

THE CONCEPT OF HUMANKIND ACCORDING TO CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY (IMAGO DEI) AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION WITHIN THE CHURCH, FAMILY, AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

The concept of humankind from a Christian philosophical perspective is rooted in the teaching of Imago Dei, the belief that humans are created in the image and likeness of God. This understanding affirms human dignity as beings possessing intrinsic values, rationality, freedom, moral responsibility, and a purpose in life. This study aims to analyze the philosophical and theological meaning of Imago Dei and its implications for the development of Christian Religious Education (CRE). In the context of CRE, the concept of Imago Dei has significant implications for educational goals, learning methods, the relationship between teachers and students, and the formation of Christian character. The research method used is a literature review with a descriptive-analytical approach to the concept of humankind according to Christian philosophy and its relevance in contemporary Christian religious education. The results indicate that Imago Dei not only affirms human identity as God's creation but also serves as the basis for education oriented toward character formation, the development of spiritual potential, and the affirmation of one's calling in the light of Christ. Christian Religious Education must therefore function as a means of transformation that guides students to live in accordance with their dignity as images of God.

Keywords: Imago Dei, Christian philosophy, humankind, Christian Religious Education, Christian character.

INTRODUCTION

The understanding of humankind is one of the fundamental subjects in the Christian philosophical and theological tradition. Within the framework of general philosophy, humanity is often reduced to specific dimensions alone as biological beings subject to natural law, social beings living in community interaction, or rational beings determined by their capacity to think. Christian philosophy, however, offers a more comprehensive and transcendent perspective. Human beings are understood not merely as material or rational entities, but as creatures of God made in His image and likeness, a concept known as Imago Dei.

The concept of Imago Dei provides a solid ontological and axiological foundation for understanding the value, dignity, and purpose of human life. Human dignity does not derive from biological or rational capacity alone, but from an existential relationship with the Creator. Accordingly, human beings possess an intrinsic value that cannot be substituted, as well as a life calling oriented toward service to God and neighbor. This perspective affirms that education, ethics, and social life must be rooted in the recognition of humanity as the image of God, so that every individual is treated with respect, love, and moral responsibility (Waruwu et

al., 2026). Gen. 1:26–27 (WEBUS) affirms that God created humankind in His image and likeness. This declaration forms the primary foundation of Christian anthropology, which fundamentally distinguishes humanity from all other creation. In this perspective, human beings are regarded not merely as biological or rational creatures, but as persons who reflect the divine character.

As the image of God, human beings possess certain capacities: the moral capacity to distinguish good from evil, the spiritual capacity to relate to the Creator, the rational capacity to think and understand reality, and the relational capacity to live in community with one another. These four dimensions indicate that human beings are multidimensional creatures who reflect the nature of God in daily life. The implication of this understanding is the recognition that every human being possesses a transcendent dignity that cannot be replaced by any material aspect. Human dignity is grounded in an existential relationship with God, so every individual must be respected, protected, and treated with love. Accordingly, the concept of Imago Dei becomes the theological and philosophical foundation for Christian ethics, education, and social life that emphasizes reverence for human dignity as God's creation (Zacharias, 2025).

In the context of the modern era shaped by rationalism and secularism conceptions of human nature have undergone significant shifts. Secular perspectives tend to reduce human beings to entities measured solely by work productivity, intellectual capacity, social status, or economic achievement. This reductionism disregards the existential, spiritual, and moral dimensions that truly constitute the wholeness of the human person. Consequently, multidimensional problems arise: an identity crisis that weakens self-awareness, moral degradation that erodes ethical values, discrimination that undermines the principle of justice, and violence that threatens social cohesion. Furthermore, the reduction of human beings to materialistic terms leads to a loss of reverence for human dignity as beings with intrinsic and transcendent value. The primary challenge of the modern era is thus not merely a matter of technology or economics, but how to restore an integral understanding of human beings as whole persons encompassing rational, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions. This endeavor demands a philosophical and ethical approach capable of reaffirming human dignity as a center of value, not merely an instrument of productivity or an object of social evaluation (Manalu, 2021).

Within the realm of Christian Religious Education, the concept of Imago Dei holds a foundational position because it provides the ontological and theological basis for the goals of Christian education. Christian education does not stop at the transfer of doctrinal or cognitive knowledge; it functions as a holistic process that shapes human beings to live in harmony with God's will. The dimensions emphasized include character formation, the deepening of spirituality, and the development of integral moral responsibility within students. A CRE teacher is called to regard each student not merely as an object of learning, but as a person with intrinsic value and transcendent dignity before God. This perspective demands that teachers internalize the vision of Imago Dei in pedagogical practice, so that every educational process becomes a means of restoring and strengthening human identity as God's creation. A rigorous philosophical and theological examination of the concept of humankind according to Christian philosophy and its implications for CRE is therefore of critical importance. Such analysis enables Christian education to respond to the challenges of the era moral crisis, the relativism of values, and spiritual degradation by offering a paradigm rooted in the love of Christ, producing generations with firm faith, noble character, and lives that serve as genuine reflections of God's love in everyday reality.

The research problem in this study begins from the fundamental question of how human nature is understood in general philosophy compared to Christian philosophy. General philosophy tends to reduce human beings to merely biological, rational, or social dimensions, thereby overlooking the existential and spiritual aspects that constitute human wholeness. Christian philosophy, through the concept of Imago Dei, affirms on the contrary that human beings are God's creation with intrinsic dignity and transcendent value. In the modern context, secular reductionism emphasizing productivity, social status, and material achievement gives rise to serious problems: identity crisis, moral degradation, discrimination, and the loss of reverence for human dignity. This raises the critical question: how can Christian philosophy, grounded in Imago Dei, provide answers to this multidimensional crisis, and what are its implications for Christian Religious Education in forming the character, spirituality, and moral responsibility of students? The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To analyze the distinction between the understanding of human nature in general philosophy which tends toward reductionism and Christian philosophy grounded in the concept of Imago Dei.
2. To explore the meaning of Imago Dei as the ontological and axiological foundation for understanding human dignity, value, and purpose of life.
3. To assess the relevance of Christian philosophy in addressing the multidimensional problems of the modern era, including identity crisis, moral degradation, discrimination, and the loss of reverence for human dignity.
4. To identify the implications of Imago Dei for Christian Religious Education, particularly in the formation of students' character, spirituality, and moral responsibility.
5. To formulate a paradigm of Christian education capable of producing generations with firm faith, noble character, and lives that serve as genuine reflections of God's love in social life.

This research holds multidimensional significance encompassing theological, academic, practical, pedagogical, and social dimensions. First, in terms of strengthening the theological foundation, this study reaffirms that human beings are Imago Dei, so that every student is treated as a person of dignity with intrinsic value. Second, this research makes a significant academic contribution to the development of Christian philosophical and theological studies, particularly in the field of Christian education. Third, this research holds practical relevance by offering an educational paradigm capable of addressing contemporary challenges such as moral crisis, spiritual degradation, and the relativism of values. Fourth, this research plays a role in character formation by helping CRE teachers design learning strategies that emphasize the cultivation of character, spirituality, and students' moral responsibility. Finally, this research carries social implications that encourage the creation of a more just, loving society that honors human dignity in accordance with the vision of Christian ethics.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs the library research method with a descriptive-qualitative approach. This approach was selected as appropriate for exploring, interpreting, and constructing a conceptual understanding of Imago Dei within the perspective of Christian philosophy and theology, along with its relevance for Christian Religious Education (CRE). Research data sources include biblical texts as the normative foundation, classical and contemporary works of Christian philosophy, Christian Religious Education literature, as well as relevant scholarly articles and academic journals. Source selection was conducted selectively, taking into account credibility,

authority, and relevance to the research theme. Data analysis was carried out through stages of identification, classification, and interpretation. Identification aimed at discovering core ideas related to the concept of Imago Dei; classification was performed to group these ideas according to theological, philosophical, and pedagogical dimensions; while interpretation served to elucidate the meaning and implications of this concept for the practice of Christian Religious Education. This approach enables the researcher to construct a comprehensive, systematic, and critical account of the theological and philosophical meaning of humankind as the image of God. Accordingly, the research is not merely descriptive but also analytical and reflective, capable of providing academic, theological, and practical contributions to the development of CRE as both an academic discipline and a practice of Christian faith education.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Imago Dei: The Nature and Essence of Humanity Created by God as Bearing the Character and Nature of God

In Gen. 1:26 (WEBUS), two key terms are found "image" and "likeness" which point to the nature and essence of humanity as created by God to bear the nature of God. The meaning of the word "image" *tselem* refers to a replica or a shadow form of the original. Thus, the meaning of humanity being created in the image of God points to God's work of creating human beings according to His own image. The word "image" refers to God's great work upon His creation called humanity, created according to His own image. The essential nature of humanity is therefore created according to its foundational pattern, namely God Himself. Furthermore, the word *demut* "likeness" derives from the root word *damah*, meaning "blood," pointing to the meaning of lineage or descent: one born of a blood lineage will bear a resemblance in character, just as a child inherits the character of his parents. Therefore, humanity created according to the image and likeness of God ought to possess character and disposition consistent with the Creator: love, justice, righteousness, and holiness. Another key term for understanding Gen. 1:26 (WEBUS) is the preposition "according to" *kid* which indicates that when God undertook His work upon humanity, He employed His own image and likeness. Humankind is not the image of God Himself, for the image of God is God Himself. The word "according to" means that God used His own design, pattern, and blueprint when creating human beings. Thus, humanity was created based on the design, pattern, and blueprint of God's image and likeness. Therefore, human beings ought to possess form and behavior consistent with their Creator. One part of God's character and nature is love, justice, and holiness. It is therefore proper that God's people should bear character and disposition that reflect God's own love, justice, and a constant preservation of holiness (Sianturi et al., 2023).

In the context of Christian education, the concept of humanity as God's creation according to image (*tselem*) and likeness (*demut*) affirms that every individual possesses a transcendent dignity and an identity rooted in the divine design. This means that the educational process does not focus solely on intellectual development, but also on character formation that reflects the nature of God. Christian education must instill the awareness that human beings are replicas of God's design, so that the goal of learning is not only to produce intellectually capable individuals, but also persons of integrity, love, and justice. Christian education thus becomes a means to revitalize divine values in the lives of students. Furthermore, the understanding of humanity as the image and likeness of God provides an ethical foundation for Christian education. The word *demut*, which points to resemblance to God, implies that students are called to inherit divine qualities such as love, truth, justice, and holiness. Christian education

must therefore not stop at the transfer of knowledge but must direct students to internalize the moral and spiritual values consistent with God's design. By emphasizing this dimension, Christian education functions as a transformative process that shapes human beings into persons capable of living according to God's will and becoming witnesses of His love in the midst of society.

Humanity Created and Given Rada (Authority) Over All Creation: Authority as the Power to Guard, Protect, and Nurture Life

Furthermore, the existence of humanity created according to the image and likeness of God was not without God's purpose. God has a purpose for humanity, namely to give them authority with the task: "that they may have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the sky, and over the livestock, and over all the earth" (Gen. 1:26–28 WEBUS). Humanity was given rada by God a mandate to govern and have dominion over all life. However, it must be understood that "dominion" here is not exploitation, destruction, or self-serving purposes. Human beings were given a mandate as a king; they must rule with justice and wisdom and bring well-being to life. As Ps. 72:6 (WEBUS) reads: "He shall come down like rain on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth." The word "come down" in the context of rainfall uses the word yarad, which derives from the root word rada, meaning to govern or to have dominion. It thus becomes very clear that the mandate from God to humanity is to guard, nurture, and develop all creation like rainwater that falls to bring the vitality of life to what is barren. In the context of a work ethic, the words "govern" and "have dominion" do not describe exploitative or manipulative work behavior. Rather, it is a work ethic grounded in the image and likeness of God the character and nature of God that grants life-giving power, not the power of death presenting love, truth, holiness, honesty, justice, and wisdom (Pardede, 2024).

In Christian education, the mandate of God to humanity to "have dominion" over creation must not be understood as legitimizing exploitation, but rather as a calling to preserve, nurture, and develop life. The concept of rada meaning "to govern" in the context of a work ethic emphasizes leadership that is just, wise, and filled with love. Christian education must therefore instill the awareness that the authority given by God is a moral responsibility to bring forth well-being, not destruction. Students are guided to understand that humanity's task as the image of God is to serve as God's representative on earth, presenting love, truth, and justice in every aspect of life. Furthermore, the relevance of this mandate for Christian education lies in the formation of a work ethic rooted in the character of God. CRE teachers need to emphasize that working, leading, and managing life are not merely practical activities, but expressions of the divine nature that bestows the power of life. Christian education thus shapes students to possess a work ethic that is honest, just, loving, and holiness-preserving the very values that form the foundation of a curriculum directing students to become responsible individuals, capable of managing creation wisely, and serving as agents of social transformation who bring God's peace into the midst of society.

Imago Dei and the Dimension of Rationality

The rational dimension of humanity is rooted in Gen. 1:26–27 (WEBUS), in which God created human beings according to His image and likeness. This rationality is not merely logical capacity, but also the capacity to understand truth, distinguish good from evil, and direct one's life in accordance with God's will. Paul in Rom. 12:2 (WEBUS) emphasizes the importance of the renewing of the mind so that human beings may discern the will of God that which is good,

pleasing, and perfect. Human rationality is thus a divine instrument that enables human beings to live in obedience and relationship with the Creator. This rationality distinguishes humanity from other creatures, since it is human beings alone who are given the capacity for reflective and moral thought as a reflection of God's wisdom. Rationality as part of Imago Dei is also closely related to moral responsibility. In Gen. 2:17 (WEBUS), God gives human beings a command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, affirming that they possess the rational capacity to understand a command and its consequences. This dimension shows that the human mind is not only for abstract thought, but also for directing action in accordance with divine values. Eph. 4:23–24 (WEBUS) emphasizes the renewal of the mind in truth and holiness, meaning that human rationality must be employed to uphold the love, justice, and truth of God. In Christian education, this rational dimension becomes the foundation of character formation, in which students are invited to use their minds not for self-serving ends, but to bring forth life consistent with God's design (Telaumbanua & Pasaribu, 2026).

In Christian education, the rational dimension of humanity is understood as a gift from God that enables students to think critically, reflectively, and morally. Rationality is not merely logical capacity, but the capacity to understand truth and distinguish good from evil, as affirmed in Rom. 12:2 (WEBUS) regarding the renewing of the mind. Christian education must therefore direct students to use their minds in evaluating the realities of life according to God's will, affirming that the process of learning is not merely the mastery of knowledge, but also the formation of a mindset aligned with divine values. Furthermore, the relevance of this rational dimension in Christian education lies in the formation of morally responsible character. Gen. 2:17 (WEBUS) shows that human beings possess the rational capacity to understand God's commands and their consequences, so Christian education must instill the awareness that the mind is an instrument for upholding love, justice, and truth. Eph. 4:23–24 (WEBUS) emphasizes the renewal of the mind in holiness, meaning that students are directed to think and act in accordance with God's design. Christian education thus functions as a transformative means that shapes human beings into persons capable of integrating rationality with faith, so that their lives become a genuine testimony to the wisdom of God.

Imago Dei and the Moral Dimension

The moral dimension of humanity is rooted in Gen. 1:26–27 (WEBUS), which affirms that humanity was created in the image and likeness of God. This means that human beings have the capacity to distinguish good from evil and to act in accordance with God's will. Morality is not merely a social norm, but a reflection of the nature of God who is holy, just, and full of love. In Ps. 15:2–3 (WEBUS), it is affirmed that the righteous are those who live with integrity, speak truth, and do no evil to their neighbor. Thus, the moral dimension of humanity as Imago Dei is the calling to live in harmony with the character of God. As part of Imago Dei, human morality demands ethical responsibility in every aspect of life. Gen. 2:17 (WEBUS) shows that God gave moral commands to human beings, affirming that they have the capacity to understand the consequences of their actions. Paul in Gal. 5:22–23 (WEBUS) emphasizes the fruit of the Spirit as the standard of Christian morality: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This moral dimension affirms that human beings are called to live not only by logic or rationality, but also by divine values that form ethical behavior (Rahayu et al., 2025).

In Christian education, the moral dimension of humanity rooted in Gen. 1:26–27 (WEBUS) forms the foundation for students' character formation. Morality is understood not as mere social rules, but as a reflection of the nature of God who is holy, just, and full of love. Christian education must therefore instill the awareness that every individual has the capacity to distinguish good from evil and to act in accordance with God's will. This affirms that the learning process is not oriented solely toward cognitive knowledge, but also toward the formation of integrity and a life lived in harmony with the character of God. Furthermore, the relevance of this moral dimension in Christian education is evident in the ethical responsibility that must be cultivated in students. Gen. 2:17 (WEBUS) shows that human beings have the rational and moral capacity to understand God's commands, while Gal. 5:22–23 (WEBUS) emphasizes the fruit of the Spirit as the standard of Christian morality. Christian education must therefore direct students to internalize the values of love, patience, honesty, and self-control as part of daily life. By emphasizing this moral dimension, Christian education functions as a transformative means that forms persons of divine character, enabling students to become witnesses of Christ and bring the values of God's kingdom into the midst of society.

Imago Dei and the Relational Dimension

The relational dimension of humanity is rooted in Gen. 1:26–27 (WEBUS), which affirms that humanity was created in the image and likeness of God. This shows that human beings are not individualistic creatures, but persons called to live in relationship with God and with one another. This relationality reflects the nature of the Triune God who lives in a fellowship of love among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus, human beings as Imago Dei have the capacity to build relationships grounded in love, justice, and truth. This relationship is not merely social interaction, but an existential calling to reflect the character of God in communal life. The relational dimension of humanity also demands social responsibility rooted in the love of God. In Jn. 13:34–35 (WEBUS), Jesus affirms the new commandment to love one another as the mark of identity for His disciples. This shows that human relationships must reflect the unconditional love of Christ. Relationality as part of Imago Dei means that human beings are called to live in solidarity, to help one another, and to build communities that are just and filled with peace. Healthy relationships not only strengthen social bonds, but also serve as a means of bringing the kingdom of God into the midst of the world (Suwandi, 2026).

The relational dimension of humanity as Imago Dei affirms that human beings were created to live in relationship with God and with one another, reflecting the nature of the Triune God who lives in a fellowship of love. In Christian education, this awareness becomes an important foundation for building a learning community that emphasizes togetherness, mutual respect, and solidarity. Students are invited to understand that relationship is not merely social interaction, but a calling to reflect the love of God in real life. Relationality as part of Imago Dei also demands ethical responsibility in building healthy relationships. Jn. 13:34–35 (WEBUS) affirms Jesus' command to love one another as the mark of identity for His disciples. In Christian education, this means that every learning process must integrate the values of love, justice, and truth in relationships among students and between teachers and students. Healthy relationships become a means of character formation, in which students learn to live in humility, patience, and unity as affirmed in Eph. 4:2–3 (WEBUS).

Imago Dei and the Spiritual Dimension

The spiritual dimension of humanity is rooted in Gen. 1:26–27 (WEBUS), which affirms that humanity was created in the image and likeness of God. This shows that human beings have the capacity to relate to God directly through faith, prayer, and worship. Spirituality is not merely an emotional experience, but a reflection of the existence of God who is holy and transcendent. Ps. 42:2 (WEBUS) affirms the longing of the human soul to meet with God, indicating that spirituality is an essential part of the nature of humanity as Imago Dei. Thus, the spiritual dimension of humanity is a calling to live in union with God, who is the source of life and the ultimate purpose of human existence. The spiritual dimension also affirms the responsibility of human beings to live in faithfulness and obedience to God. Jn. 4:24 (WEBUS) emphasizes that true worship must be offered in spirit and in truth, meaning that human spirituality must be rooted in the integrity of faith, not merely in formal ritual. Spirituality as part of Imago Dei directs human beings to live out love, truth, and holiness in their relationship with God and with one another. This affirms that spirituality is not merely a personal matter, but also has social impact, because human beings are called to bring divine values into communal life (Waruwu et al., 2026).

The spiritual dimension of humanity as Imago Dei affirms that every individual has the capacity to relate to God through faith, prayer, and worship. In Christian education, this becomes an important foundation because the learning process is not oriented solely toward the mastery of knowledge, but also toward the nurturing of spiritual life. Students are invited to recognize that they are images of God called to live in holiness and obedience. Christian education thus functions as a means of forming a firm faith that guides students to integrate knowledge with spiritual life. The spiritual dimension also has implications for the character formation of students. Jn. 4:24 (WEBUS) affirms that true worship must be offered in spirit and in truth, meaning that spirituality must be rooted in the integrity of faith. In Christian education, this is expressed through learning that emphasizes the values of love, honesty, and faithfulness as reflections of the nature of God. Healthy spirituality shapes students into persons capable of bringing God's peace into their relationships with one another, while also serving as witnesses of Christ in the midst of society.

The Concept of Imago Dei: Implications for Christian Religious Education

As elaborated above, the concept of Imago Dei affirms that humanity was created in the image and likeness of God. This provides a strong theological basis that every human being possesses dignity, intrinsic value, and rational, moral, relational, and spiritual capacities that reflect the nature of God. In the context of Christian education, the understanding of Imago Dei becomes the philosophical and theological foundation that shapes the educational paradigm, in which students are regarded not merely as objects of education, but as whole persons with divine potential that must be developed. Thus, Christian education is not oriented solely toward the transfer of knowledge, but also toward character and spiritual formation consistent with God's design. The practical implications of the concept of Imago Dei in CRE are evident in the effort to build an educational process that is holistic, transformative, and Christ-centered. All parties including parents, church leaders, and CRE teachers are called to instill the values of love, justice, truth, and holiness as reflections of the nature of God mirrored in human beings. This is consistent with the biblical mandate that emphasizes the renewal of the mind (Rom. 12:2 WEBUS), character formation through the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23 WEBUS), and the calling to live in a relationship of love (Jn. 13:34–35 WEBUS). Research on the practical

implications of Imago Dei in CRE is therefore important for formulating educational strategies that are relevant to the challenges of the era, while also affirming the vision of Christian education as a means of forming whole human beings according to God's will.

The following are some practical implications of the concept of Imago Dei in Christian Religious Education (CRE):

Implications for Education in the Church

Human dignity is an ontological foundation that cannot be separated from the Christian educational process. The church, as a community of faith, is called to educate its congregation by acknowledging every person as the image of God (Imago Dei). This means that education must not be regarded merely as a utilitarian means of meeting pragmatic needs, or as a discriminatory mechanism that distinguishes individuals based on social status, economic standing, or intellectual ability. On the contrary, Christian education must be rooted in the recognition that every human being possesses intrinsic value derived from an existential relationship with the Creator. The theological basis for this view is found in Gen. 1:26–27 (WEBUS), which affirms that humanity was created in the image and likeness of God. Thus, human dignity is not determined by worldly achievement, but by the divine identity that has been inherent since creation. Ps. 8:4–6 (WEBUS) adds that human beings are given authority over creation, a mandate that affirms the noble status of humanity in the cosmic order. Furthermore, Eph. 4:23–24 (WEBUS) and Col. 3:10 (WEBUS) emphasize the renewal of humanity in Christ, which restores the divine dignity damaged by sin. On this foundation, Christian education in the church must be understood as a transformative process that affirms human dignity as the image of God not only transferring knowledge, but forming Christian character that reflects the love, truth, and justice of God. The church, through teaching, faith formation, and pastoral ministry, serves as a learning space that honors every person, rejects all forms of discrimination, and affirms that every member of the congregation has a noble calling to live according to the will of God (Makoro et al., 2026). Practical implications in church education include (Pratama & None, 2023):

1. The church provides inclusive education: The church curriculum must be designed to welcome all members of the congregation regardless of social, economic, gender, or ability backgrounds. This affirms that every person possesses equal dignity as the image of God (Gen. 1:26–27 WEBUS). The church must reject all forms of discrimination in education, whether based on social status or ability. Ps. 8:4–6 (WEBUS) affirms that human beings are given a noble status by God, so that every member of the congregation is worthy of respect. (Anti-discriminatory education.)
2. The church provides education focused on character formation: Learning materials must emphasize the values of love, justice, and integrity as reflections of Imago Dei. The church not only teaches doctrine, but also forms its congregation into persons who are Christlike (Eph. 4:23–24 WEBUS).
3. The church provides holistic education: The curriculum must encompass intellectual aspects (biblical teaching), spiritual aspects (worship and prayer), moral aspects (Christian ethics), and social aspects (service and diakonia). This affirms that human dignity as the image of God encompasses every dimension of life.
4. The church provides education aimed at achieving the restoration of its people: In the perspective of Christian theology, the church holds a mandate not merely as a place of worship, but also as a center of faith education that functions to form its people according to God's design.

Education provided by the church aims to bring about the restoration of the people the recovery of humanity from the damage caused by sin toward the likeness of Christ. The philosophical and theological foundation of this vision lies in the concept of Imago Dei, which affirms that humanity was created in the image and likeness of God. This concept provides the ontological basis that every individual possesses dignity, intrinsic value, and rational, moral, relational, and spiritual capacities that reflect the nature of God. The restoration of the people through church education means restoring human beings to their true identity as the image of God through faith formation, biblical teaching, and Christ-centered character formation, instilling ethical values such as love, justice, truth, and holiness. Academically, this concept may be understood as the integration of Christian anthropology and pedagogical practice. The church regards students as whole persons to be developed in all their dimensions: intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social. Education grounded in Imago Dei rejects reductionism that emphasizes only the cognitive aspect, and instead emphasizes the formation of the whole person. Thus, the restoration of the people is not only individual but also collective, because a restored people will form a community that reflects the kingdom of God in the world.

Implications for Education in the Family

One of the fundamental values of Imago Dei is human dignity. This dignity affirms that every person, regardless of race, gender, social status, or background, possesses transcendent value before God. In the midst of the digital age, this principle invites younger generations to respect diversity and reject all forms of discrimination and hate speech that so often appear in digital spaces. Character education can serve as a means of instilling mutual respect through the wise use of technology for instance, by cultivating courteous and inclusive online communication. In addition, Imago Dei also emphasizes that human beings are relational beings. As reflections of the Triune God who lives in a unity of love, human beings are called to build harmonious lives with one another. Challenges arise in the digital era when interpersonal relationships are frequently replaced by virtual interactions. Character education grounded in Imago Dei directs individuals to cultivate authentic, loving, and mutually supportive relationships expressed through digital literacy that emphasizes the use of social media as a means of building positive and supportive networks, rather than as a medium for shallow or destructive interaction. Another important aspect of the value of Imago Dei is the human capacity for critical thinking alongside moral action. As reflections of God the Creator, human beings are endowed with creative potential and the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood. Thus, reason and morality become the distinctive marks of humanity as the image of God, enabling them to develop new ideas while upholding ethical values in life (Paembonan & Ronda, 2024).

The following is an elaboration of the role of parents in the education of children in the family, related to the concept of Imago Dei (Berhиту et al., 2025):

1. Human Dignity and Family Education

In the perspective of Imago Dei, every child possesses a transcendent dignity as the image of God. Parents play an important role in instilling the awareness that their children are of value before God, regardless of race, gender, social status, or background. Education in the family becomes the first context in which children learn to value themselves and others. In the digital age, parents are called to guide their children to use technology responsibly, to reject discrimination, and to avoid hate speech. The family thus functions as a space for character formation that emphasizes respect for diversity and courteous communication.

2. Relationality as the Foundation of Family Education

As relational beings reflecting the Triune God, human beings are called to live in love and harmony. Parents bear the responsibility of instilling this relational value in their children from an early age. In the family context, authentic, loving, and mutually supportive relationships serve as the primary example for children. Challenges arise when interpersonal interaction is replaced by virtual relationships in the digital age. Parents need to guide children to use social media as a means of building positive networks, rather than merely shallow or destructive interaction. Family education grounded in Imago Dei emphasizes the importance of building healthy relationships, both in the physical and digital worlds.

3. The Critical and Moral Capacity of Children under Parental Guidance

Another value of Imago Dei is the human capacity for critical thinking and moral action. Parents serve as the primary educators who cultivate children's creative potential while guiding them in distinguishing right from wrong. Family education grounded in Imago Dei does not focus solely on intellectual aspects, but also on the formation of children's morality. With parental guidance, children learn to develop new creative ideas while upholding ethical values in daily life. This is of particular importance in the digital age, where children are confronted with a variety of information and influences that can shape their patterns of thought and behavior.

The implication of the concept of Imago Dei for family education is that parents must be living examples reflecting the love of God. They are called to build a home atmosphere full of love, to honor the dignity of every family member, and to cultivate healthy relationships. In addition, parents need to guide children in the wise use of technology, to teach courteous online communication, and to instill a critical attitude toward the information received. Family education thus serves as the primary foundation for forming a child's personality with divine character capable of living in love and ready to face the challenges of the age.

Implications for Education in Christian Schools and for Christian Educators

Christian education is not directed solely toward academic achievement, but is oriented toward the character formation and spiritual growth of students as an integral part of the educational process. This orientation affirms that Christian education has a holistic dimension encompassing intellectual, moral, and spiritual aspects, so that students are regarded as whole persons. The theological foundation supporting this paradigm is the concept of Imago Dei the conviction that humanity was created in the image and likeness of God. This concept provides a strong philosophical and theological basis for Christian education, because it emphasizes human dignity as God's creation with intrinsic value and the potential to reflect the divine nature. Thus, Christian education functions not only as a means of knowledge transfer, but also as a transformative process that shapes human beings to live according to God's will and to reflect the love of Christ in real life (Paembonan & Ronda, 2024). This understanding carries profound implications that every individual must be treated as a person of transcendent value, high dignity, and inherent divine potential as expressed in Gen. 1:26–27 (WEBUS). Christian education is therefore required to develop a holistic approach that not only emphasizes the intellectual aspect, but also forms the character, morality, and spirituality of students. Christian education thus functions as a transformative means that cultivates an awareness of human identity as a reflection of God, while also encouraging students to live according to the values of love, truth, and holiness (Neonisa & Ottu, 2025).

The following are several aspects requiring attention regarding the implications of the concept of Imago Dei for Christian educational institutions and Christian educators:

Transformative Curriculum Based on Imago Dei

A transformative curriculum is understood as an educational approach that does not function merely to transfer knowledge or passively convey content, but aims to promote deep change in the intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social dimensions of students. The orientation of this curriculum does not only emphasize the cognitive aspect what students know but goes further to direct the formation of identity, character, values, and the quality of human relationships, as well as responsibility toward the community. A transformative curriculum thus demands a learning process that is critical, reflective, contextual, and relevant to the dynamics and challenges of the era, so as to produce individuals who are whole and purposeful in both social and spiritual life. A teacher who lives out the principle of Imago Dei will play an active role in guiding and supporting students to develop respect for themselves and for others, while building healthy self-confidence. This value as a form of honoring the creation of God affirms the urgency of preserving and maintaining the quality of human relationships. The application of the principle of Imago Dei in education is therefore not oriented merely toward the individual, but also emphasizes collective responsibility in building a harmonious, loving, and sustainable life. Christian education is not oriented solely toward academic achievement, but is also directed toward forming good and responsible persons before God and neighbor. In addition, this education functions as a means for learning essential social values such as collaboration and tolerance in daily life, as well as the cultivation of empathy and care for others. Christian education thus holds a transformative dimension that emphasizes the development of character, morality, and spirituality, so that students are able to live wholly in relationship with God, neighbor, and their environment.

Service Learning Model

Service Learning, or service-based learning, is understood as an educational approach that integrates community service activities with academic learning objectives. Through this model, students do not only acquire intellectual knowledge and skills, but also undergo a process of character formation, the development of empathy, and the strengthening of social responsibility. In other words, Service Learning places service activities as an integral part of the learning process, not merely as a supplementary activity (Antak, 2024). Martha Antak emphasizes that educators need to design learning strategies that acknowledge the needs and potential of students holistically, so that they can grow in accordance with God's design. This also affirms that the entire educational process is rooted in the image of God, in which teachers regard students as unique and valuable persons, consistent with the belief in God as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. In line with this view, teachers are expected to create a learning environment that supports the intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual development of students. Saingo adds that teachers' motivation derives from an understanding of God who is full of compassion, so that they are driven to provide positive examples through actions grounded in love and justice in daily interaction. The development of students' character and faith in accordance with God's will thus becomes an aspect of equal importance to academic achievement in the management of Christian education (Saingo, 2023).

Inclusivity in Learning

Inclusive learning is not understood merely as an administrative strategy, but as a value-based and cultural approach to education that places every student as a person of value who has the right to equal learning opportunities. An understanding of inclusive management demands efforts to cultivate a sense of justice, acceptance, the reduction of stigma, and the strengthening of a school community that reflects God's love toward humanity. Inclusive learning management may therefore be understood as the process of managing all learning activities designed and implemented so that all students, without exception, are able to participate, develop, and achieve their best potential according to their respective abilities, needs, and backgrounds. In the context of building inclusive learning management, Masinambow and Nasrani affirm that spiritual education is an essential element in daily life. Students need to recognize that they are special creatures of God, so that the educational process is not oriented solely toward academic aspects, but also cultivates an awareness of the spiritual identity inherent within them. Inclusive learning management must therefore integrate the spiritual dimension as a foundation that strengthens reverence for human dignity, while also forming a learning environment that reflects the love and acceptance with which God loves every individual (Masinambow & Nasrani, 2021). The value and distinctiveness inherent in human beings ought to be understood by students as the foundation for building their identity and role as images of God. Within this framework of understanding, students are expected to cultivate empathy and respect both toward themselves and toward others by recognizing their nature as human beings created in the image of God. This awareness not only strengthens identity, but also forms a moral and spiritual disposition aligned with the divine design, so that students are able to live as persons reflecting the love and truth of God in their social relationships and daily lives.

CONCLUSION

The concept of Imago Dei provides a solid theological foundation for Christian Religious Education, affirming that every human being possesses dignity, intrinsic value, and rational, moral, relational, and spiritual capacities that reflect the nature of God. This understanding guides the Christian educational paradigm to regard students not merely as objects of learning, but as whole persons with divine potential that must be developed. The practical implications of this concept are evident in the provision of education that is holistic, transformative, and Christ-centered. The church, parents, educational institutions, and CRE teachers and lecturers are called to instill the values of love, justice, truth, and holiness as reflections of the nature of God:

1. Christian education in the church must reject all forms of discrimination, affirm human dignity as the image of God, and be oriented toward the formation of Christlike Christian character.
2. Education in the family serves as the primary foundation for character formation. Parents serve as the first educators who instill the awareness of self-worth, a relationship of love, and the capacity for critical and moral thinking. Family education grounded in Imago Dei functions to form the whole child one with divine character, capable of living in love, and ready to face the challenges of the age.
3. Christian educational institutions (schools, universities) and Christian educators (teachers and lecturers) are called to provide a transformative curriculum, service-based learning, and an inclusive approach that affirms the dignity of every individual as the

image of God. Christian education thus functions as a transformative means that forms whole persons who reflect the love of Christ.

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