
IMPLICATIONS OF THE IMAGE OF GOD: DOMINION AND OFFICES

DS212—Doctrine of Humanity
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DOMINION

- Dominion is exercised in several ways.
 - Genesis 1:28—And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill (וּמְלֵא) the earth and subdue (וַיְכַבְּשׁוּ) it, and have dominion (וַיִּרְדּוּ) over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”
 - Genesis 2:15
 - The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.
 - וַיִּקַּח יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם וַיִּנְתְּנוֹ בְּגֶן־עֵדֶן לְעִבְדָּהּ וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ:
 - Man is given express responsibilities. He is specifically called to have dominion over creation and to work and keep the garden of Eden.
 - לְעִבְדָּהּ—Work, Serve (BDB)—Laboring over creation “in terms of nurturing, cultivating, tending, building up, guiding, and ruling.”¹
 - Exodus 4:22–23—Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me (וַיַּעֲבֹדֵנִי).” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.”
 - וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ—Keep, Watch, Preserve (BDB)—This involves protecting the creation and maintaining the work that has been established.
 - This word is also used throughout the Old Testament (cf. Lev 8:35; Psalm 121; et al).
 - Priests were called to guard and keep the tabernacle/temple.
 - Man was called to keep the garden of Eden, and by extension, we are called to keep that over which we have oversight and authority.
- All of this underscores the fact that human beings have a special place among creation.
 - Psalm 8:3–8 (ESV)—³When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? ⁵ Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶ You have given him dominion (תַּמְשִׁילֶהוּ) over the works of your hands;

¹ Richard D. Phillips, *The Masculine Mandate* (Orlando: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2009), 8.

you have put all things under his feet (תָּחַת־רַגְלָיו),⁷ all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,⁸ the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

- Theologians often include dominion as part of the image of God.
 - Gen 1:27 speaks of man being created in the image and likeness of God.
 - Gen 1:28 follows that description with the command to be fruitful and multiply, filling the earth, subduing it, and having dominion.
 - Although the two are inextricably related, dominion is not included in the poetic form of Gen 1:27, which describes the way in which man is created.
 - Perhaps it is best to consider dominion over the creatures as an entailment of the image.
 - For example, dominion over the creatures presupposes that man is capable of the task—that he be created in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.
 - In other words, if man is the image of God, who is Lord over all, then it necessarily follows that man would also bear some measure of lordship over creation.
- Dominion is a power and authority God has granted to mankind over creation.
 - He has the right to dispose of the creation at his pleasure, so long as that accords with God's will.
 - Stewardship—God has entrusted creation to mankind. He wants us to do something with it.
 - Consider the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14–30).
 - The servant who buried his talents—doing nothing with them—had his buried talent taken away, and he was cast into outer darkness.
 - Likewise, a life of idleness is akin to “burying” the image of God and its dominion.
- Man's dominion over creation is immediately conjoined to the description of man as created in the image of God. The two are intimately related.
 - Man was created originally with dominion over creation.
 - The Fall into sin has affected this dominion (cf. Gen 3:17–19).
 - Notwithstanding, like the image of God itself, man retains dominion.
 - Even prior to the Fall, man's dominion over creation differs substantially from God's dominion as ectype differs from archetype.
 - God's lordship or dominion is original, independent, absolute, and unlimited. Man's is derived, dependent, relative, and limited.
 - Man has dominion over the creatures, because he *images* or represents in his very being God, the Creator and Sustainer of all things.
- God created man and charged him to have dominion over all living creatures. Man was also commanded to multiply and fill the earth, subduing it.
 - He was to *reproduce* and *replicate* the image and cause it to advance throughout creation (see Gen 5:1–3).

- This notion of image-reproduction and advancement can be understood as man’s divinely-appointed cultural activity.
- This dominion would come to its *terminus* in the *eschaton*. God will glorify mankind, bringing him to an even fuller and consummate expression of his image.
 - Man’s sub-eschatological cultural endeavors—his subjugation of the earth—will be complete.
 - Man will enter into his final Sabbath rest (Heb 4:9–10).

OFFICES

- This basic description of man’s general calling can be organized and considered further in a functional sense by considering man’s three offices (prophet, priest, and king). These offices serve as the general functions by which man as the image of God exercises dominion.
- In coming lectures, we will explore a Two-Adam Christology and establish a paradigm that will be critical for our understanding of humanity and our place among creation.
 - But before we look at that topic in detail, let us receive a preview of the work of Christ as the second and last Adam.
 - Recall Psalm 8:6, “You have given him dominion (תַּמְשִׁילֶהוּ) over the works of your hands; you have put all things *under his feet* (תַּתַּת־רַגְלָיו).”
 - Psalm 110 demonstrates that Christ fully accomplishes the original charge to Adam through the perfect execution of his offices and call to guard and keep the realm of God. He is waiting for his enemies to be made his footstool (הָדָם לְרַגְלָיִךְ), Psalm 110:1).
- The eternal Son and the image of God
 - It may seem to elementary to mention, but if human beings are created in the image of God, to understand human beings rightly, one must have an understanding of God’s being and attributes.
 - While general and special revelation are the two main categories of revelation, it’s important that we also recognize that God has revealed himself to us climactically in his Son, Jesus Christ.
 - Therefore, to gain a grasp on man as created in the image of God, we must look to the eternal Son of God, who is the perfect image of God (Col 1:15–20), the form of God (Phil 2:5–11), and the exact imprint of his nature (Heb 1:1–4).

CHRISTOLOGY AND THE IMAGE OF GOD

- Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man.
 - He is the perfect image of God as the eternal Son of God, consubstantial with the Father and Spirit.
 - Colossians 1:15–20 and Hebrews 1:2–3 are two foundational texts that teach us this truth.
- Yet, the eternal Son has entered into history by assuming a human nature.
 - This image of God is assumed in the incarnation and then perfected eschatologically through his resurrection from the dead.
 - As such, the ontology and historical experience of Christ inform our understanding of the image of God in pre- and postlapsarian contexts.
- From this perfect and eschatological man, who redeems us from our sin and ushers in the consummation, we can learn more of the original design and intent of the image of God through christocentric, christotelic, and christomorphic example.

COLOSSIANS 1:15–19

- Colossians 1:15–20—¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. ¹⁹ For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰ and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.
- This is an early Christian hymn that Paul used to counter the Colossian heresy, which was a hybrid of Gnostic and Judaizer theology.

Strophe 1 (15–16) Creation	Transition (17–18a)	Strophe 2 (18b–20) Redemption
¹⁵ ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου,	¹⁷ καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν	ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή,
πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως,	πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα	πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων,
¹⁶ ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη	ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν, ¹⁸ καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν	¹⁹ ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλῆρωμα κατοικῆσαι ²⁰ καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι
τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὀρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα, εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι· τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἐκτισται·	ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας·	τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν, εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ, [δι’ αὐτοῦ] εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

- Recurring features mark sections of each strophe, identified in the table above.
 - These features pair the strophes together such that they are parallel.
 - While the transition of vv. 17–18a is not a perfect match for the strophes, it also shares similar features.
 - The αὐτός ἐστιν beginning 17a mimics the ὅς ἐστιν.
 - The ἐν αὐτῷ (in him) mimics ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ.
 - The phrase ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος is similar in meaning to πρωτότοκος.
- Strophes one and two identify to features of the Son, the God-man.
 - The first strophe emphasizes the pre-existence of the Son of God. It focuses on his eternal ontic status and his role in creating the world.
 - The second strophe emphasizes the Son’s redemptive-historical activity. He is the firstborn from the dead and the preeminent one.
 - The hymn moves from the Son’s role in creation to redemption through a transition that connects the two.
- The Son as Uncreated Image of God (vv. 15–16)
 - Image of the Invisible God
 - 15a—ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου
 - The ὅς ἐστιν introduces a relative clause that connects the following material with the previous context.
 - Verses 13–14 described Christ’s redemptive-historical activity.
 - ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
 - Relative pronouns in vv. 14 (ὃς), 15 (ὅς), and 18 (ὅς) identify the Son in v. 13.
 - Verse 15 further describes this “beloved Son.”
 - The kingdom referenced in verse 13 is the present, eschatological reign of the resurrected Christ, for we have been transferred to it. It cannot refer to his pre-creational eternal reign.
 - Because of this fact, many interpreters view εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ in 15a to refer to Christ’s imaging of God with respect to his outward representation of God through his incarnation and especially his resurrection.
 - There are significant reasons this argument should not stand.
 - Jesus is identified as the agent of creation in v. 16.
 - It is grammatically permissible to take ἐστιν following a relative pronoun as an atemporal present.
 - Paul’s usage demands we take εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ to refer to the Son’s *eternal* imaging of God.
 - Firstborn over All Creation
 - This leads us to consider how he relates to creation. He is πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως.
 - This describes the Son as the preeminent one.

- Psalm 89:27—And I will make him the firstborn (LXX πρωτότοκον, accusative), the highest of the kings of the earth.
- The genitive κτίσεως can either be taken as an objective genitive, meaning that Christ is preeminent *over* creation, or as a comparative genitive, meaning that Christ is preeminent when compared to creation.
 - This preeminence comes from the fact that he created all things (ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα).
- Ridderbos and “Paul’s Christological Interpretation of Creation”
 - In *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, Herman Ridderbos describes the relationship of Christology to creation.
 - He writes, “by calling Christ the image of God he thus identifies Christ’s glory with that of God himself . . . and the same thing applies to Col. 1:15 . . . there is special reference to Christ’s glory as the Pre-existent One in these passages.”²
 - He continues, “by the designation image of God he is on the one hand distinguished from God, and on the other hand identified with God as bearer of the divine glory.”³
 - Ridderbos sees the language of Col 1:15 rooted in Gen 1:27.
 - Even though in passages like 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5, Christ is the *second* Adam, he precedes and is antecedent to Adam as the eternal image.
 - We have said that man is the ectype, who is created after the divine archetype. Now, we can see that in a more specific sense, the eternal Son of God exists as that archetype.
- Cosmic Dominion
 - Christ bears a dominion over all things. It’s a total dominion.
 - Because Christ is the eternal Son of God and the one through whom everything was created and holds together, he bears cosmic dominion.
 - The dominion given to man in Gen 1:26–28 is grounded in the cosmic dominion of the eternal Son of God.
 - The eternal Son is the uncreated paradigm (in a very real sense the archetype) for man as God’s image bearer.

² Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, 70.

³ Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, 70.

PHILIPPIANS 2:5–11

- Philippians 2:5–11—⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (ESV)
- Context
 - Paul exhorts the Philippians to look to Christ as a model for their own Christian walk. They are to “have this mind”—a mind that exhibits a willingness to sacrifice for others. This refers to vv. 3–4, where Paul writes, “³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”
 - Jesus’s life provides the pattern for the Christian life. It is a movement from suffering and humiliation unto glory and exaltation.
- Like Col 1:15–19, Phil 2:5–11 is another ancient Christian hymn. It is organized in a way that covers the entirety of Christ’s life experience (preexistence, incarnation, exaltation).
 - Preexistence (v. 6)—⁶ ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ
 - While “form of God” (μορφῇ θεοῦ) is not identical “image of God,” the two concepts are closely related.
 - μορφῇ refers to the constituent qualities of a thing that distinguish it from other things.
 - Jesus is specifically the μορφῇ θεοῦ, meaning he shares in the distinguishing characteristics of God.
 - Paul is speaking now of Christ’s preexistence. He is speaking of Christ’s equality with the Father. Prior to his incarnation, the Son is the very form of God.
 - Nevertheless, the Son *did not* consider equality with God (ἴσα θεῷ) a thing to be grasped.
 - This presupposes that the Son is equal with God. Again, μορφῇ θεοῦ, emphasizes equality with God.
 - Nonetheless, the Son did not seek to retain or otherwise prize this equality with respect to his incarnation.
 - The Son “emptied himself” (ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν). What is meant?
 - It’s the opposite attitude exhibited by Adam in the garden. He desired to be like God inappropriately (Gen 3:5).
 - While being equal with God, the Son nevertheless emptied and humbled himself.

- Whereas Adam “took and ate” (Gen 3:6), the Son did not “grasp” equality with God (Phil 2:6).
 - While remaining the μορφή θεοῦ, he took to himself the μορφήν δούλου.
- Incarnation (vv. 7–8)
 - Verse 7 describes precisely *how* the Son emptied himself: μορφήν δούλου λαβών. He took to himself the form of a servant.
 - This begins his *humiliation*, which is further described as “being born in the likeness of men” (ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος).
 - The Son’s emptying and humiliation then begins in the incarnation. But it continues in verse 8b: “he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ).
 - The Son of God, who is μορφή θεοῦ, and therefore equal with the Father, humbled himself through the incarnation, becoming subject to everything concomitant with human life (though without personal sin) and died a death, even death on a cross.
 - This is emptying/humiliation via *addition*.
 - The Son did not *give up* or otherwise lose the μορφή θεοῦ. He *added/took* (λαβών) the μορφήν δούλου.
 - In other words, the way in which the Son emptied himself was in the act of taking the form of a servant. This in no way references giving up the form of God.
 - In terms of eternal ontic status, the Son remains equal with God. He holds all things together (Col 1:17; Heb 1:3).
 - Yet in terms of the divine *economy* and his redemptive-historical status, he has humbled himself to the Father’s will.
- Exaltation (vv. 9–11)
 - Because of what the Son did in redemptive-history, the Father rewarded him.
 - ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
 - The movement in Christ’s historical life is from suffering *unto* glory. We must share in this mindset (Phil 2:5; also Heb 12:1–2).
 - We’ll cover more of this christomorphic pattern of life when we speak of the eschatology of the image of God.