense of Divinity: A Critical Examination of the Views of Calvin and Demarest," 342.

Calvin demonstrates that from this *sensus divinitatis* human beings also obtain admiration concerning the good creation of God; awareness of the creatures' obligation to be obedient to their majestic Creator; and an overwhelming dynamic power toward piety / godliness in the face of the Creator's glory.³⁶ This knowledge of God, which is acquired through the aid of the sense of divinity, lead humanity to worship God as well as to attain hope: "Knowledge of this sort, then, ought not only to arouse us to worship of God, but also to awaken and encourage us to the hope of future life."³⁷

In these benefits, the sense of divinity does have limitations since it cannot lead human being to real faith in Jesus Christ. Calvin never states that the sense of divinity originates the belief that God is benevolent. The knowledge of sin aroused by the sense of divinity is incomplete and skewed by our inability to see clearly. Calvin also spends many pages in his *Institutes* to demonstrate the limits of the effectiveness of this knowledge / awareness of God. Although his explanation of this subject is pessimistic and negative in tone, it is evidence that he wants to underline the fact that all humanity has such intuitive knowledge of God.

From this we can ascertain that Calvin's view of the sense of divinity has implications for a theology of mission. This could support the inherent common ground in all humanity, which forms the point of contact for intercultural worldwide evangelism as well as in contextualizing the Gospel. We indeed must include two more components – the Word of God (scripture) and the work of the Holy Spirit—in this enterprise; otherwise our theology of mission will end up in vain. Derek S. Jeffreys, in his critique to Alvin Plantinga's overconfidence in the ability of the sense of divinity to produce a genuine belief in God, wrote the following:

... Calvin neither affirms that the *sensus divinitatis* produces knowledge of God's benevolence, nor states that natural beauty activates the *sensus divinitatis* to produce this belief. Because knowledge of God's benevolence is the most important kind of knowledge of Calvin, it appears that the *sensus divinitatis* is not a reliable belief-forming module. In fact,

³⁶Calvin, *Institutes* 1.5.1-1.5.10, 51-63.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 1.5.10, 62-63.

as Calvin presents it, it is decidedly unreliable. ... Without Scripture and the Holy Spirit, it leads us into an epidemic disaster. Calvin describes this disaster using one of his favorite images, the labyrinth. ... Without Scripture and the Holy Spirit, the human mind constricts itself in claustrophobic labyrinth of wandering images.³⁸

3. Human Freedom

Calvin begins his discussion of the will by establishing the direction of his inquiry. It is obvious that he tries to avoid two mistakes. First, to ignore the subject altogether, "When man is denied all uprightness, he immediately takes occasion for complacency from that fact; and, because he is said to have no ability to pursue righteousness on his own, he holds all such pursuit to be of no consequence, as if it did not pertain to him at all."³⁹

And second, to fail to give proper honor to God in effecting our redemption. To make mistake in our apprehension of the fallen will is to run the risk of debasing the glory of God.

Nothing, however slight, can be credited to man without depriving God of his honor, and without man himself falling into ruin through the brazen confidence. ... Here, then, is the course that we must follow if we are to avoid crashing upon these rocks; when man has been taught that no good things remains in his power, and that he is hedged about on all sides by most miserable necessity, in spite of this he should nevertheless be instructed to aspire to a good of which he is empty to a freedom he has been deprived. ... What, therefore, now remains for man, bare and destitute of all glory, but to recognize God for whose beneficence he could not be grateful when he abounded with the riches of his grace; and at least, by confessing his own poverty, to glorify in him in whom he did not previously glory recognition of his own blessings?⁴⁰

Now, we examine Calvin's view of the will of human beings both before and after the Fall. What does Calvin mean by free will? In the *Institutes* he recognizes it as a faculty of the human soul, which functions "to choose one or the other."⁴¹ We can say that this was the popular notion

³⁸Derek S. Jeffreys "How Reformed is Reformed Epistemology?: Alvin Plantinga and Calvin's '*Sensus Divinitatis*,'" *Religious Studies* 33 (1997), 425.

³⁹Calvin, *Institutes* 2.2.1, 242.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 2.2.1, 242.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 2.2.4, 261.

of free will at that time. The human being is depicted "to be master of both his mind and will, able of his own power to turn himself toward either good or evil."⁴² Thus, this free will is the power of contrary choice or the power to change the direction / orientation of one's life.

We identify that the above ability belongs inherently to humanity before the Fall. This reflects Calvin's notion that God created human beings in good or ideal condition. In this original state of being,

(the human being) by free will had the power, if he so willed, to attain eternal life ... Adam could have stood if he wished, seeing that he felt solely by his own will, but it was because his will was capable of being bent to one side or the other, and was not given the constancy to persevere, that he fell so easily. Yet, his choice of good and evil was free, and not that alone, but the highest rectitude was in his mind and will, and all the organic parts were rightly composed to obedience, until in destroying himself he corrupted his own blessings.⁴³

Thus, in his or her pre-Fallen condition the human being is free to incline and choose to embrace either good or evil things. Adam could have chosen to love and obey God or to reject and disobey Him. However, after the Fall, human beings no longer have the free will to make such choices. The will still remains in a fallen human being, but it is bowed or inclined to sin. The fallen will cannot move one to good things. Deprived of liberty, it is drawn to evil of necessity. Necessity is distinguished from compulsion in that it is inward as against the outward compulsion. Calvin pictures this in such words, "Man, as he was corrupted by the Fall, sinned willingly, not unwillingly or by compulsion; by the most eager inclination of his heart, not by forced compulsion; by the prompting of his own lust (*libido*), nor by compulsion from without. Yet so deprived in his nature that he can be moved or impelled only to evil."⁴⁴ Human beings' will is now in the bondage of sin. Under such a condition "the will is held bound, it cannot move toward good..."⁴⁵ Calvin adds some comments drawn from Bernard of Clairvaux to state the general condition of the fallen will, "Bernard teaches that to will

⁴²Ibid., 2.2.7, 264.

⁴³Ibid., 1.15.8, 195.

⁴⁴Ibid., 2.3.5, 295-296.

⁴⁵Ibid., 2.3.5, 294.

is in us all; but to will good is gain; to will evil, loss. Therefore simply to will is of man; to will ill, of a corrupt nature; to will well, of grace."⁴⁶ In other words, human beings both cannot and do not rationally choose or pursue what is good.

By this, Calvin does not mean that after the Fall, the whole is absolutely destroyed and totally darkened. Fallen human beings' understanding and reason still function. The fallen will is inherently active as well, yet not according to its original function. It is now weak and insecure. In the Fall, it is clear that human will is so enslaved to sin that it cannot move toward the good any longer.

For even though something of understanding and judgment remains as a residue along with the will, yet we shall not call a mind whole and sound that is both weak and plunge into deep darkness. And depravity of the will is all too well known. Since reason, therefore, by which man distinguishes between good and evil, and by which he understands and judges, is a natural gift, it could not be completely wiped out; but it was partly weakened and partly corrupted, so that its misshapen ruins appear. John speaks in this sense: "The light still shines in the darkness, but the darkness comprehends it not" [John 1:5]. In these words both facts are clearly expressed. First, in man's perverted and degenerate nature some sparks still gleam. These show him to be a rational being, differing from brute beasts, because he is endowed with understanding. Yet, secondly, they show the light choked with dense ignorance, so that it cannot come forth effectively. Similarly the will, because it is inseparable from man's nature, did not perish, but was so bound to wicked desires that it cannot strive after right.⁴⁷

How do we understand further Calvin's notion of the loss of the freedom of the will in terms of contrary choice? Does it mean that human beings are not able to make choices at all? In order to clarify this matter, we need to examine Calvin's exposition of the government of divine providence and its relation to human freedom. Mary Engel makes a fine explanation as she writes,

He [Calvin] explains that to say that the wicked sin by necessity does not mean that they do not sin by their own voluntary (*voluntaria*) and

⁴⁶Ibid., 2.3.5, 294-295.

⁴⁷Ibid., 2.2.12, 270.

deliberate (*deliberata*) wickedness. Necessity means only that God accomplishes his work, which is fixed and stable, through the work of the wicked. Nevertheless, the will (*voluntas*) and intention (*propositum*) to do evil reside in the evildoers, which make them guilty for their actions. Though sinners have lost the ability to choose freely between good and evil (*liberum arbitrium*), they have not lost the faculty *voluntas*, for they choose evil. In other words, from the perspective of humankind we can say that sin corrupts the faculty *voluntas*, but does not destroy it.⁴⁸

Consequently, this fallen human being still retains a certain freedom and Calvin endorses this. The fallen will, as Susan Schreiner notes is, "according to Calvin, inherently active." Adopting Augustine's formulation, she sums up, "Calvin stated that the original will, which could choose between good and evil, was weak and insecure. Nonetheless, Calvin insisted, "there was no necessity imposed on God of giving man other than a mediocre and transitory will, so that from man's fall, he might gather more occasion for his glory."⁴⁹

Calvin only denies the freedom of the will as the ability to make a decisive choice pertaining to his or her salvation, in which circumstance the self is dominantly and deeply involved. Free will as the power or ability to make decisive choices regarding one's salvation has been polluted and restricted by sin. In his pre-Fallen state Adam could have chosen to love God or to deny Him. He, nevertheless, did choose to commit the latter. From this Fall on, Adam and his own descendants lost this original gift. Calvin depicts the post-Fallen human being as such,

Since reason, therefore, by which man distinguishes between good and evil, and by which he understands and judges, is a natural gift, it could not be completely wiped out, but it was partly weakened and partly corrupted. ... First, in man's perverted and degenerate nature, some sparks still gleam. These show him to be a rational being, differing from brute beasts because he is endowed with understanding. ... Likewise the will, because it is inseparable from man's nature, did not perish but was so bound to wicked desires that it cannot strive after the right.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Engel, *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology*, 136-137.

⁴⁹Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin* (Durham: Labyrinth, 1991), 67.

⁵⁰Calvin, *Institutes* 2.2.12, 270.

Relation to Third World Theology: A Case of Kosuke Koyama

Kosuke Koyama—together with Taiwanese theologian, Choan Sen Song, as well as other Indian theologians like Stanley Samartha and M.M. Thomas—is one of the leading Asian theologians in the present time. He was born in Tokyo in 1929, studied at Tokyo's Union Theological Seminary, Drew University, and received his Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary. He lectured at Thailand Theological Seminary from 1960-1968, served as director of the Association of Theological Schools in Southeast Asia from 1968-1974, while simultaneously Dean of the Southeast Asia Graduate School of Theology (Singapore) and Editor of *the South East Asia Journal of Theology*. From 1974-1979 he was the Senior Lecturer in Religion at the University of Otago (New Zealand) and from 1980 to his retirement earlier this year, he was Professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, from 1983 to 1994 the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Professor of Ecumenisms and World Christianity, and from 1995 the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Professor of Ecumenical Studies.

Dr. Koyama has published thirteen books, including a three-volume work entitled *On Christian Life* (available only in Japanese), and one hundred scholarly articles. Perhaps his best-known works in English are *Waterbuffalo Theology* (1974), *No Handle on the Cross* (1977) and *Mt. Fuji and Mt. Sinai* (1984).

Koyama's anthropological view is well known with the term "neighborology." Merrill Morse's explanation of Koyama's doctrine of humanity deserves our attention. Morse writes, "'Neighborology' is the term which carries what might be called Koyama's 'doctrine of man.'" The word itself, centered on the term 'neighbor,' reflects Koyama's interest not in abstract deliberation on human beings but, rather, in personal relationships. His concern is more existential than theoretical." As we read his major books such as *Waterbuffalo Theology* (1974, revised and expanded in 1999), *No Handle on the Cross* (1977), *50 Meditations* (1979), and *Three Mile an Hour God* (1980), we find Koyama's unique literary style. He is doing his theology in a non-conservative way which I personally name "a meditative-reflective" style. Although Koyama never exposes his theological

stance systematically as other systematic theologians did, still we can trace his notions of human essence and its implications from his writings. Of course, we ourselves have to gather and rearrange them into a systematic doctrine.

What is human being? Koyama refuses to make a definition since he believes that no such thing can suffice to explain and contain what a human being is. To deal with this notion, he begins to analyze the verb "define" linguistically. He traces the origin of the term, saying that it "comes from Latin word *definere* (*de*=from, *finire*=to set a limit to, from *finis*=a boundary)."⁵¹

Like Calvin, Koyama openly believes and emphatically confesses that God creates human beings in the image of Him. This is a great mystery to who God is. He says, "Man is endowed by the creator with unique gifts and ability which function in his life as the image of God." After that, he exposes his notion of what the image of God is.

First of all, I would like to point out man's ability to understand and appreciate stories. There are many kinds of stories. Let us take the historical story of the island of Hong Kong as an example. We listen to it and we can understand and appreciate it. We can re-live the story. This is also particularly true with the Bible. The Bible is a great story of interaction between God and man. We can understand it and find ourselves in it in a most exciting way. This ability to interpret events that happened, to tell the story, and to understand it, is a special gift bestowed upon a man. If man did not have this ability, there would be no civilization, no government, no ethical thoughts, no philosophy and no religions. Here, however, is a tragedy of man. This ability of man to understand makes it possible for man to misunderstand. Since man can understand, he can misunderstand.

Secondly, man is specially endowed to live in relationship with God and man. 'Love your God and love your neighbor' — this is the rock upon which a man should build his life. Man has to live 'in relationship' to others. Relationship less life is both impossibility and a monstrosity. The fact that the Creator God created 'man and woman' indicates a primal relationship between two persons. Responsible living in relation to others is a special gift that has been given to man. Then comes the tragedy.

⁵¹Kosuke Koyama, *50 Meditations* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979), 43.

Because man is able to live with others in sound relationships he can produce broken relationships. A family, a marriage or a labor agreement can be a successful relationship or a broken relationship — either way it is determined by man.

Thirdly, man has special ability to criticize himself. Cats and dogs cannot criticize themselves. Man can look at himself and evaluate himself critically. This is an amazing quality of man. Since he can criticize himself, he can admit his faults. Then comes a tragedy. This ability to criticize himself gives him the same ability to criticize others, and quite frequently in a negative and devastating manner.⁵²

If we examine the above explanation that Koyama made about *imago dei*, we can detect a similar view to Calvin's. Koyama seems to understand *imago dei* both in term of the substantive and the relational views. For him, God has given humanity special abilities and gifts, i.e., (1) the ability to understand and appreciate stories; (2) the ability to live in relationship with God as well as with other human beings; and (3) the ability to perform self-evaluation, to criticize their own selves. However, a more careful study of Koyama's writings will bring us to the fact that he develops his theology on the relational aspect of *imago dei* rather than that of the substantive one.

We will observe just one example to explicate this matter and this is concerning his "neighborology." This term carries—as mentioned before—what might be called Koyama's anthropology. This anthropology puts great emphasis on the sensitivity to the inter-relatedness aspect of humanity. It also takes seriously the value of a human being. Koyama once said "to be a human' means to live in relationship." He then continued, saying, "to live in *human* relationship with other men', is the substance of 'to be human.'"⁵³ Human beings cannot live in separation and alienation from others. In order to live in accordance with their very essence, human beings should live in relationship with others. That is why in emphasizing the importance of appreciating fellow human beings as our dear neighbors, Koyama points out the Scriptural accounts. One of them is I John 4:20.

⁵²Koyama, *Waterbuffalo Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1974), 206-207.

⁵³Koyama, *50 Meditations*, 41.

Morse notes,

In this verse, the significance of the idea of relationship is the order with which it challenges the believer. The order is "neighbor-God." "It does not read: "He who does not love God whom he has not seen, cannot love his brother whom he has seen". For Koyama, this serves as an illustration which reinforces the fundamental necessity of awareness and concern for the situation of one's non-Christian neighbor.⁵⁴

How does Koyama perceive human freedom? It seems that for him, human freedom is the integral part of *imago dei* since Koyama adds the fourth element, i.e., human freedom to his understanding of the image of God. This freedom is not some thing extrinsically put into human nature. It is instead something inherent that remains in humanity. Thus, it is the very essence of humanity. Koyama emphatically remarks, "without freedom, man is not a man" because:

"To be human," means to live in relationship. An isolated individualistic life is hardly human life. True, man is man whether he moves in community or lives in isolation. But the 'isolated man' is far less lively and with less personality than the 'engaged man' (the Samaritan in the parable of Jesus). When man meets man—a great human event!—He is engaged and then his personality comes out most powerfully. Then he becomes actively human.⁵⁵

Even after the Fall, it is—in imperfect condition—still part of human nature. To this statement Koyama adds, "Even in the despairing darkness of inhumanity, as in war concentration camp, man remains a man by exercising the last fragment of freedom left to him."⁵⁶ It is obvious to us—after examining his view of the image of God—that for Koyama, the image of God still remains in the fallen humanity.

Koyama never mentions or explicitly deal with the matter of the sense of divinity as Calvin did in his *Institutes*. Even so, we still can find the indirect clues of his dealings with this issue.

⁵⁴Merill Morse, *Kosuke Koyama: A Model for Intercultural Theology* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991), 167.

⁵⁵Koyama, *Waterbuffalo Theology*, 206-207.

⁵⁶Ibid.

Developing Theology of Mission in a Third World (Asian) Context: *Imago Dei*, *Sensus Divinitatis* and Human Freedom as Common Ground

The development of a theology of mission cannot be divorced from its crucial elements, i.e., God and humanity. Mission is basically dealing with God, who is searching for His beloved creatures who have fallen away from their original design. God makes this effort to totally renovate them and reconcile them with Himself. From this, we see the inseparable relationship between God and humanity.

God's mission is relational. It means that even though sin corrupted human beings and broke His perfect relationship with them, yet there still remains a relational continuity between God and humanity. After the Fall, God did not totally discard the ability to communicate and relate with humanity. His searching call, "Adam, where are you?" echoes through times and ages ever since. God even came into human history in Jesus Christ in order to bring human beings back into His lap. By this, then, we can assume that there must be some inherent capacities in human beings, which enable them to listen, appreciate and accept God's call in offering the gift of salvation to them. These capacities establish a common ground within all of our fallen humanity and open the opportunity to the effectiveness of Christian mission.

I assume that Calvin—through his views of *imago dei*, *sensus divinitatis* and human freedom—recognized and accepted the idea of this common ground. Unfortunately, some Reformed (Calvinist) theologians such as Cornelius Van Til and Abraham Kuyper, who stress a strongly negative assessment of human rationality, see sin as the primary cause of spiritual blindness. They argue that because of the *noetic* effects of sin, non-Christians do not share the Christian worldview. For this reason, they cannot understand the world as it truly is. Although God shed His light through nature, human minds darkened in sin cannot see it. Thus, both Kuyper and Van Til believe there is no common ground between Christian and non-Christians. They assert that believers and unbelievers have no common intellectual ground, no common cognitive commitments or understandings. God's grace must first confront an unbeliever, convicting the heart of Christian truth. Only then can he pursue knowledge.

L. Russ Bush, at the end of his book entitled, *Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics: A.D. 100-1800*, makes the following comments concerning Van Til:

Among the strongly Calvinistic Dutch Reformed apologists of the twentieth century, perhaps no one has been more widely read in America than Cornelius Van Til of the Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch Calvinist theologian, educator, and political leader in Amsterdam, had so strongly opposed apologetics (by which he meant the defense of the faith against the attacks of unbelievers) that Reformed scholars had virtually abandoned all efforts in that direction. Indeed, it seemed to many that Christianity was struggling to hold less and less territory. Van Til, however, took a new approach that not only sought to take the offensive rather than merely defend the faith, but it also denied the unbeliever the right to possess any territory at all. For Van Til, there was no common ground between believers and unbelievers.⁵⁷

William Lane Craig, in his book on apologetics, briefly touches on the topic of "common ground" with the following: "Some would disagree with what I have said about the role of the Holy Spirit in showing Christianity to be true. They would contend that the believer and the unbeliever have no common ground on which to discuss; therefore, it is futile to try to convince an unbeliever that Christianity is true".⁵⁸ While Craig does not specifically single out Van Til as one who would "disagree" with him, the charge of an absolute, no common ground position is almost closely always identified with Van Til.

Now, it is clear that both Calvin and Kosuke Koyama hold a kind of anthropological view, which is open to and supportive of the construction of a more conducive theology of mission in a non-European context. The acceptance and appreciation of the common ground present in all humanity

⁵⁷L. Russ Bush, "The Rest of the Story: A Bibliographical Essay on Apologetic Writing in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" in *Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics: A.D. 100-1800*, ed. L. Russ Bush (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1983), 381.

⁵⁸William Lane Craig, *Apologetics: An Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 24.

will lead to the innovative outcomes in terms of inter-cultural missionary enterprise.

Old missionaries, especially in the Colonial era, held pessimistic and negative views of human beings. They championed triumphalistic⁵⁹ attitudes emphasizing the superiority of the European civilization as well as their “culturally conditioned” Christianity. Consequently, to be Christian—for these missionaries—is meant to adopt European-Christian customs, ways of life, and cultures. David Bosch sketches this fact by saying,

... the advocates of mission were blind to their own ethnocentrism. They confused their middle-class ideals and values with the tenets of Christianity. Their views about morality, respectability, order, efficiency, individualism, professionalism, work, and technological progress having been baptized long before, were without compunction exported to the ends of the earth. They were, therefore, predisposed not to appreciate the cultures of people to whom they went ... “Western theology” was transmitted unchanged to the burgeoning Christian churches in other parts of the world.⁶⁰

These beliefs of the old missionaries uphold the view that there is no common ground between believers (which meant European cultured Christianity) and unbelievers (which mean non-European people). As a result, people from other cultures are assumed to be pagans and viewed as those who are dominated by total depravity without any positive quality within them at all. Bosch accurately affirms this matter when he says, “Protestants were hardly more progressive in this regard ... because of the Calvinist doctrine of the total depravity of human nature, which Westerners tended to recognize more easily in the peoples of Asia and Africa than in themselves.”⁶¹ To such people, there is no need to have a dialogue or any other sympathetic way of communication. The only way to deal with them

⁵⁹Louis J. Luzbetak, a Roman Catholic missiologist points out in his *magnum opus*, *The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), 65, that triumphalism is one of the variety forms of ethnocentrism as he says, “Ethnocentrism may occur also in a variety forms, the most common, and perhaps also the most serious, being (1) paternalism, (2) triumphalism, and (3) racism.”

⁶⁰David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), 294.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 294-295.

is in a sort of triumphalistic method such as a "crusade". Intensified by the fact that there were missionaries coming from other countries together with the colonialist troops, it is obvious why then third world people (including Asians) negatively associate Christianity with Western or Colonialist religion.

That is why, instead, we must support a common ground view as well as have an optimistic anthropological view of all human beings that will enable us to develop a more conducive and effective theology of mission. With this view, we are able to see other people not as objects to be utilized and abused, but as fellow humans, who deserve appreciation and equal treatment. We might also be able to accept not only our physical differences but also our cultural diversities. Moreover, illuminated by these two facts, we might refine and improve our missionary approaches and methods for more future success.

Kosuke Koyama seems to be successful not only in his theological concept of humanity, but also in his missionary praxis. His theology of mission (or we can call it his theology of world religions), which is well known as "neighborology" is grounded in his optimistic view of human beings. His anthropology, which is based on and pervaded by his Christology—known as "the crucified mind" theology—enables him to see and value fellow humans as Jesus did. This theology is not a superficial theology since it is a fruit of long and deep thinking and actually has a combination of the Christian worldview at its core along with his way of life as an Asian, and deep-empathetic comprehension along with appreciation of the local context. This allows him to develop an effective theology of religions among non-Christian as well. Victoria Erickson comments concerning this matter: "Kosuke Koyama accomplished his theology / ministry through a very special kind of listening. He listened well, he learned how neighbors become neighbors and then he learned how to become neighbor for himself. ... He learned how to be neighbor... by doing."⁶²

⁶²Victoria Lee Erickson, "Neighborology: A Feminist Ethno-Missiological Celebration of Kosuke Koyama," in *The Agitated Mind of God: The Theology of Kosuke Koyama*, eds. Dale T. Irvin and Akintunde E. Akinade (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 153.

As God values human beings more than anything else that is also what Koyama has done in his missionary work. Koyama underscores that in his ministries, especially among Buddhists in Thailand, the *ist* (human beings) is much more important rather than *ism* (theology or concept). Human beings in their context and life are Koyama's main concern. This is showed vividly by his testimony:

When I first went to Thailand, I had a rather negative view of Buddhism there. I felt that Buddhism did not have much of a future and was probably passing out of the thoughts of many millions in Southeast Asia. Since life had become increasingly modernized and secularized, that ancient religion of "detachment" and "tranquility" was bound to diminish. So I did not pay much attention to it.

However, after three years had passed, I had to revise my view of Buddhism in Thailand. As my relationship with Buddhist friends increased and my language comprehension grew. I came to realize that what really matters is not a set of doctrines called Buddhism, but *people* who live according to the doctrine of the Buddha, or I should say, who are trying to live according to the doctrine of the Buddha. Accordingly, my interest shifted from Buddhism to Buddhist people.⁶³

In his ministry, he never considers Buddhists as merely his object of missionary work. He refuses to define what a human being is since he believes that a human being is too wide to be put into a limited definition. He gets involved totally with them. He becomes their genuine friend. He communicates with many people from different social strata. He learns and appreciates the beauty of their cultures.

Koyama also underlines freedom as one aspect of *imago dei*. He believes that to evangelize non-Christians with coercion by using aggressive persuasive methods, tends to be manipulative and also a form of ignorance and disrespectful toward the image of God within other human beings. In the Bible, God never uses such a strategy or method. In the New Testament, Jesus never forces anyone to be His follower. Jesus admires human beings, who are created in the image of God. He comes to and lives among human beings. He greets and relates to every one without showing favoritism.

⁶³Koyama, *WaterBuffalo Theology* (Revised and expanded edition; Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999), 93-95.

He rejoices with those who rejoice and weeps with those who weep. And moreover He finally died on the cross for the salvation of all fallen humanity. As Jesus values humanity and always includes this aspect in His theology (if we can express Jesus' teaching with this term), Koyama does the same thing in the establishment of his theology of mission or his theology of the world religions. His "neighborology," never loses its focus on humanity. Merrill Morse makes an impressive comment on Koyama's theology as follows:

Any Christian theology of other religion also inevitably involves a certain "anthropology," or understanding of what human beings are and how they relate. By focusing on this particular aspect of faith and encounter, a useful avenue for dealing with the issue may be identified. Koyama's theology is one example of a theology of other religions that develops this focus. After formulating his Christology, and along with a practical and doctrinal study of other religions, he emphasizes the need to understand inter-faith encounter in terms of "neighborology." He puts the focus on people, not theories.⁶⁴

Conclusion

It is evident that Calvin's anthropological view, even though it is accused of portraying human beings pessimistically and negatively, has some contribution for the construction of third world theology of mission and theology of world religions. Three aspects of Calvin's anthropology: the image of God, the sense of divinity, and human freedom reside within human beings universally, both in believers and unbelievers. Therefore, there is a common ground, which can be beneficial ways for doing Christian mission cross-culturally. Since there exists in humanity this common ground, then it is possible for Christians to share and transmit the Biblical message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people all over the world within their own distinct context (cultures, languages and so on). The shared human characteristic they have enables them to understand the Gospel message as it is contextually delivered.

This doctrine of human beings, which shows awareness and appreciation as well as focuses on the positive aspects of humanity (without

⁶⁴Morse, *Koşuke Koyama: A Model for Intercultural Theology*, 218.

losing recognition of their sinful nature), is proved to be fit and effective in cross-cultural mission enterprise. A theology of world religions as developed by Koyama, which is grounded in his appreciative view of human beings, is effectively proved among Buddhists. His "neighborology,"⁶⁵ the integral aspect of his anthropology, combines Christian worldview as its core, his way of life as an Asian, and deep-emphatic comprehension as well as appreciation of people (human beings) and their context. This enables him to see humanity in a positive-optimistic manner.

This is the crucial point that Calvinist missionaries / theologians often miss. As a result, they frequently encounter barriers in their intercultural missionary works, which reduces significantly their outreach outcome. They would have reached the opposite result if they had followed Koyama's method / strategy. Since theology is open to be refined and developed, it is not too late for such Reformed missionaries / theologians to evaluate, fix, or even change their doctrine of human beings to be more positive and supportive for the success of their future missionary enterprise.

⁶⁵Morse, in *Kosuke Koyama: A Model for Intercultural Theology*, 157, points out that this term "carries what might be called Koyama 'doctrine of man.'" He adds, "The word itself centered on the term, 'neighbor,' reflects Koyama's interest not in abstract deliberation on human beings, but, rather, in personal relationships. His concern is more existential than theoretical."