

## John Calvin on the Fall and the *Imago Dei*

By Barry Waugh

The commonly accepted anthropology of the day is that man as male and female—the words God used in Genesis 1:27 to describe his image bearers—is the highest achievement of the evolutionary process in the animal kingdom; that is, man is a rational animal, a biped mammal. Speaking of man in biblical terms is uttering an unknown tongue—or maybe a crude or suppressed tongue—in the kingdom of Darwinian evolutionese. The sad thing is that in a day when male and female are particularly lacking in dignity, troubled by low self-esteem, using DNA to excuse sin, substituting social media for real interpersonal relationships, committing suicide, and desperately seeking hope in all the wrong places, the only answer is caricatured as an attack on “human beings” that comes from religious non-scientific ignorance linked to an archaic and hateful understanding of all that exists. The answer is found only through the gospel of Christ and an understanding of the dignified anthropology of the *imago Dei*.

The purpose of this article is to consider John Calvin’s teaching on the *imago Dei* with particular emphasis on how it was affected by the fall. This will be accomplished with a sampling of representative passages from his commentaries, sermons, catechisms, and the *Institutes*. The passages will be studied in the order of their dates to determine whether his view changed as the years of his life passed. At the end of the article there will be a summary and conclusion regarding Calvin’s view. However, before examining the specifics of his writings, a survey of published opinions regarding his view is needed.

### PERSPECTIVES ON THE FALL AND THE *IMAGO DEI* IN CALVIN’S THOUGHT

Some of the earlier studies of the subject of Calvin and the *imago Dei* examined for this article came from

Europeans. Wilhelm Niesel, writing in German in 1938, concluded that Calvin believed that when Adam sinned “he threw away his opportunity, his relation to the Creator and consequently the divine image in him was destroyed.”<sup>1</sup> In 1950, Francois Wendel’s work, published in French and then distributed in English as *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, observed that Calvin taught that man was created with the seat of the *imago* “in the mind and in the heart,” but there was no part of him “which did not reflect some glint of [God].” Post fall, the image, says Wendel, “was destroyed, effaced, or to use Calvin’s own more discreet formula, ‘it was so deeply corrupted that all that remains of it is a horrible deformity.’”<sup>2</sup> Then, seven years after Wendel’s work, T. F. Torrance, the Scottish theologian, believed that Calvin’s presentation of the *imago Dei* in its wider sense referred to the creation as a whole, but in its more narrow sense the image is uniquely manifested

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1. Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), 69.

2. François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, Philip Mairet, trans. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1987, 1997), 176, 185; the quote from Calvin used by Wendel is from *Institutes*, 1.15.4.

in man as he responds to the Word and mirrors God's glory.<sup>3</sup> Further, the image is essentially spiritual and the soul is its seat but there is a sense in which the whole person reflects the image existentially as the Word is communicated.<sup>4</sup>

About thirty years after Torrance, Mary Potter Engel published her *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology*, which has a chapter about the *imago Dei*. Her approach interprets Calvin's view of the *imago* along with other aspects of his anthropology from the divine and human perspectives. Considerable attention is given to Torrance's work as she challenges what she describes as his imposition of Barthianism on the Genevan. She concludes with respect to her own view that from God's perspective as judge, Calvin usually presented the *imago Dei* as totally destroyed by the fall, but from man's perspective there is restoration after the fall through Christ.<sup>5</sup>

Articles by Richard Prins and Brian Gerrish added to the literature on Calvin and the image of God. Prins's article is titled, "The Image of God in Adam and the Restoration of Man in Jesus Christ." He recognized the difficulties in Calvin's anthropology, noting what he believed were inconsistencies; but he emphasized that Calvin distinguished supernatural gifts from natural gifts with respect to the image. The supernatural

gifts of the *imago*, such as righteousness and holiness, were completely destroyed by the fall, but the natural gifts of reason and will were not lost, only deformed, and could not have been lost because they are inseparable from what man is as man.<sup>6</sup> In 1984, Brian Gerrish, currently retired from the University of Chicago Divinity School, said that for Calvin the *imago Dei* is a reflection from the soul that mirrors God's glory.<sup>7</sup> The metaphor of a "mirror" is often used by Calvin to illustrate a variety of theological concepts and Gerrish's interpretation of its use for the *imago* provides a valuable perspective.

The most topic-specific and extensive works regarding the *imago Dei* in Calvin's anthropology in recent years are Shu-Ying Shih's 2004 dissertation in which he presented his analysis of the subject as it unfolded in the sequential editions of *Institutes*, and Jason Van Vliet's dissertation titled, *Children of God: The Imago Dei in John Calvin and His Context*, published in 2009.<sup>8</sup> Shih distinguishes between the *eschatological* and *temporal* aspects of man and the *imago Dei*, and the *objective* and *subjective* dimensions of the knowledge of God and his glory as represented in the *imago*.<sup>9</sup> He comments that during Calvin's early years his teaching was confusing, tended towards belief in the *imago's* total destruction by the fall, but that as the years passed Calvin's view moved from total destruction to a remnant of the *imago*. Van Vliet's work is a comprehensive study of the *imago Dei* that examines a multitude of texts from Calvin's corpus, including *Psychopannachia*, 1534, and then continuing on to Calvin's death in 1564, when he mentioned the *imago* in his last will and testament. One of Van Vliet's perspectives on the *imago* is that Calvin's teaching moved from belief in its total destruction to belief in its partial preservation in his later years, and that the work of redemption brings progressive restoration of the image of God as the Christian lives.

In summary, the preponderant understanding of Calvin's interpretation of how the fall affected the *imago Dei* is that he moved from thinking of it as totally or almost totally destroyed to believing it was desperately deformed, distorted, and devastated.

#### PASSAGES CONCERNING THE *IMAGO DEI* FROM JOHN CALVIN'S WORKS

Unless otherwise noted regarding the sources in this article, the English version of the Bible commentaries used is the forty-five-volume set published by the Calvin Translation Society, 1844–1856, which will be cited *TSC*

3. T. F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1957), 35, 48–51.

4. Torrance, 52, 56–57, 59. In his preface he commented, "Traditional Calvinism I have studiously avoided, and have made no reference to works on Calvin, ancient or modern, so that this presentation might be free from the imputation of partisanship in any of the different schools, such as that of the Dutch Calvinists, or that of W. Niesel and the late Peter Barth" (7).

5. Mary Potter Engel, *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 56–61; chapter 2, pages 37–72, is titled, "Imago Dei."

6. Richard Prins, "The Image of God in Adam and the Restoration of Man in Jesus Christ," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 25 (1972): 32–44. The article was reprinted in *An Elaboration of the Theology of Calvin*, ed. Richard C. Gamble (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1992).

7. Brian A. Gerrish, "The Mirror of God's Goodness: A Key Metaphor in Calvin's View of Man," in *Readings in Calvin's Theology*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 112, 113, 114, 122.

8. Shu-Ying Shih, "The Development of Calvin's Understanding of the Imago Dei in the Institutes of the Christian Religion from 1536 to 1559" (Th. D. diss., Theological Faculty of the Ruprecht Karls University of Heidelberg, 2004); Jason Van Vliet, *Children of God: The Imago Dei in John Calvin and His Context* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, 2009).

9. Examples of the eschatological and temporal pages include 23, 26, 28, 30, 94, 100, 103, 176 (particularly with reference to T. F. Torrance), 179, 247, and 249; objective and subjective examples include pages 25, 44, 46, 52, 64–67, 112, 113, 117, 120, 127, 137, 183, *et al.*

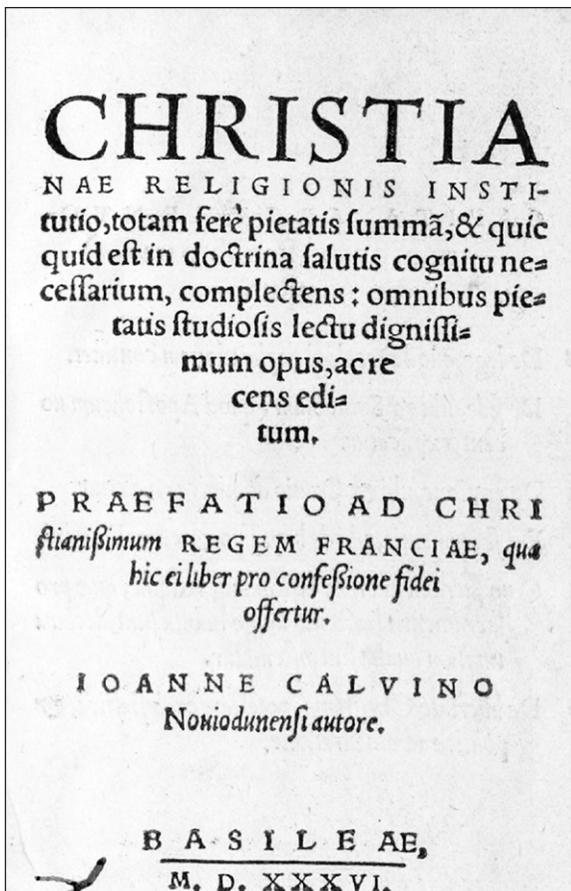
with the volume and page number, thus, TSC.24.137. This set has been reprinted in other editions over the years since its release. Even though the quality and accuracy of the translations are inconsistent, the series is readily available for readers of this article who are interested in following up on citations. The Latin and some of the French originals by Calvin are found in volumes 29 through 87 of the *Corpus Reformatorum* (CR) which are themselves designated through a secondary numbering system. His works are titled *Ioannis Calvinus Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, and they fill fifty-nine volumes. These will be cited CO with the volume and page number, thus, CO.7.256. The disparity in the number of volumes for CO as they relate to the volumes of the CR series is due to the combination of the last two volumes of CO into the single CR volume numbered 87.<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that even the most comprehensive study of Master Calvin's corpus is stymied by his thirty years of writing at a rate of just over 2,300 words per day, every one of which was composed without a computer. In a day when paper was very expensive, its purchase must have drawn quite a sum from the budget.<sup>11</sup>

Also, in the article that follows, parentheses are used within quotes from sources for three purposes—first, because they were used in the text quoted from its source; secondly, to insert portions of text from the original Latin or French; and thirdly, for parenthetical citations. The source for the sermon from Genesis in French and its English translation will be cited when discussed. In some samples selected, the Latin and French publication dates are both provided in the headings even though only one or the other was used in the analysis.

#### INSTITUTES (LATIN, 1536)

One of John Calvin's earliest writings was the first edition of *Institutes of the Christian Religion* which was published in Latin in March 1536. It was printed in Basel in a small octavo, roughly six by nine inches with 514 pages. Ford Lewis Battles has provided an English translation, from which the following text in the section "Knowledge of Man" was selected.<sup>12</sup>

In order for us to come to a sure knowledge of ourselves, we must first grasp that Adam, parent of us all, was created in the image and likeness of God (*esse creatum ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei*) [Gen. 1:26–27]. That is, he was endowed with wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and was so clinging by these gifts of grace to God



Title page detail, *Christianæ religionis institutio* (1536), Universitätsbibliothek Basel, FO IX 6:1, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-7379> / Public Domain Mark.

10. At the time of the writing of this article the English texts of the *Institutes*, *Letters*, *Tracts*, and *Commentaries* are available from the Calvin College digital collection at the Meeter Center, but other online venues have English editions as well. The *Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia* of the *Corpus Reformatorum* are available from the University of Geneva digital collection at <http://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:650> [accessed April 14, 2017].

11. The total pages in each of thirteen volumes randomly selected (2, 8, 13, 19, 25, 29, 33, 38, 41, 45, 49, 51, 57) in CO were added and divide by 13 to obtain the average number of pages in each book of the series, 775. This number was multiplied by 59, which is the total number of Calvin's volumes, which was then multiplied again by 475 words per page to obtain 21,719,375 words. This total was divided by 30 years x 52 weeks x 6 days per week to achieve a rate of writing for Calvin of just under 2,320 words per day. This is merely an estimate with unaccounted variables such as the CO does not contain all his writings, some pages of CO have letters and other writings that would yield more blank space per page than others, and there is some duplication in CO due to translations of works being included. However, if 2,320 is half right, it is surely an efficient pace using a stylus and ink.

12. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1536 Edition*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1975, 1986), 15–16; the brackets original to Battles's text.

that he could have lived forever in Him, if he had stood fast in the uprightness God had given him. But when Adam slipped (*lapsus*) into sin, this image and likeness of God was cancelled and effaced (*haec imago et similitudo Dei inducta et oblitterata est*), that is, he lost all the benefits of divine grace, by which he could have been led back into the way of life [Gen. 3]. Moreover, he was far removed from God and became a complete stranger. From this it follows that man was stripped and deprived of all wisdom, righteousness, power, life, which—as has already been said—could be held only in God. As a consequence, nothing was left to him save ignorance, iniquity, impotence, death, and judgment [Rom. 5:12–21]. These are indeed the “fruits of sin.”

In the quoted English passage, Calvin’s use of *imago et similitudo*, image and likeness, is the way he often expressed this aspect of anthropology that describes how man related uniquely to the one who formed him from the dust of the earth. The history of image and likeness in theology generally had interpreted the two words with different meanings, but in the case of Calvin, he treated them as synonyms because the doubling of like terms in the Bible’s Hebrew stressed the importance of the image of God—repetition gives emphasis. Man was *created* in God’s image to live in fellowship with him under the single restriction—*do not eat the fruit*. It promised blessing, continuing in the garden in fellowship with God, and a curse, death, which would come to include eviction from Eden. Thus, the first parents disobeyed the stipulation, fell, and were expelled from Eden. But how did the fall affect man, made

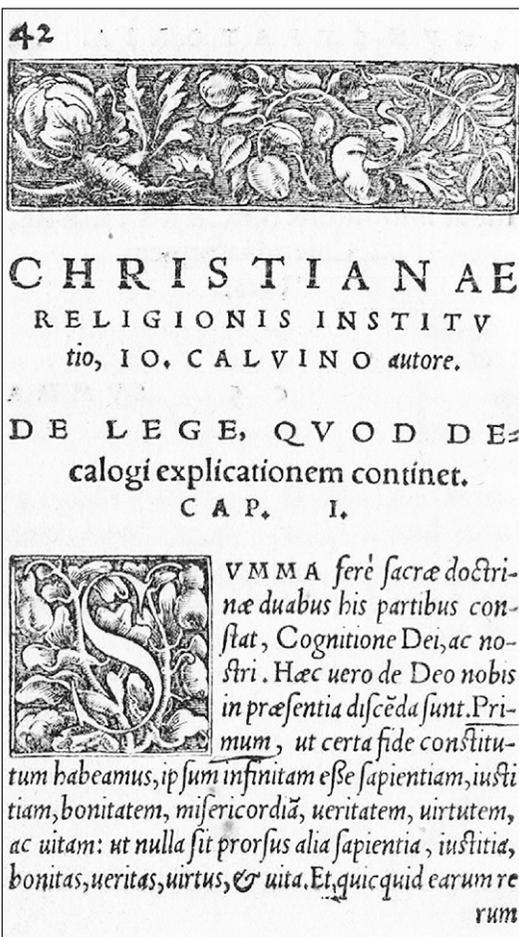
in God’s image and likeness? Battles used “cancelled” and “effaced” to render the Latin, but the sense of *inducta* (*induco*) is more of a covering, like pouring wax

over an inscription to hide it or conceal something with a skin or cloth. When a Roman political figure died or was replaced by another one, the successor might have inscriptions of his predecessor covered with wax, totally hidden from view. The other word, *oblitero*, is defined “to blot out, strike out, annihilate, obliterate, abolish, cancel, erase, bring into oblivion, or make to be forgotten.” When the two words are brought together their combined meaning describes the image as thoroughly covered or effaced horribly so that it is obscured from view *as if it did not exist*. If one has a stain on a wall in the house it can be covered with sealing primer and then painted to hide the stain, but the stain still exists underneath the new finish even though it is concealed. The terms Calvin used come short of the *imago* having been removed from man because of the fall. Further, “he lost all the benefits of divine grace, by which he could have been led back

into the way of life,” which implies that the unique aspects of the image before the fall such as the abilities not to sin (*posse non peccare*) and to reason rightly, as well as original righteousness were lost, but not the image itself.

#### CATECHISM (FRENCH, 1537; LATIN, 1538)

The 1538 Latin catechism by Calvin was composed for the instruction of children or novices in the faith. It was preceded by a French edition in 1537, which in turn had been written from an earlier document ordered by the Council of Geneva.<sup>13</sup> It was designed to be a brief statement of faith following the outline of Calvin’s *Institutes*. The fourth section of this catechism, *De*



Page detail, *Christianae religionis institutio* (1536), Universitätsbibliothek Basel, FO IX 6:1, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-7379> / Public Domain Mark.

13. I. John Hesselink, *Calvin's First Catechism: A Commentary Featuring Ford Lewis Battle's translation of the 1538 Catechism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), ix.

*Homine*, opens stating that man “was first formed to God’s image and likeness” (*Homo primum ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei formatus fuit*). In this catechism, just as he had expressed it in his *Institutes*, image and likeness are paired. The brief paragraph goes on to add that because of the fall “God’s likeness is wiped out” (*obliterata Dei similitudine*).<sup>14</sup> The Genevan used *oblitero* as he had done in the first edition *Institutes*, but *induco* was not included, perhaps simply so as to shorten his text and make his point as succinctly as possible for his intended students.

Calvin had a keen sense of the importance of presenting his teaching not only accurately but also in the most suitable terminology for the capacity of his students. Just as a pastor might use different words to express concepts to young children, college students, adults, or his theologically educated peers in a presbytery or classis meeting, Calvin composed his teaching with his listeners in mind. He contextualized his language as any proficient teacher should.

The English of both the first edition *Institutes* and the 1538 *Catechism* were translated by Battles. However, the use of *oblitero* in the catechism, which was translated “wiped out,” gives a more destructive sense of meaning than “effaced,” which was chosen to translate *oblitero* in the *Institutes*. In this second example of Calvin’s teaching regarding how the fall affected the *imago Dei*, the Latin once again conveys the meaning of a complete obscuring, sweeping the sand with one’s foot to efface an image drawn, or covering it with fresh granules to leave it *as if* it had not existed.

COMMENTARY ON 2 CORINTHIANS 3:18 (FRENCH, 1547;  
LATIN, 1548)

Having considered a theological summary of doctrine in *Institutes* and a catechism, the next form of literature to be considered is biblical commentary. Readers of commentaries in Calvin’s day and in successive generations would likely have had some education in Scripture and theology and were most likely pastors or teachers, and they would to some degree be familiar with key theological terminology and concepts. In Master Calvin’s observations regarding 2 Cor. 3:18, he brings up the *imago* in his explanation of the words “But we all with unveiled faces.” He made three points: first, God clearly uncovers his face in the gospel; second, the contemplation of God’s face should not be dead but instead one which transforms man “into the image of God”; and third, the first two points are not accomplished in “one moment,” but the faithful must progress in the knowledge of God

and in conformity to his image (TSC.40.186; CO.50.47). God’s revelation in the New Testament adds to and interprets the Law, Prophets, and Writings. The glowing face of Moses was hidden from the people, but the post-incarnation believer enjoys an understanding of law and gospel without the obfuscation of a veil. The glory of God shown in his Word demonstrates to the Christian the grace of Christ.

The Genevan then continued to interpret Paul’s encouraging words to the troubled cosmopolitan church in Corinth as the Apostle turned his sheep to the heartening words “as by the Spirit of the Lord”:

Observe, that the design of the gospel is this—that the image of God, which had been effaced by sin (*quae induc-ta fuerat per peccatum*), may be stamped (*reparetur*) anew upon us, and that the advancement of this restoration may be continually going forward in us during our whole life, because God makes his glory shine forth in us by little and little. (TSC.40.186; CO.50.47)

As he had done in the 1536 *Institutes*, Calvin used *induco* here to describe the effects of the fall on the *imago Dei*, and this word was then translated in the English version of the commentary by “effaced.” As has been seen, the sense of *induco* is more along the lines of a covering material, such as wax, cloth, or veneer, so that the original form of something is completely covered—it is still there, but it cannot be seen. Thus, when Calvin goes on to say that the *imago* may be stamped anew upon man, the sense is that of pressing a logo or crest of identification into the hot wax, sealing an important document. Even as royalty would impress their crests into a glob of wax, sealing a document to prove its authenticity to the recipient, so pressing anew the image of God upon man brings the *imago* to light through renovation while signifying the authenticity of those who are the Lord’s. Sanctification is not mentioned in the commentary *per se*, but the quoted text describes the progress of the Christian life and its association with the image of God. In the seventeenth century, the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* would include in its answer to the question “What is sanctification?” that “we are *renewed in the whole man after the image of God*, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness” (Q 35; italics added).

14. Hesselink, *First Catechism*, 9.

COMMENTARIES ON EPHESIANS AND COLOSSIANS  
(LATIN AND FRENCH, 1548)

The Genevan's commentaries on the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians deal with parallel texts that have considerable similarities, and the biblical passages explained by the commentaries are often referred to in editions of *Institutes* as well as in other writings from Calvin's hand. The cities of Ephesus and Colossae in southwestern Asia Minor, to which Paul wrote, were separated by just over a hundred miles. Both churches were dealing with some common issues because their congregants had been converted from paganism, whether it involved the Greek or Roman pantheons, or parochial deities. The city of Ephesus was where Demetrius the silversmith had incited other tradesmen into a frenzy, according to Luke in Acts 19:23–41. The gospel had enjoyed great success in Ephesus and its environs through the conversion of many, which resulted in the local vendors of cultic memorabilia and miniatures of Artemis suffering reduced sales and bottom line figures heading towards red ink. A massive crowd had gathered in the city streets, and Gaius and Aristarchus were taken to the local theater for interfering with the wheels of cultic commerce. Paul was pointed out as the ringleader of the anti-Artemis band of trouble makers. The house was packed with incensed people chanting loudly for *two hours*, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians." Paganism and idolatry were common and powerful adversaries of the gospel. So, as God spoke through Paul in Ephesians, it could well be that the Christians coming out of paganism in general and Ephesian paganism in particular needed clarification regarding what "image" means and how it should be applied in relation to the only true God. It would be a difficult concept for converts to Christ to change their idea of divinity from a god statue made of stone, clay, metal, or wood, to the bodiless God who made men and women in his image. Calvin commented on the *imago* in his explanation of a portion of Ephesians 4:24, rendered in English, "And that you put on the new man."

Adam was at first created after the image of God, and reflected, as in a mirror (*quasi in speculo repraesentaret*), the Divine righteousness; but that image, having been defaced (*deleta*) by sin, must now be restored in Christ. The regeneration of the godly is indeed—as we have formerly explained—nothing else than the formation anew of the image of God in them. There is, no doubt, a far more rich and powerful manifestation of Divine

grace in this second creation than in the first; but our highest perfection is uniformly represented in Scripture as consisting in our conformity and resemblance to God. Adam lost the image which he had originally received, and therefore it becomes necessary that it shall be restored to us by Christ. The design contemplated by regeneration is to recall us from our wanderings to that end for which we were created. (*TSC.41.296; CO.51.208–9*)

Ephesians 4:17–24 is concerned to encourage Christians to put aside the old ways and put on Christ in faithful service. A term that occurs often in Calvin with respect to the *imago*, as Brian Gerrish has observed and was noted previously, is "mirror," which shows that pre-fall Adam reflected God's attributes.<sup>15</sup> However, that glorious reflection was "defaced" (*deleta*); but despite the damage, regeneration reforms the *imago*. This is the first use of *deleta* (*deleo*) by Calvin in the sampling of passages in this article, and it means "to blot out, efface, or erase." His point is that the image is recreated in the believer, not in the sense that it is recreated *ex nihilo*, but rather that the faint hint of a remnant, a severely marred and unrecognizable stamping, even though obscured, is reformed and renewed through the recreation provided by Christ. Not only is the image in the Christian progressively restored, but further, as Christians live and grow in sanctification, the image of God increasingly approaches the glories of the *imago Dei* in pre-fall Adam.

Calvin's comments on Colossians 3:10 parallel those of the passage in Ephesians; he even refers his readers to the commentary on Ephesians for further information. Again, the issue of the passage is the Christian life, the renewal of believers, and sanctification in Christ.

Now, the image of God resides in the whole of the soul, in as much as it is not the reason merely that is rectified, but also the will. Hence, too, we learn, on the one hand, what is the end of our regeneration (*tum quis finis sit regenerationis nostrae*), that is, that we may be made like God, and that his glory may shine forth in us; and, on the other hand, what is the image of God... [it is] the rectitude and integrity of the whole soul, so that man reflects, like a mirror, the wisdom, righteousness, and goodness of God. He speaks somewhat differently in the Epistle to the Ephesians, but the meaning is the same... Paul, at the same time, teaches, that there is nothing more excellent at which the Colossians can aspire, in as much as this is our highest perfection and blessedness—to bear the image of God. (*TSC.42.211–12; CO.52.121*)

15. Gerrish, "Mirror," 107–122.

Excluded in the commentary on Colossians is mention of how the *imago* was affected by the fall. Instead, Calvin developed the positive aspects of the image's restoration or renovation. The ultimate and final goal of the regenerate life is the blessedness of being like God and enjoying the benefits of the *imago Dei* under reconstruction. Calvin brings in the communicable attributes of God, saying that the Christian mirrors God's wisdom, righteousness, and goodness. The image, though all but destroyed in the fall, is restored as one progresses in faith and grows to truly bear the image of God.

COMMENTARY ON GENESIS 1:26, 27; 9:6 (LATIN AND FRENCH, 1554)

With respect to the biblical book of Genesis, the Geneva's first published work was his commentary and then later in life he delivered his sermons in the St. Pierre Church as part of his weekly Old Testament *lectio continua*. The passages from the commentary that will be considered include 1:26–27 with regard to God's creating man and 9:6 with reference to the covenant with Noah and capital punishment. But before considering Calvin's commentary, some general points regarding his view of God's work of creation will be beneficial for background.

For John Calvin,<sup>16</sup> the Lord created heaven, earth, and all that exists within the span of six days, with the days defined by the evening and the morning, even before there was a sun to illumine the day and a moon for night. The six days constitute the work week, which was ended by the seventh day, the Sabbath. The six-and-one pattern for creation is the paradigm man must follow as God's image bearer. If Calvin could have been transported into the future, he undoubtedly would have been polemically attacking the French Revolution for its attempt to defy God's order in creation with its ten-day week.<sup>17</sup> All of God's creation was made "very good," but with the fall the curse of excessive labor in the midst of complicating factors entered the picture. Sin distorted the harmony, beauty, and inhabitability of God's universe. The innocent creation was wrapped and bound because of the curse due to man's sin, but God sustains his handiwork as it struggles and anticipates its ultimate redemption.<sup>18</sup>

First, Genesis 1:26–27 tells about the creation of man as male and female, with each made in the image of God. In the two verses "image" occurs three times and "likeness" once. Calvin discusses the *imago Dei* after a short defense of his belief already mentioned in this article that the meanings of "image" (*imaginem*) and

"likeness" (*similitudine*) are synonymous. A characteristic of the image is, as Calvin came to agree partially with Chrysostom in later years, that man was appointed vicegerent of the creation. God is sovereign over creation and he has appointed man, his image bearer, to rule as his vassal king.

Since the image of God has been destroyed (*deleta*) in us by the fall, we may judge from its restoration what it originally had been. Paul says that we are transformed into the image of God by the gospel. And, according to him, spiritual regeneration is nothing else than the restoration of the same image. (TSC.1.94; CO.23.26)

The Genesis commentary contends, with the supporting perspective of Colossians and Ephesians in mind, that the image's restoration is accomplished through the gospel, so that what was lost in the fall can be determined to some degree from what Christ restores. Once again *deleta* is used to describe the post-fall *imago*. Calvin presses on to refine his meaning further as he continues in the same passage:

But now, although some obscure (*obscura*) lineaments of that image are found remaining in us; yet are they so vitiated and maimed (*vitiata et mutila*), that they may truly be said to be destroyed (*deleta*). For besides the deformity which everywhere appears unsightly, this evil also is added, that no part is free from the infection of sin. (TSC.1.95; CO.23.27)

Adding another word to the *imago* discussion, some aspects of the image are *obscura*, which not only means "obscure," but also "dimly seen" or "darkened." The Geneva emphasizes that the image is not removed, it is not absent from man, but he instead underlines its presence as an impoverished remnant of its pre-fall majesty. Also, Calvin chose once again to use *deleta* to

16. This paragraph is composed from the author's general observations particularly in the Genesis sermons. The English versions of Calvin's sermons used in this article were translated by Rob Roy McGregor in *Sermons on Genesis Chapters 1–11* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009); a second volume by the same translator and publisher is titled, *Sermons on Genesis 11–20* (2012).

17. The revolutionaries were thumbing their noses at God with the ten-day week because it ignored the Lord's Day and denied his six-day work pattern. Paul has said so well, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18), and "The carnal mind is at enmity with the law of God, it is not subject to it, neither indeed can be" (8:7).

18. For example, see Calvin's interpretation of Romans 8:20 in his commentary.

describe the post-fall image and qualified it noting the “liniments” are “vitiating and maimed.” His thoughts on the passage harken back to *induco* and the idea that the image has been hidden as if covered with wax or cloth, but in this case the agent obscuring the image is the pitch-like darkness of sin shrouding all. No part of man nor the image is free from the “infection of sin.” This passage, taken in conjunction with the previous ones considered, shows that when Calvin says *deleta* he doesn’t mean absolute, complete, entire, and total destruction, leaving absolutely nothing, as if all had been vaporized into nothingness. Man was created to be a glorious, righteous, and royal ruler of Eden, but due to the fall, he plummeted catastrophically, leaving the *imago Dei* a mere grotesque caricature of its original magnificent appearance.

In Genesis 8:20–9:17 is found the account of Noah’s worshipping God after the flood and the covenant God made with Noah. When Adam and Eve were created their task included having children to populate the earth, but unfortunately early on, fratricide entered the world through Cain’s murder of Abel. With the task of filling the earth beginning anew after the flood, God included in his covenant with Noah a deterrent stipulation intended to protect his image bearers from Cain’s crime. The Noahic covenant required that shedders of man’s blood would have their own blood shed, and the reason given for the death penalty, verse 6, is that the slain victim bore the *imago Dei*. Further, murdering man is not only homicide but also an assault on God because man bears God’s image (*TSC*.1.295; *OC*.23.147). The Genevan comments on the passage.

Should any one object that this divine image has been obliterated (*deletam*), the solution is easy; first, there yet exists some remnant of it (*manere adhuc aliquid residuum*), so that man is possessed of no small dignity; and, secondly, the Celestial Creator himself, however corrupted man may be, still keeps in view the end of his original creation; and according to his example, we ought to consider for what end he created men, and what excellence he has bestowed upon them above the rest of living beings. (*TSC*.1.296; *CO*.23.147)

Once again a form of the Latin *deleo* was used to

19. The Battles edition makes use of several earlier versions of *Institutes*. For this article, the 1559 edition presents the fullest development of Calvin’s thought in the *Institutes*. The last edition published was the 1560 French translation. Wendel, pages 118–119, points out a debate over who translated the Latin into French, but he concludes it was Calvin.

describe how the fall affected the image of God; but also in this passage, Calvin has included a comment about there being some remnant of the image post fall. At this point in redemptive history, he comprehends the blessings of the Noahic Covenant as including reminders of man’s place in creation as well as a new law concerning the heinousness of murder. Man has dignity as God’s image bearer, and that unique dignity warrants death for the murderer. The devastation of the flood had physically and spiritually washed creation clean leaving Noah and his household to begin anew.

Thus he [God] not only renews the world by the same word by which he before created it; but he directs his word to men, in order that they may recover the lawful use of marriage, may know that the care of producing offspring is pleasing to Himself, and may have confidence that a progeny shall spring from them which shall diffuse itself through all regions of the earth, so as to render it again inhabited; although it had been laid waste and made a desert. (*TSC*.1.289; *CO*.23.143)

After the flood, God instructed Noah and his family to bear children and replenish the earth (Gen. 9:1, 7), exercise dominion over the creation (9:2), eat the bounty of it (9:3,4), and know that the life of man is protected by the deterrent of capital punishment for those who kill bearers of the *imago Dei* (9:5, 6). The key words of this passage are “renews” (*renovat*) and “recover” (*recuperent*). The post-flood creation had been laid waste and was decidedly not Eden, but it was instead a new start for man and the creation, a renewal and recovery.

Calvin teaches in his Genesis commentary that the *imago Dei* in fallen man is not destroyed, and he was concerned to mention that there is a remnant of the image present post fall. In each of the passages he used a form of *deleo* to describe how the image was affected by the fall. When these Genesis passages concerning the *imago* are taken together and not in isolation, it can be seen that the Genevan believed the image was catastrophically affected by the fall so that it was *almost* destroyed; but despite its grossly affected condition, it is still present and necessary for man to be man as male and female.

#### INSTITUTES (LATIN, 1559; FRENCH, 1560)<sup>19</sup>

Master Calvin’s opening chapter of *Institutes*, “The Knowledge of God the Creator,” establishes the foundation for the exposition of doctrine that follows. It is essential, he says, that a proper understanding of the

self can be achieved only through an understanding of God. As man looks at God's face and then descends to consider his own, he achieves a clearer self-knowledge. All that is within and around man has been "contaminated by great immorality" and "what in us seems perfection itself corresponds ill to the purity of God." Though he does not explicitly mention the *imago Dei* at this point, the idea that man knows himself properly by first knowing God is dependent on understanding the *imago Dei*, because it mirrors God and elevates man above the rest of creation. Calvin instructs his readers by stating his point from the lesser to the greater—"man is never sufficiently touched and affected by the awareness of his lowly condition until he has compared himself with God's majesty." The chief end of man as male and female is to know God and thereby know one's self. Knowing God is not only an intellectual affirmation that he exists and is the master of the world, but it also recognizes that man is made in God's image to reflect his glory (1.1.2–3; CO.2.32–33).

The *imago Dei* is mentioned in *Institutes* in the discussion of the Christian's assurance of victory in the struggle against Satan and temptation. The teaching presented by John Calvin distinguishes those who are Christ's from those who are Satan's; he presents a distinct antithesis reminding one of the great chasm Jesus described between Lazarus and the rich man, or the void between heaven and hell. The final sentence expresses the difference between the children of light and those of darkness.

Finally, they [the wicked] are said to be of their father the devil (John 8:44); for, as believers are recognized as the children of God because they bear his image, so are those rightly recognized to be the children of Satan from his image, into which they have degenerated. (1 John 3:8–10). (1.14.18; CO.2.130, italics added)

There are two antitheses—the first contrasts God, the Father of his own, with Satan, the progenitor of the wicked; the second contrasts the bearers of the *imago Dei* from those distorted and disfigured with Satan's image. If read in isolation, this example from Calvin might lead to the conclusion that he believed the fall removed the *imago*, but given his thought presented so far in this article it has been seen that both believers and nonbelievers have the post-fall *imago Dei*; the Christian enjoys renovation of the image by the Spirit in opposition to Satan, but the nonbeliever's *imago* remnant is instead opposed by Satan's image. The Genevan's use of antithesis in this *Institutes* passage anticipates his interaction with Andreas

Osiander's view that extends the presence of the *imago* from the soul to include also the body in the sense of *theosis*, which Calvin said "mingles heaven and earth" (1.15.3). The weightiness of the issues related to Osiander and the image are anticipated in the strong terminology used by Calvin as the context required an acute separation of the followers of Christ from those of Satan.

The most extensive portion of the *Institutes* dealing with man and the *imago Dei* is chapter 15 of book 1, titled, "Discussion of Human Nature as Created, of the Faculties of the Soul, of the Image of God, of Free Will, and of the Original Integrity of Man's Nature." Calvin anticipated his presentation in 1.15 with emphatic parallel antitheses in 1.14.18 (CO.2.130), which, first, distinguished the Father of the children of God from Satan the father of his progeny; and second, the children of God bear his image in contrast with the seed of Satan that bears his image. After establishing the importance of understanding man in both the pre and post-fall conditions, then defending the dichotomist view of man as body and soul, Calvin presents his position on "God's image and likeness in man" (1.15.2, 3). He comments regarding Genesis 1:27 that man was created in God's image, which "shines forth in the outer man, yet there is no doubt that the proper seat of his image is in the soul" (1.15.3; CO.2.136).

In his criticism of Andreas Osiander's view of the *imago Dei*, Calvin spoke to whether there were any physical aspects of the image in man. Even though he believed Osiander's view detracted from the nature and character of God, Calvin was not opposed to the idea of there being something physical about the *imago*. It may appear an unusual idea to think of the image of God having physical aspects given Scripture's emphasis on the fact that the Lord is a spirit and does not have a body.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, although the soul is not man, yet it is not absurd for man, in respect to his soul, to be called God's image; even though I retain the principle I just now set forward, that the likeness of God extends to the whole excellence by which man's nature towers over

20. Calvin's affection for glowing sparks as a metaphor is echoed in 2.2.12, where it is applied to man's reason having not been wiped out by the fall: "in man's perverted and degenerate nature some sparks still gleam"; and in 1.16.9, "And yet what is set forth in Scripture concerning God's secret providence was never so extinguished from men's hearts without some sparks always glowing in the darkness." He likely borrowed the imagery from Augustine, *Civitas Dei*, 22.24, where he says (in the context of how man differs from the beasts) that "the little spark of reason, which was the image of God in him, has not been quite quenched."

all the kinds of living creatures. Accordingly, the integrity with which Adam was endowed is expressed by this word [i.e. *imago*], when he had full possession of right understanding, when he had his affections kept within the bounds of reason, all his senses tempered in right order, and he truly referred his excellence to exceptional gifts bestowed upon him by his Maker. And although the primary seat of the divine image was in the mind and heart, or in the soul and its powers, yet there was no part of man, not even the body itself, in which some sparks did not glow (*in qua non scintillae aliquae micarent*). (1.15.3; CO.2.137–38)

Calvin is describing Adam in Edenic perfection with integrity, correctly ordered senses, and right reason; the *imago* was unobscured by the covering of sin, and man as male and female were gloriously mirroring their creator. The English translator's rendering "exceptional gifts" suggests *donum superadditum*, the idea that the *imago* in part or in whole was added to man after God breathed life into the ground he had sculpted to form Adam. However, the distinction between *imago Dei intrinseca* and *imago Dei extrinseca* better explains the Geneva's idea, because in passages throughout his works he speaks of reason, often and particularly, along with other capacities as necessary functions of the image that twinkle through the obscuring and thick fog of sin. The *imago Dei intrinseca* would include affections, conscience, and reason; these are necessary for man to be man and their absence would leave a mere being. The *imago Dei extrinseca* consists of holiness, purity, and the ability not to sin (*posse non peccare*), which were all lost in the fall. François Wendel said of Calvin in this section of *Institutes* that the "image of God imprinted on man consists, then, of the integrity and righteousness which were the attributes of Adam when he came fresh from his Creator's hands, the perfect example of which has been shown in Christ the second Adam."<sup>21</sup>

Discussion in the *Institutes* regarding man in his original estate continues; however, Calvin shifts the perspective from paradise lost to paradise regained through New Testament passages from Paul's epistles to Corinth, Colossae, and Ephesus that explain the Second Adam. The first couple's fall alienated not only themselves from God but also their posterity descended from them by ordinary generation. Christ, the Second Adam, restores the believer "to true and complete integrity" with the "end of regeneration... that Christ should reform us to God's image (*ut nos Christus ad imaginem Dei reforme*)"

(1.15.4; CO.2.138). As the Christian is conformed to Christ, then the *imago Dei* is renovated in piety, righteousness, purity, and wisdom, and the experience of renewal of the image in Christians gives them a sense of the nature of the state of innocence.

Now God's image is the perfect excellence of human nature which shone in Adam before his defection, but was subsequently so vitiated and almost blotted out (*postea sic vitiata et prope deleta*) 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. (1.15.4; CO.2.139)

Man was created with the *imago Dei* shining gloriously, as reflected accurately from a mirror; but his failure to keep the restriction against eating the fruit resulted in near total destruction of the image. Calvin softens the sense of *deleta* by modifying it with "almost blotted out." In his later works, he more consistently used qualifiers to clarify his teaching regarding the fall and its effect on the image. He also brings in the eschatological aspect that the image will not be perfected until heaven. Adam fell from the glory of Eden into shame and nakedness resulting in expulsion from the Garden of gardens. In his final Latin edition of *Institutes*, Calvin taught that the image of God was still present in fallen women and men, but it was a mere remnant of its Edenic self.

In the first two chapters of the second book of the *Institutes*, Calvin considers the fall, original sin, and freedom of the will. The first parents disobeying God not only resulted in their own sin, but their seed also would bear original sin. As the *Westminster Confession* would express it, the fall resulted in the sinful nature being "conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation" (6:3). Calvin presented the catastrophe of the fall for the *imago*:

Therefore, after the heavenly image was obliterated (*obliterata*) in him, he was not the only one to suffer this punishment—that, in place of wisdom, virtue, holiness, truth, and justice, with which adornments he had been clad, there came forth the most filthy plagues, blindness, impotence, impurity, vanity, and injustice—but he also entangled and immersed his offspring in the same miseries. (2.1.5; CO.2.179)

The context of this quote is Calvin's refutation of the doctrine of original sin as presented by Pelagius. Pelagius believed individuals sinned by imitating the errant

21. Wendel, *Calvin*, 176–77.

choices of others; people do not sin because original sin dictates it, but it is instead because they follow the bad examples all around them, or, to put it crassly, “monkey see, monkey do.” In the *Institutes* quote, *obliterata* is not *reduced* in the severity of its meaning by qualifiers, but is instead *intensified* by them. Calvin is addressing a foundational doctrine that Pelagius grossly misconstrued, then propagated so that multitudes were deceived, and he did not abandon his view when it was deemed heretical by the papacy. It was seen in 1.15.4 that Calvin clearly believed the *imago* was not removed by the fall because he qualified *deleta*, saying it was, as rendered in English, “so vitiated and almost blotted out.” But the force of the language in 2.1.5 is an example of the Frenchman contextually composing his comment to bolster his argument, which in this case meant painting the picture of post-fall man as dismally as possible in opposition to the optimistic and incorrect teaching of the Pelagians. The terminology used with respect to the condition of the post-fall image varied according to the context in which the Genevan was writing.

Turning to 2.2.12, the *imago Dei* is not specifically mentioned by Pastor Calvin as he discussed Bishop Augustine’s assessment that the natural gifts to man, such as reason, were corrupted by sin, but the supernatural gifts, such as the ability not to sin, were removed. Calvin agreed with his North African mentor, saying, “the natural gifts were corrupted (*corrupta*) in man through sin, but ... his supernatural gifts were stripped (*exinanitum*) from him” (CO.2.195). He then added that despite the devastation of the fall “some sparks still gleam” and man is still “a rational being, differing from the brute beasts.” The *imago* distinguishes man from the rest of creation; Adam is not a human animal but is instead man as male and female who can think, who can reason, who can read. So, even though the specific terminology *imago Dei* is absent from 2.2.12, the fall’s devastation of the natural and supernatural gifts is *imago* related. The Genevan has brought together in the 1559 *Institutes* a more refined and focused position on the results of the fall on the image of God by finessing each passage of discussion with greater sensitivity to its particular context.

Calvin turns to Andreas Osiander’s teaching on the *imago* during his critique of the German Lutheran’s view that Christ would have come in the flesh even if man had not fallen in sin. After going over the necessity for Christ’s atoning work and the use of several passages of Scripture to attest to the necessity of the incarnation, Calvin then spoke to Osiander’s doctrine of the image of God. For Osiander, God’s glory shone

in Adam through the exceptional gifts he bore, but further, God dwelt essentially in him (2.12.6). Calvin commented on the view.

I admit that Adam bore God’s image, in so far as he was joined to God (which is the true and highest perfection of dignity). Nevertheless, I maintain that this likeness (*similitudinem*) ought to be sought only in those marks of excellence with which God had distinguished Adam over all other living creatures. All men unanimously admit that Christ was even then [at the time of the creation of Adam] the image of God. Hence, whatever excellence was engraved (*insigniverat*) upon Adam, derived from the fact that he approached the glory of his Creator through the only-begotten Son. “So man was created in the image of God” (Gen. 1:27); in him the Creator himself willed that his own glory be seen as in a mirror (*speculo*). Adam was advanced to this degree of honor, thanks to the only-begotten Son. (2.12.6; CO.2.345)

Again, Calvin uses “image” and “likeness” interchangeably; Adam “bore God’s image” and he was his “likeness” in those aspects distinguishing him from other created beings. Adam was formed righteous, exhibiting the *imago Dei* as if engraved upon him, or as an image in a mirror reflecting God’s communicable attributes and the qualities unique to the state of innocence. The Genevan adds that Adam’s bearing the *imago Dei* was attributable to the image of Christ in him; he is concerned to distinguish how Christ related to Adam from Osiander’s essential presence of God in Adam. Even though this particular *Institutes* passage does not address how the fall changed the image of God, it does add to the picture of Adam and Eve in the state of innocence, which gives a fuller sense of their glory as image bearers and what is renovated in Christ.

During Calvin’s discussion of spiritual rebirth through Christ, he observed that the believer is crucified with Jesus and through the work of the Spirit the old body of sin perishes as the new nature fights sin. The Christian life is to be lived in righteousness, exhibiting the newness of followers of Christ:

Therefore, in a word, I interpret repentance as regeneration, whose sole end is to restore in us the image of God that had been disfigured (*foedata*) and all but obliterated (*obliterata*) through Adam’s transgression. So the apostle teaches when he says: “Now we, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from glory to glory even as from the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). (3.3.9; CO.2.440)

Here is provided another dimension to the Genevan's *imago Dei* teaching. The end of regeneration is to take the obscured, tattered, and deformed image, covered as if under a tarp, a wax coating, or lost in the absence of light created in a pit of darkness, and work towards its restoration. The terminology used to describe the condition of the image includes the familiar *obliterata*, which is qualified with "all but," to which is added *foedata* rendered in English as "disfigured." The *imago Dei*, even though hidden and obscured, begins to shine through as the Holy Spirit progressively restores its glory. This passage is particularly significant because it shows that restoration of the *imago* is seen to be a key part of salvation. Man is not only saved from the penalty of sin to grow in sanctification, but also saved to be restored in the image of God; even as was mentioned earlier, the goal of regeneration is restoration of the image of God.

#### SERMONS ON GENESIS (FRENCH, 1559–1560)

Pastor Calvin delivered with his native French tongue a series of sermons on Genesis in the Church of St. Pierre, Geneva, beginning in the fall of 1559. They were part of a weekday program of Old Testament passages in *lectio continua*, a running commentary, but "sermons" is a more convenient term and may be more accurate considering their pastoral tone. The Genevan personally did not publish these sermons, but beginning in 1549 Denis Reguenier was hired to record all Calvin's sermons verbatim using his 6,000-words-per-hour shorthand skill. However, Bernard Cottret has reminded readers that the sermons are "therefore a record of what was heard, and

not a text revised by Calvin."<sup>22</sup> In fact they are what was heard twice—first from Calvin in shorthand, and then from Reguenier to his scribes as he presented aloud in French the translation of his shorthand. Prédicateur Calvin's exposition of 1:26–28 will be considered here.

On Saturday, September 9, 1559, the Genevan presented his exposition bringing together his teaching on the *imago Dei* to a group of listeners with varied levels of understanding.<sup>23</sup> But despite Pastor Calvin's sensitivity to exposit the Word appropriately for the context, it may well be that several of his listeners did not appreciate his effort. Current Calvin aficionados may have difficulty comprehending it, but he regularly complained that his listeners were disinterested, noisy, even rude.<sup>24</sup> In the Bible verses, the word translated "image," which has the same spelling in French as English, occurs three times to emphasize its importance. He begins the sermon explaining his belief that the reason man was created last is because just as an earthly father prepares his home for the impending birth of a child, so the Father prepared the universe with its paradise for his image bearers to inhabit, cultivate, and fill with descendants. As Jason VanVliet has observed, Calvin's explanation of the *imago Dei* as well as other aspects of his teaching abound with family imagery, particularly the relation of a father to his children.<sup>25</sup> After explaining that Christ is the image of God because he is revealed to be so in the Word, Calvin then related the *imago* to the powers and gifts, which "serve as signs and imprints to show that the human race is like God's lineage." Maybe today this could be called spiritual DNA. With respect to the fall, man was "stripped of that image," which explains why "all our senses are darkened, indeed completely depraved, our affections corrupted and filled with evil."<sup>26</sup> The word translated "stripped," *despouillez*, also means "unclothe, disarray, take away, deprive, rob, spoil, or take the skin off." The preacher goes on to comment with respect to Adam that "God stripped him of the excellent gifts with which he had previously adorned him" (*Dieu l'a despouillé des dons exquis, dont il l'avoit orné au paravant*). Thus, what was stripped or removed was not the *imago* but those aspects associated with the state of innocence, such as original righteousness. Then the Genevan adds, "But because God repairs his image in us through our Lord Jesus Christ (*Mais d'autant que Dieu repare son image en nous, par nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ*), that image which had been effaced in Adam, we can better understand the importance of that conformity and likeness that man had in the beginning with God."<sup>27</sup> Thus, the somewhat reluctant congregation gathered in the church heard in Calvin's sermon on this key passage

22. Bernard Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography*, trans. M. Wallace McDonald (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 289.

23. Calvin often, sometimes three or four times per page, comments that Moses was the writer of Genesis. It occurs so often that one might conclude he had a deficient understanding of inspiration, but this is not the case because he instead had a keen sense of the office of the prophet as the voice of God to the people. In a way, it is not necessary to say God *said* because the prophets' words were God *saying*.

24. Regarding the inattentiveness of Calvin's flock, see Selderhuis, *Pilgrim's Life*, 132.

25. See with reference to the current biblical passage, Van Vliet, *Children*, 106–10; and for his briefer presentation of the father child perspective see, "As a Son to his Father: An Overlooked aspect of the *Imago Dei* in Calvin," in *Calvinus Sacrarum Literarum Interpres: Papers of the International Congress on Calvin Research* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 108–118.

26. Calvin, *Genesis Sermons*, 95–96; the source for the French is, *Supplementa Calviniana*, vol. 11:1, *Jean Calvin, Sermons sur la Genèse Chapitres 1,1–11,4*, édités par Max Engammare (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 2000), 59.

27. Calvin, *Genesis Sermons*, 95–96.

that man as male and female was created in God's image, that when Adam fell his excellent gifts were stripped and the remaining image was covered or grossly deformed, but that through Christ, renovation of the *imago Dei* commences and continues through sanctification.

#### CONCLUSION

Master Calvin's understanding of the consequences of the fall for the *imago Dei* is fed from the heart of his theology, which is the cataclysmic spiritual result of the fall upon Adam, Eve, and their posterity. His keen sense of the drastically desperate post-fall situation realized by the first parents and their progeny is the blood pulsing through the veins of his literary *corpus*. But Calvin's vigorously beating heart has not been well received. Several of the secondary sources consulted for this article commented negatively regarding Pastor Calvin's "pessimistic view of man," or referred with disdain to his describing man as a "five foot worm" in *Institutes* 1.5.4, *et al.* But his view of the fall dictates that if man as male and female is dead in sin and incapable of performing righteousness apart from the grace of salvation, *then how is it possible that the image of God could be associated with such a creature?* How is it that the righteous, sovereign, just, and perfect God could have fellowship with fallen man? The fall plummeted all into the abyss of sin—it separated God's image bearers from him, altering the *imago Dei* into vaporous vestiges of its created splendor. But through the grace of Christ, the Christian is redeemed from the death of sin to progress in sanctification and enjoy the ultimate victory of a resurrected and glorified body with a magnificently renewed and enhanced *imago Dei*. The Genevan's teaching on the post-fall *imago* can be likened to a patient in the hospital who is on the critical list, in the intensive care unit, surviving via life support equipment with nearly all monitoring devices indicating nearly flat lines, and close to the point of death; but then the changes wrought by redemption bring new life to the *imago*, initiating the process of recovery, healing, and restoration. In the case of the *imago Dei*, the miracle treatment effecting recovery is God's work within.

A key issue regarding Calvin and the fall's consequences for the image is whether he changed his view, and, in particular, whether he ever believed the image was removed from man because of the fall. The variety of terminology used in Latin and the few bits of French addressed in this article show a progression to an increasingly fuller definition for the post-fall *imago Dei*. However, the early use of *induco*—covering totally,

veneering, hiding with wax—assumed there was *something there to hide or cover*, which was the image. He not only used *induco* but paired it with *oblitero* in the 1536 *Institutes*; and then he continued to use both words until *oblitero* and *deleo* came to the fore as the years progressed. Calvin's comments on Ephesians used *deleta*—destruction, effacing, or erasing—to make his point, all words which imply that something is still there. Destruction leaves rubble, effacing has to occur to a surface, and erasing leaves streaks or residue. With respect to his commentary on Genesis 1:26, 27, he observed that "some obscure (*obscura*) lineaments" are left post fall, but they are so "vitiating and maimed (*vitiata et mutila*)," that they appear "destroyed (*deleta*)." Here, in the case of *deleta*, the English translation "destroyed" is not a synonym for removal or taking away. Any destruction, no matter how devastating, even that at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, leaves *something*. At the end of 1559 in his sermon on Genesis 1:26–28, Calvin used *despouiller*—strip, unclasp, take away—with reference to aspects such as original righteousness and *posse non peccare*; but the *imago* was not stripped away along with the unique attributes associated with the state of innocence. Also, as he continued to develop his thought, he refined his view using qualifiers that come forth in English wording such as "all but destroyed," "disfigured," or "so vitiating and maimed" as he described the nature of the post-fall *imago*. John Calvin always believed the *imago* was present post fall; the problem he faced was how to express this clearly and accurately while remaining faithful to the heartbeat of his doctrine. Calvin was not a revolutionary in his view, but rather his understanding of the image of God fits within the parameters noted by Richard Muller as he summarized the meaning of the *imago Dei* for the Reformed and Lutherans, saying that, generally, they believed the image was either lost or so vitiating that only vestiges remain, which would put Calvin at the vestiges end of the spectrum.<sup>28</sup>

Another aspect of Calvin regarding the fallen *imago* is his pastoral or contextual presentation and rhetorical sense, which William J. Bouwsma has observed.<sup>29</sup> Children, whether wee ones or those who are novices in the faith, need basic terminology to explain complicated concepts, thus a simplified difficult concept—no

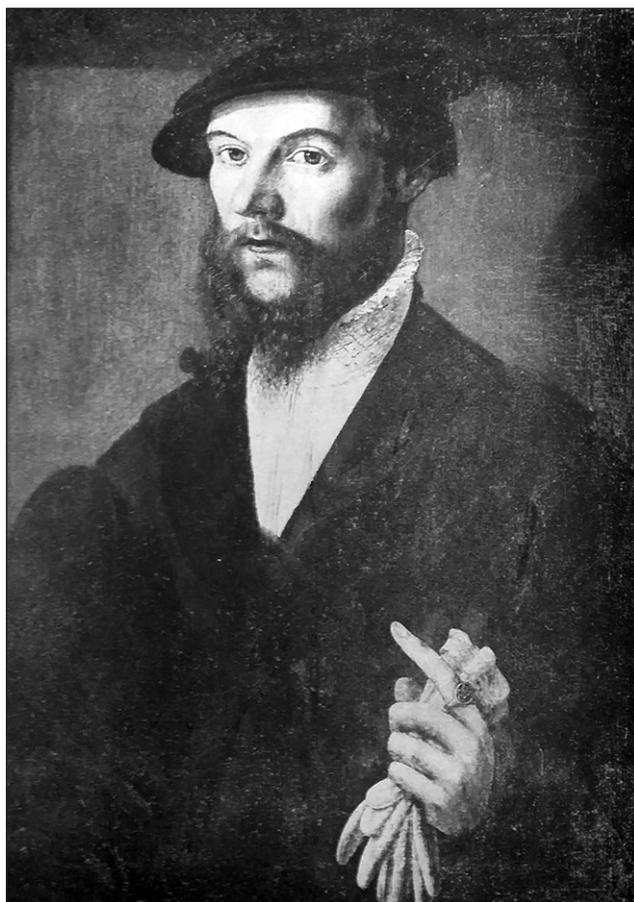
28. Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 143.

29. William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), see particularly 142–43; also, S. M. Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); see pages 156–57 for Calvin's rhetoric in preaching.

matter how astute the teacher—might sometimes edge its way to simplistic presentation or oversimplification. Calvin spoke to this pastoral or contextual sense in his commentary on the text, “I have fed you with milk” (*Lactis potu vos alui*) in 1 Corinthians 3:2:

Hence it is the part of a wise teacher (*doctoris*) to accommodate himself to the capacity of those whom he has undertaken to instruct, that in dealing with the weak and ignorant (*infirmos et rudes*), he begins with first principles and does not go deeper than they are able to follow, so that in short, he drips in his instructions little by little lest it should run over if poured in more abundantly. At the same time, *those first principles will contain everything necessary to be known (quidquid cognitu necessarium est continebunt haec rudimenta)*, no less than the more advanced lessons that are communicated to those that are stronger. (*TSC.39,122, italics added; CO.49.347*)

The italicized text are not words one might attribute to the precise, detailed, copious, and thorough theologian named Ioannis Calvinus, but they are what could be expected from Pastor Jean Calvin. The master shepherd was targeting his writings for the capacity of his listeners as he clarified the results of the fall upon the *imago Dei*. Catechisms were simple but sufficient; sermons were aimed at the point of the milk-meat spectrum deemed appropriate for the congregation; commentaries were a step up the ladder of difficulty for those with greater knowledge; and editions of the *Institutes* became the most complex of Calvin’s works. Currently, church pulpits sometimes have plaques with the words, “Sir, we would see Jesus” (John 12:21), so maybe a plaque



An engraving after The Hanau Calvin. Frontispiece, Emile Doumergue, *Jean Calvin*, volume II (Lausanne, 1902).

could be added with Calvin’s comments quoted above to encourage preachers to select words revealing Jesus according to the capacity of their listeners.

As was mentioned in the opening paragraph of this article, the idea of man as male and female made in God’s image is considered by many to be foolishness. Unfortunately, among Christians the glorious doctrine of the *imago Dei* may have been tarnished or damaged in their thinking through years of evolution mantra. Darwinian evangelism has had many proponents. One snappy, memorable, and efficient proponent of Darwinian doctrine was an animated character of the mid-twentieth century

named Jiminy Cricket. In one cartoon he tipped his top hat and danced around the room while twirling his umbrella, singing, “You are a human animal, you are a very special breed; for you are the only animal who can think, who can reason, who can read.” As has often been noted, if a person’s thought is to be influenced, it is best to begin early—the younger the better. Generations after the Scopes Trial, it seems as if the purveyors of evolution have led the masses to believe the world is “the planet” and its Creator has no part in its events, nor does he have anything to say; and some would add that he does not exist. Wherever one goes (especially museums), whatever one reads, whichever video or cinematic production is viewed, the answer to the question of origins is evolution. John Calvin reminds us of the importance of the *imago Dei* and that the only true dignity man as male and female can enjoy is through grace and restoration of the image. ■