

Men and women in the image of God

2018 Priscilla & Aquila Conference Elective

1. Introduction

First grouping:

- (Gen 1:26-7) “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”
- (Gen 5:1-2) “When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And he named them “mankind” when they were created. When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth.”
- (Gen 9:6) “Whoever sheds human blood by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.”
- (Jas 3:9) “With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness.”

Second grouping:

- (2 Cor 4:4) “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”
- (Col 1:15) “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.”
- (Heb 1:3) “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”

Third grouping:

- (Rom 8:29) “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”
- (1 Cor 15:49) “And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.”
- (2 Cor 3:18) “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”
- (Col 3:9-10) “Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator.”
- (1 John 3:2) “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

An “outlier”:

- (1 Cor 11:7) “A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man”.

2. Survey of different approaches

Traditional Patristic-Augustinian reading

- Structural/ontological image: intellect, memory, will
- Dynamic image: active love
- Partially lost image: the Fall
- Restored image: grace in Christ
- Criticisms:
 - Emphasis on the soul: dualistic?
 - Emphasis on reason: privileges autonomy and intelligence?
 - Emphasis on “original righteousness”: what about the Fall?

Modern functional-representational reading

- Genesis 1:26-7 and Ancient Near Eastern parallels:
 - A “royal” dimension: image representing divine rule
 - A “priestly” dimension: image representing service of the gods
- Gen 1-11 an ideological critique (e.g., Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image*):
 - Gen 1:26-7: a “democratization” of the image
 - Living images in God’s cosmic “temple”:
 - A royal dimension: “besides the definitive human task represented in Genesis 2:15 by the agricultural metaphor (to “till” and “keep” the garden), which is a paradigmatic form of organizing and transforming the environment into a habitable world for humans, we may note the pervasive interest throughout the primeval history in human cultural achievements and technological innovations such as city-building (4:17; 11:1-9) and nomadic livestock-herding, music, and metallurgy (4:20-22). The human task thus reflects in significant ways the divine artisan portrayed in Genesis 1 as artfully constructing a world.” (*Liberating Image*, 89)
 - A priestly dimension: “In the cosmic sanctuary of God’s world, humans have pride of place and supreme responsibility, not just as royal stewards and cultural shapers of the environment, but (taking seriously the temple imagery) as priests of creation, actively mediating divine blessing to the non human world.” (*Liberating Image*, 89-90)
- “Augustinian” echoes:
 - Jerome Zanchi (1516-90): “For this is the truth on the earth: in it a visible image was made—not by someone from a picture or sculpture—but by God himself, having fashioned man with his own hands, furnishing them with body and soul, and making him alive in his state. For on this account he wished to be visible

in the midst of the world so he could be seen by all things. But since he himself is invisible in his own nature, at least in this, his visible image, there was a likeness, where he may be observed and known. You see, after building some great city, great princes are accustomed to establish an image of themselves in the midst of it, in ongoing memory of its builder, in order that from the shape and outline of a form like the one who had been the builder of the city, all posterity might honour him in soul, and love him in soul. Similarly, after making the world, God fashioned his own visible image in it so that man himself as a vicar of God might also rule it, and that God in him, as in his image, by a certain means be seen and loved.” (*De Operibus Dei*, III)

- John Owen (1616-83): “They [other creatures] could not any way declare the glory of God, but passively and objectively. They were as an harmonious, well-tuned instrument, which gives no sound unless there be a skilful hand to move and act it. What is light, if there be no eye to see it? or what is music, if there be no ear to hear it? How glorious and beautiful soever any of the works of creation appear to be, from impressions of divine power, wisdom, and goodness on them; yet, without this image of God in man, there was nothing here below to understand God in them—to glorify God by them. This alone is that whereby, in a way of admiration, obedience, and praise, we were enabled to render unto God all the glory which he designed from those works of his power.” (*Christologia*, Works I.183)

- Criticisms:

- Image restricted to “dominion-like” activity/activities
- Does it restrict the image to “culture makers”?
- What about the impact of the Fall on dominion?

John Kilner: *Dignity and Destiny* (2015)

- Key observations:

- Men and women made *according to* the image: i.e., *according to* Christ who alone *is* the image of God
- Difference between the dignity of an intended destiny (common to all) and those who finally reach that destiny (Christians united to Christ)

- Image and idolatry (cf., Ps 115:4-8; Exod 32; Rom 1-3)

“A powerful dynamic overpowers the dynamic of being in the image of God. People, since they are inescapably in God’s image, should exclusively be living out God’s intentions for them to reflect godly attributes, to God’s glory. Yet they instead live out the implications of their identification with counterfeit gods. Such is the power and tragedy of sin. People become more like what they worship.” (*Dignity and Destiny*, 157-8)

- Key strengths:

- Focus on Christ for defining the image
- Sidesteps difficulties of people possessing the image in different measures

- “Augustinian” echoes:

- Christological focus of traditional emphasis on “original righteousness”:

E.g., John Calvin: “Nevertheless, it seems that we do not have a full definition of ‘image’ if we do not see more plainly those faculties in which man excels, and in which he ought to be thought the reflection of God’s glory. That, indeed, can be nowhere better recognised than from the restoration of his corrupted nature...“Now we are to see what Paul chiefly comprehends under this renewal. In the first place he posits knowledge [Col 3:10], then pure righteousness and holiness [Eph 4:24]. From this we infer that, to begin with, God’s image was visible in the light of the mind, in the uprightness of the heart, and in the soundness of all the parts. **For although I confess that these forms of speaking are synecdoches, yet this principle cannot be overthrown, that what was primary in the renewing of God’s image also held the highest place in the [original] creation itself.** To the same pertains what he teaches elsewhere, that “we...with unveiled face beholding the glory of Christ are being transformed into his very image” (2 Cor 3:18). Now we see how Christ is the most perfect image of God; if we are conformed to it, we are so restored that with true piety, righteousness, purity, and intelligence we bear God’s image.” (*Institutes* I.xv.4)

- The image and the traditional body-soul union
 - Upright soul provides “potential” to image and glorify God
 - “potential” only “actualised” in the embodied union
 - Image partially lost: soul’s “potential” to act righteously and glorify God lost in the Fall
 - Image restored through the new nature received from Christ: progressively actualised in sanctification and glorification of the body

3. The image and male-female complementarity

- Karl Barth and Genesis 1:26-7: “[God] willed the existence of a being which in all its non-deity and therefore its differentiation can be a real partner; which is capable of action and relation to him.” (*Church Dogmatics*, III/1.184)
 - Criticisms
 - Richard Lints (*Identity and Idolatry*): irreducible plurality in unity
- “Augustinian” echoes:
 - (1 Cor 11:7-12) “A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.”
 - Zanchi: “For without the body, the soul is by no means able to exercise the dominion that God has given to humanity (*hominibus*) when he says, ‘let them have dominion over the fish of the sea’ [Gen 1.26]. Accordingly, on the one hand he leads by voice, whilst the he guides by hand, and both are used for his rule whereby he is the lord of those things. And we know that an aspect (*speciem*) of his dominion and authority is even that authority which a man has over a wife. The difference of sex does not come from the soul but from the body.” (*De Operibus Dei* III)
 - An analogy of the Trinity? (1 Cor 11:3): “I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”