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# THE IMAGE OF GOD

DS212—Anthropology  
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## DEFINING THE IMAGE

- Theologians have conceptualized the image of God in several different ways.
  - As we looked at last week, some distinguish between the *image* of God and the *likeness* of God (cf. Gen 1:26).
    - The image is often identified with the ontological similarity to God. The likeness is an ethical similarity to God.
    - At the risk of oversimplifying, some theologians consider the image as something a human *is* and the likeness is something a human *does*.
  - While the Reformed tradition recognizes ontological and ethical aspects to the image, it typically has not distinguished between God’s image and likeness in this fashion.
    - Herman Bavinck:
      - “In our treatment of the doctrine of the image of God, then, we must highlight, in accordance with Scripture and the Reformed confession, the idea that a human being does not bear or have the image of God but that he or she is the image of God. As a human being a man is the son, the likeness, or offspring of God (Gen. 1:26; 9:6; Luke 3:38; Acts 17:28; 1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9).”<sup>1</sup>
      - “this image extends to the whole person. Nothing in a human being is excluded from the image of God. While all creatures display vestiges of God, only a human being is the image of God. And he is such totally, in soul and body, in all his faculties and powers, in all conditions and relations. Man is the image of God because and insofar as he is truly human, and he is truly and essentially human because, and to the extent that, he is the image of God.”<sup>2</sup>
    - Murray further elaborates on aspects of the image: “Man is a person and, therefore, a self-conscious, rational, free, moral, and religious agent.”<sup>3</sup>
  - The Reformed tradition often uses the language of archetype/ectype.
    - The human being is an ectype of God himself, the triune God, who is the archetype.

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<sup>1</sup> Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:554.

<sup>2</sup> Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:555.

<sup>3</sup> Murray, 2:38.

- The ectype extends to man's entire being: his ontology as well as his ethical capacity.
- There has been a change in humanity that was brought about through the Fall into sin. We must negotiate what that change entails and whether or not it has led to a loss of the image.
  - Speaking of the image of God prior to the Fall, Calvin says, "The integrity with which Adam was endowed is expressed by this phrase (image of God), 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."<sup>4</sup>
  - Prior to the Fall, the image of God consisted of true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness along with dominion over the created order.<sup>5</sup> However, this image has been affected by sin.<sup>6</sup>

## THE IMAGE OF GOD WITH REFERENCE TO SIN

- Genesis 9:6, which is decidedly a postlapsarian text, seems to presuppose that man *continues* to be made in the image of God.
  - Genesis 9:6—Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.
    - כִּי בַצֶּלֶם אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶת־הָאָדָם:
    - Yet not all interpreters read Gen 9:6 in this way (e.g. Schilder and Berkouwer).
    - Some interpret this verse to say that man *was* made in the image of God and may in fact regain that image. This gives human life a special dignity.
  - How are we to take this passage? What exegetical reasons do we have to affirm or negate this interpretation?
    - We need to focus first upon the use of עָשָׂה. Namely, what does the Qal perfect entail?
    - Arnold and Choi write that the perfect, "views the situation from the outside, looking upon it as a complete whole. It may refer to an action or state in the past, present or future, although it tends to view it as a complete situation or action that is temporally undefined (making it similar to the Greek aorist tense). . . . It may also refer to the perfect state, that is to an event and a state resulting from that event (making the perfect similar to the Greek perfect)."<sup>7</sup>
  - Interpreting Genesis 9:6 with עָשָׂה as an event with a state resulting from that event, we would conclude that man was made in the image of God and retains

<sup>4</sup> *Institutes*, I.15.3.

<sup>5</sup> *Institutes*, II.2.12.

<sup>6</sup> *Institutes*, I.15.4, II.12.17; *Commentary on Genesis 9:6*.

<sup>7</sup> Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 54.

that image. Consequently, murder is worthy of death, because man *continues* to be made in the image of God.

- In contrast, it seems Schilder must argue that man was made in the image of God, but no longer is made in that fashion.
  - To paraphrase, you must not shed the blood of man, because he once was made in the image of God and may at some point recover that image.
  - It's based upon past and *potential* value, not present actual value.
- That does not seem to be the force of Genesis 9:6. Rather, it weakens the argument.
- The use of the Qal perfect and the context itself support the notion that man continues to be made in the image of God.
- Prior to the Fall, man is created בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים and after the Fall continues to be made בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים.
  - This is identical language, which emphasizes that there is no *substantial* change in man's fundamental identity as image of God.
  - This basic position is supported further by James 3:9.
- James 3:9—With [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God (τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοὺς καθ' ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ γεγονότας).
  - James has been teaching about the danger of sinning with the tongue (vv. 6–8). It's unfitting that we would bless our God and Father with the same organ we use to curse people.
  - The argument is not simply that it's a contradiction to use the tongue to bless and curse *in general*. It turns specifically on the nature of man.
  - Let's consider the text more closely: James 3:9b—ἐν αὐτῇ καταρώμεθα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοὺς καθ' ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ γεγονότας
    - τοὺς καθ' ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ γεγονότας is a relative clause that describes τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. That is, men are created in God's likeness.
    - γεγονότας is a perfect active participle (accusative masculine plural of γίνομαι).
      - It modifies ἀνθρώπους, which is also accusative masculine plural.
      - As with our reading of the Qal perfect הִשָּׁבַע in Gen 9:6, this perfect active participle is a past act that has present effects by virtue of creating a continuing state.
    - Therefore, fallen man continues to be made in the likeness of God. The Fall has not eradicated the ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ.
  - Is this the same thing as being made in the *image* of God?
    - The LXX of Gen 1:26 uses both εἰκόν and ὁμοίωσιν. We argued previously that in that context, ὁμοίωσιν functions epexegetically to εἰκόν. That is, it further elaborates what the image is. They are two words that describe the same reality.

- But the question is whether James agrees with this. In other words, how is he using ὁμοίωσιν?
  - ὁμοίωσιν is an accusative feminine singular of ὁμοιότης. It appears in this form only in James 3:9
    - Not having other examples of this particular form in Scripture, we must be especially careful to consider the context.
      - With the preposition κατά, it describes the creation of man according to a fashion or pattern.
      - That is, ὁμοιότης describes the divine archetype *according to which* man is the ectype.
        - The reason it is such a contradiction to curse men while we also bless God with the very same tongue is that man is created expressly according to God’s likeness. There is an ontological relationship between the two.
        - It is inconsistent, illogical, and even absurd to curse the likeness of God while blessing God.
  - But let us turn to other texts to get a fuller grasp of ὁμοιότης in James 3:9. There are several instances of its cognates:
    - Hebrews 7:15—And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of (κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα) Melchizedek, there arises another priest.
    - Romans 1:23—and [they] exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling (ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνοσ) mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.
    - Romans 6:5—For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death (τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου), certainly we also shall be *in the likeness of His* resurrection.
    - Philippians 2:7—[Jesus Christ] emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men (ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος).
  - These uses indicate a similarity, though not identity, between an originating pattern and its reproductions—between an archetype and its ectypes.
    - This similarity does not appear to be limited to ethical aspects, as many who distinguish between εἰκῶν and ὁμοίωσιν in Gen 1:26 often insist.
    - As a result, James 3:9 teaches that fallen man continues to be created and bear the likeness of God. This conclusion is further strengthened as we turn to 1 Cor 11:7.
- 1 Corinthians 11:7—“For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God (εἰκῶν καὶ δόξα θεοῦ ὑπάρχων); but woman is the glory of man.”
  - The phrase εἰκῶν καὶ δόξα θεοῦ ὑπάρχων is particularly instructive for our present concerns.
    - The language Paul uses is borrowed from the Old Testament.

- The LXX of Gen 1:27 translates **בְּצַלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים** as κατ' εἰκόνα Θεοῦ.
- Paul uses cognates of these very words to describe man's existence as created.
- **ὑπάρχων** is a present active participle masculine nominative singular from **ὑπάρχω**.
  - This implies an abiding and continuing present reality. Man is or remains the image of the invisible God.
  - This present participle requires that we understand fallen man to retain the image of God. Man, even after the fall, is the image and glory of God.
- Yet some theologians would suggest that we consider the intended audience of this epistle.
  - Granted, this epistle is written to Christians. However, Paul's argument transcends the distinction of believer and unbeliever.
    - Paul uses the language of Genesis 1:27, which refers to a covenant-historical period prior to the fall, and therefore prior to any ethical category that distinguishes between believers and unbelievers.
    - Paul refers to what is common to humanity. His argument is rooted in the original creation, not the new creation brought about through redemption.
  - This passage is perplexing on several levels, but the conjunctions and prepositions help to clarify Paul's intent.
    - 1 Corinthians 11:8–9—<sup>8</sup> For man was not made from woman, but woman from man (ἀλλὰ γυνή ἐξ ἀνδρός). <sup>9</sup> Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man (ἀλλὰ γυνή διὰ τὸν ἄνδρα).
    - There's a distinction made between from (ἐκ/ἐξ) and for (διὰ) in verses 7 and 8.
    - The initial οὐ γάρ of verse 8 links Paul's statement with what he established in verse 7.
      - So that verse 8 (that woman is from man) is *based* and *founded* upon the historical reality of the original creation of man.
      - In other words, in terms of creational *origin*, woman is “from” (ἐκ) man. She was created from Adam's rib (Gen 2:21–23).
    - The initial καὶ γὰρ οὐκ of verse 9 introduces another implication of Paul's statement in verse 7.
      - In terms of creational order or purpose, woman was made “for” (διὰ) man.

- This is not a statement about ontological inequality, but one of roles, which for Paul even bear upon cultural matters such as the appropriateness of types of dress.
- Paul's statements about the creation of man and woman refer to an abiding reality.
  - The way that man and woman were created continues to be significant today—even in the midst of changing cultural particulars.
  - Therefore, Paul's argument seems to rest on the affirmation that man continues to exist in the image of God.
- Some interpreters have taken these verses to mean that men are created in the image of God, but women are not.
  - Once again, Paul makes a point about creational origin and purpose.
  - This need not contradict the clear teaching of Gen 1:27, which states explicitly: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; *male and female he created them.*"
- In 1 Corinthians 11:7, Paul is not concerned *first and foremost* to describe woman's relationship to God; he is concerned to describe woman's relationship to man.
- Given our exegesis of Genesis 9:6, James 3:9, and 1 Corinthians 11:7, we can conclude that man and women retain the image of God after the fall. That being said, other texts suggest that the image of God has been lost through the fall.
- Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10
  - Ephesians 4:24—and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. καὶ ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὁσιότητι τῆς ἀληθείας.
  - Colossians 3:10—and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν,
  - Whereas Gen 9:6; James 3:9; and 1 Corinthians 11:7 emphasized what is the *same* regarding the image of God pre- and post-fall, Eph 4:24 and Col 3:10 focus on what is *different*.
    - Both Eph 4:24 and Col 3:10 clearly speak about the renewal of the image of God. If that's the case, then something must have happened to it.
    - These texts are similar in several respects.
      - First is the emphasis upon the "new." τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον and τὸν νέον [ἄνθρωπον is implied] focus upon the New Creation.
        - Paul makes this point in 2 Cor 5:17—Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation (καινὴ κτίσις). The old has passed away; behold, the new (καινὰ) has come.

- The new creation is brought about through the redemptive work of Christ and the Spirit’s application of his work to believers.
  - Second, Paul emphasizes the divine archetype according to which man is created.
    - By speaking of a “likeness of God” in Eph 4:24 (κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα; lit: “created according to God”), he refers to an original reality or state of creation.
    - Likewise, in Col 3:10, Paul speaks of a new ἄνθρωπος which is being renewed (τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον) after the image (κατ’ εἰκόνα) of its creator.
    - The renewal of this image *recovers* something previously held.
  - Ephesians 4:24 looks to the ethical effects of the New Creation.
    - It results in ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὁσιότητι τῆς ἀληθείας.
    - The ἐν with the dative describes the sense in which believers are recreated. They are recreated ethically with respect to righteousness and holiness.
  - Colossians 3:10 focuses on the epistemological effects of the New Creation.
    - This renewal is εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν. It imparts a knowledge that was formerly held with respect to man as originally created, but was no longer present after the fall and prior to the New Creation.
      - It is not knowledge in general, but knowledge according to the image of the Creator.
      - Paul speaks of a similar renewal in Eph 4:23—“ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds” (ἀνανεοῦσθαι δὲ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ νοῦς ὑμῶν).
    - Therefore, if a renewal is necessary to recover this knowledge, then it must have been lost in some sense.
  - To combine the teaching of Eph 4:24 and Col 3:10, redemption restores true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, which are ectypes according to the divine archetype.
- The Scriptural data demands that we affirm two truths: (1) man retains the image of God after the fall, and (2) man has lost the image of God in some sense.
  - This introduces several important distinctions we find in our theological tradition regarding the image of God:
    - Broad/narrow
    - Moral agency/moral excellence
    - Generic/specific
    - Metaphysical/ethical

- In one sense, man retains moral capacity and moral agency. Yet, in his sin, man no longer possesses true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. He has lost the narrow sense of moral conformity or excellence.

## HISTORICAL VIEWS

- Roman Catholic
  - Roman Catholic theology teaches that man continues to be the image of God after the Fall. However, their definition of the image differs from other traditions.
  - The image is anchored upon man's relationship to God.
    - The Catholic Catechism teaches, "Of all visible creatures only man is 'able to know and love his creator.' He is 'the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake,' and he alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity."<sup>8</sup>
    - The image of God differentiates man from the rest of creation in terms of a moral, epistemological, and relational capacity. More than that, man has the freedom to exercise these capacities.
  - To look more closely at human constitution, Catholic theology further teaches that man is a body-soul unity.
    - The Catholic Catechism: "The human person, created in the image of God, is a being at once corporeal and spiritual."<sup>9</sup>
    - But this constitution is described in terms of higher and lower orders.
      - The lower aspect of man is the physical.
      - The higher aspect is the spiritual.
    - These aspects are in conflict with one another.
      - In medieval/scholastic Catholic theology, a problem arises when the physical and the spiritual aspects of man come into contact with one another. This tension is called "concupiscence."
      - Bavinck writes, "According to Rome, the conflict between flesh and spirit is natural. The subjection of the flesh to the spirit, therefore, is something supernatural, not something given with creation as such."<sup>10</sup>
      - For contemporary Catholic theology, concupiscence arises after the fall.
        - According to the Catholic Catechism, "The first man was unimpaired and ordered in his whole being because he was free from the triple concupiscence that subjugates him to the pleasures of the senses, covetousness for

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<sup>8</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), §356.

<sup>9</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), §362.

<sup>10</sup> Bavinck, 2:541.

earthly goods, and self-assertion, contrary to the dictates of reason.”<sup>11</sup>

- Yet there are inconsistencies with the Catholic tradition on this point.
- Concupiscence is characterized as a natural pull or tendency in man toward self-love. It is a drift from human potential and whole-hearted devotion toward God instead toward autonomy.
- To counteract this problem, God must give a supernatural gift to man.
  - The supernatural gift given to Adam after he was created is called the *donum superadditum* (super-added gift).
  - It’s important to note that the *donum superadditum* is given to man after he is created, though before sin (at least in the classic formulation).
    - It is not a constitutive part of human nature. And it is not part of the image of God. It is an accident or incidental property.
    - As such, these gifts can be lost, and man can retain the image of God.
  - Therefore, Roman Catholic theology teaches that man retains the image of God, because the image of God only includes his natural constitution.
- Problems with this Roman Catholic view:
  - First, this formulation of the image of God seems to entail that God made man deficient. *If* a natural drift away from God and toward self exists in man *as created prior to the fall*, then God’s creation is not “good” (Gen 1:31), but flawed or deficient at best. God had to provide a gift that fixed part of his creation.
  - Second, the image of God proper is unaffected by sin. What man has lost in the fall is the *donum superadditum*, which is not properly constitutive of man. This does not account for the teaching of Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 among others.
- Lutheran
  - Lutheran theology rejects the Catholic teaching of concupiscence and the *donum superadditum*.
    - Catholic theology teaches that man retains the image of God entirely.
    - Lutheran theology teaches the reverse: that man has lost the image of God entirely.
  - This view results from the Lutheran identification of the image of God with original righteousness.
    - This, however, cannot account for the teaching of Gen 9:6, and James 3:9.
    - These passages do not merely teach that man may once again recover the image of God. They teach that man present exists in the image of God.
- Pelagian

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<sup>11</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), §377.

- For the Pelagian, the image of consists in rationality, free will, and dominion over the creatures.
  - None of these aspects are lost after the fall.
  - Clearly there must be some difference in man after the fall, but what is it?
- Moral agency is part of the image of God, but moral excellence is something that must be acquired by man.
  - He obtains this excellent through rational voluntary choice.
  - Man is therefore not created in a positive righteous state. He was created morally neutral.
- Adam has a moral capacity. The use and outcome of that capacity was undetermined.
- However, the fact that Adam was created positively righteousness does not evacuate moral value from his voluntary actions.