

# The Structure of Calvin's Theology

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Calvin scholars have been puzzled by the problems involved in identifying the structure of Calvin's theology. Some Calvin scholars have attempted to find his governing intention in the construction of his theology. Others have tried to find the structure of Calvin's theology by analyzing his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

To Ernst Troeltsch, the central doctrine of Calvin's theology is the idea of the predestination of God. "The first distinctive feature of Calvinism, and the most important one, is the idea of predestination, the famous central doctrine of Calvinism."<sup>1</sup> In the idea of predestination Calvin is "trying to express the character of God as absolute sovereign will."<sup>2</sup> For Calvin "the chief point is not the self-centered personal salvation of the creature, and the universality of the Divine Will of Love, but it is the Glory of God."<sup>3</sup> In short, to Troeltsch Calvin was a theocentric thinker who emphasized the predestination, sovereign will, and glory of God.

On the other hand, Wilhelm Niesel regards Calvin as a Christo-centric thinker. "In every aspect of doctrine Calvin is concerned only about one thing: namely, the God revealed in flesh."<sup>4</sup> He goes on to say, "Jesus Christ controls not only the content but also the form of Calvinistic thought."<sup>5</sup>

Differently again, Benjamin B. Warfield regards Calvin as "the theologian of the Holy Spirit."<sup>6</sup> "But in the same sense in which we may say that the doctrine of satisfaction from Anselm, the doctrine of justification by faith from Luther, — we must say that the doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit is a gift from Calvin to the Church."<sup>7</sup> He also says, "In his hands, for the first time in the history of the Church, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit comes to its rights.... But, above everything else, it is the sense of the sovereign working of salvation by the almighty power of the Holy Spirit which characterizes all Calvin's thought of God. And above everything else he deserves, therefore, the great name of the theologian of the Holy Spirit."<sup>8</sup>

Here one comes to ask whether Calvin is a theocentric thinker, or a Christo-centric thinker, or a Pneumato-centric thinker. If one investigates the writings of Calvin, one learns that the above-mentioned interpretations are all possible. As Calvin himself says, "When, therefore, we treat of the merit of Christ, we do not place the beginning in him, but we go back to God's ordination, which is the primary cause: ...."<sup>9</sup> "Christ, apart from God's good pleasure, could not merit anything: ...."<sup>10</sup> Certainly, these expressions show that Christ is subordinated to the sovereign will of God. On the other hand, Calvin says in the *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, "from the beginning of the world all the patriarchs drew what-

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ever gifts they had from Christ.”<sup>11</sup> And in the *Institutes* he says, “through him alone we escape the imputation of our sins to us.”<sup>12</sup> But, at the same time, the work of the Holy Spirit is much emphasized in the theological system of Calvin. It is the Holy Spirit who gave inspiration to the writers of the Scriptures, and gives inner testimony to the readers of the Scriptures, and gives us graces through the sacraments. By the secret efficacy of the Spirit, “We come to enjoy Christ and all his blessings.”<sup>13</sup>

If we consider these passages, we have to say that God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are all emphasized in the theology of Calvin. In other words, the central theme of Calvin’s theology is the triune God. For instance, God, Christ, and Holy Spirit are all mentioned in the following short definition of faith.

Now we shall have a right definition of faith if we say that it is a firm and certain knowledge of the divine benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the free promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.<sup>14</sup>

We can find many such trinitarian schemes in the writings of Calvin. Calvin thinks that this trinitarian scheme roughly agrees with the four causes of Aristotle. In our salvation, the efficient cause is God the Father, the material cause Christ, the formal or instrumental cause faith, and the final cause the glory of God.<sup>15</sup> Also in the *Commentary on the Acts* he says, “Therefore when we treat of the remission of sins, we must look for no other originator of it than the Heavenly Father; we must imagine no other material cause than the blood of Christ. But when it comes to the formal cause, the Holy Spirit indeed plays the leading role, but an inferior instrument is added, the preaching of the Gospel and baptism itself.”<sup>16</sup> Generally speaking, Calvin thinks that God is the efficient cause, Christ the material cause, and the work of the Holy Spirit the formal cause. In the case of the final cause, however, Calvin does not mention it in the commentary on the Acts 22.16. Therefore, it seems that though Calvin thought that his trinitarian scheme roughly agreed with the four causes of Aristotle, he did not try to make the four causes the fundamental basis of his doctrine. They merely furnish him with a subsidiary argument.

In 1917 Louis Goumaz attempted such an interpretation in his *La Doctrine du salut d’après les commentaires de Jean Calvin sur le Nouveau Testament*. According to him, God the Father is the efficient cause of the salvation, Christ the material cause of the salvation, the action of the Holy Spirit the formal cause of the salvation, and the glory of God the final cause of the salvation.<sup>17</sup> As we mentioned, however, Calvin did not try to base his doctrine on the four causes of Aristotle, as Goumaz tries to do in his book. In spite of this defect, it is unfortunate that Calvin scholars have not sufficiently noted the work of Goumaz.

In this connection, we can observe some defects in the studies of Calvin. Troeltsch misunderstood the efficient cause as if it were the whole of Calvin’s theology. Niesel exaggerated the material cause as if it were the central theme of Calvin. Warfield overestimated the formal cause and therefore called Calvin “the theologian of the Holy Spirit.” They emphasized only one aspect of Calvin’s thought. Calvin, how-

ever, emphasized all three.

Recently, Benjamin Charles Milner, Jr. insisted that the unifying principle in Calvin's theology is the absolute correlation of the Spirit and the Word.<sup>18</sup> He argues that by the "theological" and the "christological" interpretation of Calvin "the work of the Holy Spirit is neither fully nor accurately gauged."<sup>19</sup> He is right when he emphasizes both the Spirit and the Word. However, his failure is that he does not fully consider the predestination and sovereign will of God the Father.

As mentioned earlier, some Calvin scholars have tried to find the structure of Calvin's theology by analyzing his *Institutes*. The editors of the Geneva edition of Calvin's works interpret the *Institutes* as follows :

The author has a two-fold aim – *scopus duplex* – in this *Institutio Christiana*: the former the knowledge of God, by which we arrive at blessed immortality; the latter the knowledge of ourselves, determined to that former. For this purpose he makes use of the form of the Apostles' Creed, as being the most familiar to all Christians. For just as the Creed is in four parts (i.e. the first on God the Father, the second on the Son, the third on the Holy Spirit, and the fourth on the church), so also our author has divided his *Institutio* into four books so as to accomplish both parts of the scope that we mentioned.<sup>20</sup>

This interpretation has been generally accepted. In 1868, however, J. K stlin insisted that the *Institutes* could be divided into two parts, and in the present century, E. A. Dowey developed further the opinion of K stlin. According to K stlin and Dowey, the 1559 edition of the *Institutes* is arranged in the following way in accordance with the *duplex cognitio Domini*.

1. The doctrines of God the Father, Son, and Spirit, and his creation and world government in general, apart from sin and the redemptive revelation and redemptive activity that sin makes necessary -- and similarly of mankind, apart from sin and the necessity for salvation. (Book I).
2. The historical revelation and activity of God for the salvation of the sinner, as follows:
  - a. The establishing of salvation through the incarnate Son, for which preparation had already been made under the Old Covenant. (Book II).
  - b. The application through the Holy Spirit of the salvation given in Christ, as follows:
    - (1) The process of salvation which is realized inwardly by the Spirit in individuals, extending until the perfection of these persons in the resurrection. (Book III).
    - (2) The outer means which God uses in this activity of the Spirit. (Book IV).<sup>21</sup>

Fran ois Wendel also says that the *Institutes* consists of two main parts.<sup>22</sup>

The first is constituted by Book I, and is concerned with the doctrine of God (Trinity, Creator, Providence), the scriptural revelation and man (independently of sin and of the need for salvation). The second part extends over the other three books, and deals with the historic revelation and the plan of salvation. This in its turn is subdivided into two parts: firstly,

preparation for the work of salvation, under the old covenant, and its accomplishment in the incarnation of the Son of God (Book II); and secondly, the attribution and application of salvation by the Holy Spirit, (a) by the intimate operation of the Holy Spirit within the believer, even to its completion in the future life (Book III); and (b) by the external means that the Holy Spirit employs to complete this operation and bring it to its right end (Book IV).<sup>23</sup>

The following analysis of A. Dakin is not very different from the analyses of Dowey and Wendel.

- A. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AS CREATOR.
  - I. From Nature
  - II. From the Scriptures
- B. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AS REDEEMER.
  - I. How Christ is exhibited to us.
  - II. How Christ is received by us.
  - III. How we are retained in the fellowship.<sup>24</sup>

However, since T. H. L. Parker thinks that the *Institutes* consists of four parts in accordance with the four parts of the Apostles' Creed, he criticizes the division of Dowey. "Such a reordering of the material must be regarded as illegitimate textual criticism because in assessing the nature of the subject, it does not take the order itself into account (...) but imposes upon the order what is in fact a presupposition."<sup>25</sup> As Charles Partee points out,<sup>26</sup> however, Parker himself, in his *Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, uses the same division as "Part One, The Knowledge of the Creator," and "Part Two, The Knowledge of the Redeemer."

In short, although the final edition of the *Institutes* consists of four books, it can be divided into two parts: the knowledge of God the Creator and the knowledge of God the Redeemer. This point is mentioned several times in the final edition of the *Institutes*,<sup>27</sup> and the *locus classicus* of it is the following.

Since, therefore, the Lord first appears, as much in the fashioning of the world as in the general doctrine of Scripture, simply as the Creator, and afterwards as the Redeemer in the face of Christ: hence arises a twofold knowledge of him: of which the former is now to be considered, and the other will follow in its order.<sup>28</sup>

Recently, however, Calvin scholars object to the opinion that the final edition of the *Institutes* was written according to the *duplex cognitio Domini*. Milner says in the above-mentioned book.

Now I would like to suggest that it is not the *duplex cognitio Domini* which underlies the final organization of the *Institutes*, but Calvin's conception of order as that is structured in the correlation of the Spirit and the Word. Thus, Book I describes

the original order of creation, i.e., the doctrines of God and man apart from sin; Book II.i-v the disruption of that order in the fall; and Books II. vi-IV the restoration of order, i.e., the Word (Book II) brought to us by the Spirit (Book III) through the external means (Book IV).<sup>29</sup>

In this interpretation, the church as an institution for the restoration of order stands in the center. "... this understanding ... confirms ... the centrality of Calvin's doctrine of the church for his theology as a whole; since the church is the restoration of order in the world, not only Book IV, but Books II. vi-IV must be understood as its exposition, with Book I (the conception of order), and Book II.i-v (the disruption of order), serving as its presupposition."<sup>30</sup>

However, in this thesis, God who is creating even now is overlooked, and only God who is redeeming is emphasized. In the thought of Calvin, since creation includes preservation, creation is not simply a past event. Calvin himself says, "Moreover, to make God a momentary Creator, who once for all finished his work, would be cold and barren; and we must differ from profane men especially in that we see the presence of divine power shining not less in the perpetual state of the world than in its first creation."<sup>31</sup> In short, for Calvin God not only redeems us through the church, but also continues to create in the world. Therefore, the linear scheme of Milner's interpretation, the creation of order, followed by the disruption of order, followed in turn by the restoration of order, does not correspond to Calvin's scheme.

On the other hand, E. David Willis suggests the possibility of another interpretation, though he does not reject the *duplex cognitio* scheme.

...: there is "De Cognitione Dei Creatoris" and "De Cognitione Dei Redemptoris," but no "De Cognitione Spiritus Sancti." Even if it be decided that the *duplex cognitio* scheme and not the three articles of the Creed provides the primary instrument for structuring the final edition of the *Institutes*, still the subject of books III and IV is generally the work of the Holy Spirit, as the subject of Book I is generally God the Creator and of Book II generally the Redeemer.<sup>32</sup>

Willis rightly recognizes that Calvin's *duplex cognitio Dei* is not *creatoris et Christibus creatoris et redemptoris*.<sup>33</sup> This is so "because for Calvin Christ is not only the redemptive Word of God but also the creative Word of God."<sup>34</sup> Since Christ also participates in creation, that is to say, since Christ is also *creator*, Willis rightly says that the two facets of our knowledge of God are not *creatoris et Christi* but *creatoris et redemptoris*. Unfortunately, however, Willis does not see that the knowledge of God the Father is included in "De Cognitione Dei Redemptoris," just as the knowledge of Christ is included in "De Cognitione Dei Creatoris," because he does not realize that Book II of the *Institutes* is "De Cognitione Dei Redemptoris," not "De Cognitione Christi." Moreover, even though Willis rightly says that "for Calvin Christ is not only the redemptive Word of God but also the creative Word of God, just as the Spirit is not only regenerative but also creative,"<sup>35</sup> he needs "De Cognitione Spiritus Sancti," because he does not comprehend that the knowledge of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is included in both

“De Cognitione Dei Creatoris” and “De Cognitione Dei Redemptoris.”

In short, for Calvin God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, that is, the triune God, is included in “De Cognitione Dei Creatoris.” As well, God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, that is, the triune God, is included in “De Cognitione Dei Redemptoris.” In other words, Book I of the *Institutes* deals with the triune God as Creator, and Books II-IV deal with the triune God as Redeemer. That is to say, the subject of the *Institutes* is the work of the creation and redemption of the triune God. And we may say that the subject of Calvin’s theology is the work of the creation and redemption of the triune God, because the *Institutes* is the most comprehensive and systematic work of Calvin.

What, then, is the relation between the triune God as Creator and the triune God as Redeemer? In other words, what is the relation between the creation of the triune God and the redemption of the triune God? In this connection, we must deal with the thesis of Hermann Bauke. According to Bauke, the distinguishing features of Calvin’s theology are “the formal-dialectical rationalism,”<sup>36</sup> and “the complexio oppositorum,”<sup>37</sup> on the basis of “the biblicism.”<sup>38</sup> And so Bauke regards Calvin as “a dialectician rather than a systematizer, or at best a dialectic systematizer.”<sup>39</sup> “The single fundamental elements of dogmatic stand side by side and are bound together dialectically, not deductively deduced from one or two fundamental principles.”<sup>40</sup>

Whilst Bauke argued that Calvin was not a systematic theologian who deductively deduced his theology from one or two fundamental principles, Niesel attempted to find the one fundamental principle and he insisted that this fundamental principle is Christ, as we have noted.<sup>41</sup> On the contrary, Dowey argues that the relation of the knowledge of God the Creator to the knowledge of God the Redeemer remains a dialectic one.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, Karl Barth says, “It is true that, according to Calvin, the knowledge of God in Christ includes a real knowledge of true God in creation. Includes! This means that it does not, as Brunner seems to think, bring forth a second, relatively independent kind of knowledge, so that the circle would become an ellips(e) after all...”<sup>43</sup> On the contrary, according to Emile Doumergue, the method and system of Calvin is a contradiction,<sup>44</sup> and “the thought of Calvin is an ellipse with two foci.”<sup>45</sup> Also, whereas Raymond K. Anderson says, “we have found relatively little support in the present study for the common caricature of his work as an eclectic or dialectic combination of diverse principles,”<sup>46</sup> Alexandre Ganoczy speaks of “the dialectical structure of the thought of Calvin.”<sup>47</sup>

Is the thought form of Calvin an ellipse (according to Doumergue), or not (according to Barth)? Is it dialectic (according to Dowey), or deductive (according to Niesel)? In this connection, we do well to consider the so-called *Extra Calvinisticum*. Calvin says, “Marvelously, the Son of God descended from heaven, yet without leaving heaven: marvelously, he willed to be born in the Virgin’s womb, to live on the earth, and to hang upon the cross, and yet always filled the world as from the beginning.”<sup>48</sup> Even though Niesel says, “it might be objected that it is false to regard the *Extra Calvinisticum* as the most essential

feature of Calvinistic Christology,<sup>49</sup> the *Extra Calvinisticum* is very important in Calvin's theology, as Heiko A. Obermann points out.<sup>50</sup> The *Extra Calvinisticum*, that is, the teaching that even when 'Christ in the flesh' was crucified for our redemption, 'Christ who was also beyond the flesh' continued to rule the world, influences Calvin's theology as a whole. According to Calvin, though there are people of God within the church, there are people of God even outside the church.<sup>51</sup> Though there is a special grace of the Spirit which is related to redemption, there is also common grace which is not related to redemption.<sup>52</sup> Though Calvin emphasizes the heavenly things, he does not denounce the earthly things,<sup>53</sup> and though he emphasizes the future life, he does not neglect the present life.<sup>54</sup>

The thought form of Calvin in the so-called *Extra Calvinisticum* is neither an ellipse with two foci nor a circle with one centre, but two concentric circles in which two different objects are related as core and shell.

What, then, is the structure of Calvin's theology? The subject of Calvin's theology is the work of the creation and redemption of the triune God, and the relation between the creation of the triune God and the redemption of the triune God is a relation of concentric circles, that is, a relation of core and shell.

## NOTES

- 1) Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. Olive Wyon (2 vols.; London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1931), Vol. II, p. 581.
- 2) *Ibid.*, p. 582.
- 3) *Ibid.*, p. 583.
- 4) Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), p. 246.
- 5) *Ibid.*, p. 247.
- 6) Benjamin B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1971), p. 484.
- 7) *Ibid.*, p. 485.
- 8) *Ibid.*, p. 487.
- 9) Inst. II. xvii. 1, OS III, 509, 15-17.
- 10) Inst. II. xvii.1, OS III, 509, 25-26.
- 11) Comm. Jn. 1.16, CO XLVII, 17.
- 12) Inst. II.xvi.3, OS III, 485, 6-7.
- 13) Inst. III.i.1, OS IV, 1, 22-24.

- 14) Inst. III.ii.7, OS IV, 16, 31-35.
- 15) Inst. III.xiv.17, OS IV, 235.
- 16) Comm. Act. 22.16, CO XLVIII, 496.
- 17) Louis Goumaz, *La Doctrine du salut d'après les commentaires de Jean Calvin sur le Nouveau Testament* (Lausanne: Librairie Payot & C<sup>ie</sup>, 1917), pp. 129ff.
- 18) Benjamin Charles Milner, Jr., *Calvin's Doctrine of the Church* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), p. 4.
- 19) *Ibid.*, pp. 191-92.
- 20) *Iohannis Calvini Opera Omnia Theologica in Septem Tomos Digesta* (Genevae: Apud Iohannem Vignon, Petrum & Iacobum Chouet, M. DC. XVII), Sig. \*\*4<sup>a</sup>, quoted in T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Edinburgh: Olver and Boyd, 1969), p. 8.
- 21) Edward A. Dowey, Jr., *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 42.
- 22) François Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1980), p. 121.
- 23) *Ibid.*
- 24) A. Dakin, *Calvinism* (London: Duckworth, 1940), pp. 247-48.
- 25) Parker, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
- 26) Charles Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), p. 44.
- 27) Cf. LCC XX, p. 40, n. 3.
- 28) Inst. I.ii.1, OS III, 34, 21-25.
- 29) Milner, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
- 30) *Ibid.*, pp. 193-94.
- 31) Inst. I.xvi.1, OS III, 187, 10-14.
- 32) E. David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), p. 123.
- 33) *Ibid.*, p. 121.
- 34) *Ibid.*
- 35) *Ibid.*
- 36) Hermann Bauke, *Die Probleme der Theologie Calvins* (Leipzig: Verlag der J. C. Hinrichs'schen Buchhandlung, 1922), p. 13.
- 37) *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- 38) *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- 39) *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- 40) *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 41) *Supra*, p. 1.



- 42) Dowey, *op. cit.*, p. 238.
- 43) Karl Barth, "No! Answer to Emil Brunner," *Natural Theology*, trans. Peter Fraenkel (London: The Centenary Press, 1946), pp. 108-109.
- 44) Emile Doumergue, *Le Caractère de Calvin* (Neuilly: La cause, 1931), p. 76.
- 45) Emile Doumergue, *Jean Calvin: Les hommes et les choses de son temps* (7 vols.; Lausanne: Georges Bridel & C<sup>ie</sup> Éditeurs, 1899-1927), Vol. IV, p. 279.
- 46) Raymond K. Anderson, *Love and Order: The Life-Structuring Dynamics of Grace and Virtue in Calvin's Ethical Thought* (Chambersburg: Wilson College, 1973), p. 395.
- 47) Alexandre Ganoczy, *Calvin. Théologien de l'église et du ministère* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1964), p. 59.
- 48) Inst. II.xiii.4, OS III, 458, 9-13.
- 49) Niesel, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
- 50) Heiko A. Obermann, "The 'Extra' Dimension in the Theology of Calvin," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. XXI, No. 1 (January, 1970), pp. 43ff.
- 51) Inst. IV.i.8, OS V, 13.
- 52) Cf. Inst. II.ii.12-17, OS III, 254ff.
- 53) Cf. Inst. II.ii.13, OS III, 256.
- 54) Cf. Comm. Ps. 104.15, CO XXXII, 91.

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## 國文抄錄

칼빈 研究家들은 칼빈 神學의 構造를 찾아 내려고 努力해 왔다.

한 部類의 研究家들은 칼빈 神學의 統一의 原理를 찾아내려고 했으며 다른 한 部類의 研究家들은 칼빈의 主著인 「基督教綱要」의 構造를 찾아냄으로써 칼빈 神學의 構造를 糾明해 보려고 했다.

트윅취는 칼빈 神學의 中心主題를 하나님의 豫定, 하나님의 主權的 意志, 하나님의 榮光이라고 봄으로써 神中心의 解釋을 했으며 니이젤은 칼빈 神學의 中心主題를 그리스도라고 함으로써 그리스도 中心의 解釋을 한 데 비해 위필드는 칼빈을 聖靈의 神學者라고 聖靈中心의 解釋을 했다. 그러나 칼빈의 本文을 살펴 보면 聖父, 聖子, 聖靈이 同時에 強調되고 있다. 聖父는 動因이며, 聖子는 質料因이며, 聖靈은 形相因이다. 그래서 칼빈은 三位一體의 神學者라고 하는 것이 穩當하다.

다른 한 部類의 神學者들은 칼빈의 「基督教綱要」를 分析함으로써 칼빈 神學의 構造를 찾아내려고 했다. 오래 전부터 널리 알려진 主張은 「基督教綱要」는 使徒信條의 네 部分에 따라 聖父, 聖子, 聖靈, 教會 등 네 卷으로 構成되어 있다는 것이다. 그러나 피스틀린과 다우위는 「基督教綱要」는 主님에 대한 二重의 知識에 따라 크게 두 部分으로 構成되어 있다고 했다. 「基督教綱要」 最終版을 分析해 보면 그 最終版이 創造主 하나님에 대한 知識과 救贖主 하나님에 대한 知識 등 크게 두 部分으로 되어 있음이 드러난다.

그러면 이 創造主 하나님에 대한 知識과 救贖主 하나님에 대한 知識, 다른 말로 해서 하나님의 創造와 하나님의 救贖은 어떤 關係에 있는가 하는 問題가 提起될 수 있다. 이 問題는 칼빈의 가르침 가운데 하나인 이른바 Extra Calvinisticum, 즉 肉體 안에 있는 그리스도가 十字架에서 救贖事業을 할 때 肉體 밖에도 있는 그리스도는 世界를 保存하는 創造活動을 계속했다고 하는 가르침에 따라 肉體 안에 있는 그리스도와 肉體 밖에도 있는 그리스도의 關係로 對答할 수 있다. 즉 하나님의 創造와 하나님의 救贖은 同心圓的 關係, 즉 周邊的인 것과 中心의인 것의 關係에 있다. 요컨대, 칼빈 神學의 中心主題는 三位一體 하나님의 創造와 救贖이며, 三位一體 하나님의 創造와 三位一體 하나님의 救贖은 周邊的인 것과 中心의인 것의 關係에 있다.