

The Image of God

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June 2012

The Portland Vase was an exquisite discovery near Rome in the late sixteenth century. An artisan had crafted the vase during the reign of Tiberius Caesar (AD 14-37). After many generations, it eventually passed from memory. Rome fell, and the Dark Ages came with the Renaissance and Reformation periods following. Through it all the vase remained unscathed until February 7, 1845 when an inebriated visitor to the British Museum shattered it. One could still see what the shards once formed, but they were only shards. The Portland Vase was restored, however, but the process required another 144 years to complete.

The story of mankind is similar to the Portland Vase. God created man in His own image, and gave him a glory not surpassed by the angels. Yet, with one act, that image shattered and man became a ruin of his former glory. His body began to die, his heart no longer desired God, his mind became darkened, and in that instant, his spirit died. The *imago Dei* became thoroughly marred and perverted to the point that it hardly reflected its creator.

Redemption is the beginning of man's restoration. What sin did begins to be undone. Man's spirit becomes alive again, his heart begins to love God, and his mind starts to be renewed. Man, the image of God, is gradually conformed to the image of Christ until the consummation of redemption when he is fully restored.

Indeed, the biblical concept of the *imago Dei* is "crucial for understanding the flow of redemptive history."¹ According to Charles Feinberg, it is foundational for understanding nearly every conceivable doctrine in the Bible:

The concept of the image of God, implied or expressed, underlies all revelation. Thus, it is not too much to maintain that a correct understanding of the image of God in man can hardly be overemphasized. The position taken here determines every area of doctrinal declaration. Not only is theology involved, but reason, law, and civilization as a whole, whether it views regenerate or unsaved humanity from its origin to eternity.²

The image of God explains how God can communicate with man.³ What one believes about it will affect his understanding of God and the angels as well as the doctrines of sin, salvation, and the

¹ David L. Turner, "Image of God" in *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. by Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996).

² Charles Lee Feinberg, "The Image of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129 (July 1972): 236.

³ Carl F. H. Henry stated, "By dependence upon and fidelity to divine revelation, the surviving *imago* assures the human intelligibility of divine disclosure. . . . It qualifies man not only as a carrier of objective metaphysical truth about God's nature and ways, but more particularly as a receiver of the special revelational truth of redemption" (*God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 vols. [Waco, TX: Word, 1976] 2:130). Jack Barentsen also wrote regarding this issue. "Although man is certainly different from God (he is a sinner, he is finite, he is time-

church to name a few more.⁴ The article herein will begin with a historical survey of the major views on the *imago Dei*. Discussion of the views will follow in working towards a biblical understanding.

A SURVEY OF THE THREE MAJOR VIEWS

Explanations of the *imago Dei* span the second century to the present, and they are legion. Some have slight variations, while others are more significant. Nonetheless, all views can be grouped within three categories.⁵ Substantive views teach that the *imago* consists of certain parts or characteristics of man, such as his rationale or spirit. Relational views concern man's relationship with God or others as the divine image. Functional views maintain that God's image in man is some action he does, such as rule or take dominion over creation.

The Substantive View

Viewing the *imago* substantively has been predominant throughout church history.⁶ Adherents maintain it is a quality or capacity inherent to man. Some suggest the Fall damaged or destroyed the image of God, while others teach that nothing happened at all.

In Genesis 1:26, God says, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." Irenaeus is among the beginning of those who made a distinction between "image" (*tselem*) and "likeness" (*demuth*).⁷ For him, the "image" encompassed physical characteristics including man's mind and volition while the "likeness" was spiritual.⁸ Tertullian held to similar views.⁹ According to Irenaeus, the Fall had little or no effect upon the *imago Dei*; it endured while man's God-likeness was destroyed. Man only lost his "robe of sanctity," a gift originally bestowed by the Spirit. Therefore, he could no longer commune with the Lord.¹⁰

Clement of Alexandria and Origen also held to an image-likeness distinction. For them, the *imago* includes the mind and volition along with man's physical body. They believed it is basically anything essential to humanity—what makes man "man." Whereas Irenaeus distinguished between image and likeness as physical/spiritual, Clement and Origen saw the distinction as qualities essential/unessential. In other words, man is still "man" with or without original holiness and

and-space bound), his possession of the image of God seems to ensure that God and man share enough crucial attributes (the ability to reason, the capacity for relationship, etc.) to make a shared language possible. Thus, not only is general revelation possible, but also a special revelation involving language that is intelligible to man" ("The Validity of Human Language: A Vehicle for Divine Truth," *Grace Theological Journal* 9 [Spring 1988]: 37).

⁴ Feinberg, "Image of God," 236.

⁵ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983; reprint, 2007) 520; Stanley Grenz, "Jesus as the Imago Dei: Image-of-God Christology and the Non-Linear Linearity of Theology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47 (December 2004): 621.

⁶ Ibid. 521.

⁷ Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2003) 101.

⁸ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1958; reprint, 2003) 202; Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 34.

⁹ Hoekema, *Image*, 34; Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Faith*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1998) 425-26.

¹⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III.23.5, V.6.1.

righteousness. With these qualities he becomes God-like.¹¹ Athanasius, Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, and John of Damascus all agreed in various ways.¹²

Medieval theologians continued to distinguish between the terms “image” and “likeness,” all viewing the image of God as man’s mind and will.¹³ If the Fall had no effect upon the mind or will (as they contended), the *imago* was unaffected by sin, which means the Fall only destroyed man’s likeness to God—qualities unessential to man’s being. Man was originally gifted with them (*donum superadditum*).¹⁴ At the Fall, he merely lost a divine gift, something unessential to his humanity.

Reformers, such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, viewed “image” and “likeness” as synonyms. Luther identified the *imago* as man’s original righteousness and, since man is dead in sin, the *imago* must be entirely lost.¹⁵ Calvin agreed but had a more expansive view saying that the *imago* is anything that distinguishes man from the animals;¹⁶ it was original righteousness plus certain natural endowments. In Calvin’s understanding, when man fell, sin permeated the *imago*; it was not destroyed, but horribly marred, leaving the spiritual part of it dead.¹⁷

Many of these nuances are subtle but all substantive views teach that the *imago* is an ontological part of man.¹⁸ Relational and functional views do not. Furthermore, this is the only view of the three that distinguishes between the terms “image” and “likeness.”

The Relational View

A new concept of the *imago Dei* arose in the twentieth century. Genesis 1:26 opens with Trinitarian plurality and is followed by verse 27 which says, “God created man in His own image, in the image

¹¹ Reymond, *Theology*, 426.

¹² Berkoff, *Theology*, 202. For an overview of Augustine’s views, see Stephen Duffy’s “Anthropology” in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 27-28. Augustine reasoned that if man images God, and God is triune, then the *imago* must refer to vestiges of tri-unity inherent to man. John Calvin appreciated Augustine but wrote in his *Commentary on Genesis* that Augustine “speculates with excessive refinement” on the *imago*. Pelagius also agreed with Clement and Origen. He argued that if man’s will and rationale were unscathed by sin, both are wholly good. Therefore, man has the ability to know God and can please Him unaided by grace (see Berkoff, *Theology*, 202).

¹³ Hoekema, *Image*, 36. Thomas Aquinas was one of the first to view “image” and “likeness” as synonyms.

¹⁴ Erickson, *Theology*, 522-23. If spiritual qualities are unessential to man being man, then the Fall had no effect upon the *imago* or upon man himself. Contrary to Calvinism, the Fall did not leave man wholly depraved, but specifically deprived. Furthermore, since medieval theologians viewed God-likeness (*demuth*) as destroyed, they considered the mind and will left unscathed by the Fall. Therefore, man remains able to know what is good and can choose to do it. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, believed grace was necessary for salvation but he also taught that man’s good works could incline God to bestow more grace (see Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*, I.95.4; Hoekema, *Image*, 41). How one views the *imago* radically affects anthropology, hamartiology, and soteriology.

¹⁵ Berkhof, *Theology*, 202.

¹⁶ Ibid.; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I.15.3. Calvin wrote, “. . . the likeness of God extends to the whole excellence by which man’s nature towers over all the kinds of living creatures.”

¹⁷ Calvin stated, “. . . though we grant that God’s image was not totally annihilated and destroyed in him, yet it was so corrupted that whatever remains is frightful deformity” (see Calvin, *Institutes*, I.15.4).

¹⁸ Ontology is the study in philosophy that relates to “being.”

of God He created him; male and female He created them.” In the immediate context of the *imago* lies a plurality within the Godhead and a plurality within mankind. Advocates of relational views say this plurality should be taken seriously.¹⁹ Therefore, a dynamic relationship is the essence of how man is like God.

Karl Barth believed the *imago* is not a relationship *per se*; it is an experience within an active relationship. Emil Brunner illustrated the concept saying that a mirror is not a source of light nor does it have an imprint of light; it only reflects the light according to its placement. Likewise, when man is turned towards God, he fully experiences or expresses the *imago*.²⁰

Plurality in the *imago* is a newer exegetical observation. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “The likeness, the *analogia*, of humankind to God is not *analogia entis* but *analogia relationis*.”²¹ In other words, the *imago* is not a static entity given at creation but ebbs and flows in the dynamic flux of relationship. Whether between human beings or with God, relationships are said to have the likeness of inter-Trinitarian relationships.

Many relational views of the *imago* are held by Dialectic theologians. However, G. C. Berkouwer held to a relational view and was a Reformed theologian. He believed the *imago* was lost at the Fall and was unessential to man as man.²² The image of God comes back into existence by the Holy Spirit at regeneration.²³ As the believer progresses in sanctification, the *imago* becomes all the more visible, restored, and God-like.

Unlike Bonhoeffer, Berkouwer considered the image of God to be an *analogia amoris*;²⁴ it exists in the believer but cannot grow in isolation. Love must be expressed for God and others. Therefore, the *imago* is always present in a believer, but it is dynamic and changing depending upon a right relationship with God and man.²⁵

With varying degrees, all relational views are existential.²⁶ Pannenberg taught a relational view of the *imago*. More recently, the Catholic theologian Hans Küng and evangelical scholar John Sailhamer

¹⁹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III.1.195. On Genesis 1:27, Karl Barth wrote, “Could anything be more obvious than to conclude from this clear indication that the image and likeness of the being created by God signifies existence in confrontation?” For a helpful overview of Barth on this subject, see D. J. A. Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 60-61.

²⁰ Erickson, *Theology*, 524, 527.

²¹ “Creation and Fall,” in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, trans. Martin Ruter and Ilse Todt, ed. John de Gruchy (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004) 3:65.

²² G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962; reprint, 1984) 54.

²³ *Ibid.* 112.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 116.

²⁵ Hoekema, *Theology*, 62-63.

²⁶ Erickson, *Theology*, 527. An existential view does not make one an existentialist. Dialectic theologians are existentialists in the line of Kierkegaard. Berkouwer was not.

have as well.²⁷ Relational views may be relatively new, but they have a broad spectrum of support. Indeed, these views dominated systematic theologies during the latter half of the twentieth century.²⁸

The Functional View

Like the relational views, functional views are also existential. Both suggest the *imago* is not an ontological part of man but something God-like that comes to expression.²⁹ Genesis 1:26 states:

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

God created mankind in His own image and commanded him to rule over creation. Adherents of a functional view see more than a close connection between these concepts. To them, the *imago* is the activity of ruling over creation. The image is something man does.

In extra-biblical literature, kings placed images of themselves throughout a kingdom to represent their rule and authority.³⁰ Indeed, at the heart of the Hebrew term “image” (*tselem*) is the idea of “representation.”³¹ Functional views believe man represents God by taking dominion and ruling. The image is seen when this activity is done.³²

Adherents also look to Psalm 8:5-6 for support. The psalmist says that man was crowned with glory and honor and given dominion over the earth. The language is clearly reminiscent of Genesis 1:26.

Whereas relational views are relatively new, functional views are older and have even seen resurgence as of late.³³ A large number of Old Testament scholars today favor some kind of functional view.³⁴ Calvinists in the tradition of Kuyper, Theonomists, and Reconstructionists also view the *imago* in this way.³⁵ Many Reformed theologians agree and call this the cultural mandate.³⁶

²⁷ Noreen Herzfeld, “Imago Dei,” in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2005) 362; John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990) 37-38.

²⁸ Herzfeld, “Imago,” 37-38.

²⁹ Clines, “Image,” 101.

³⁰ Grenz, “*Imago Dei*,” 622.

³¹ *Ibid.* 621.

³² Clines, “Image,” 101; Steve W. Lemke, “The Intelligent Design of Humans: The Meaning of the *Imago Dei* for Theological Anthropology” (paper presented at the Southwest Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Houston, TX, March, 2008) 3.

³³ Erickson, *Theology*, 527. The Socinians were one of the first groups to propose a functional view in their Racovian Catechism (see *The Racovian Catechism*, trans. Thomas Rees [London: William Field, 1652; reprint, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818] 21). Socinianism is known for its non-trinitarian theology; its modern-day descendants are the Unitarians.

³⁴ Lemke, “Meaning of the *Imago*,” 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 5.

³⁶ Erickson, “Theology,” 529. For an influential example, see Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008).

By equating God's image with taking dominion, the *imago* means all who desire to be God's image must take dominion. Thus, believers today are called to make disciples *and* reform culture.

EVALUATION OF THE THREE MAJOR VIEWS

Each of the major categories has strengths and weaknesses. The substantive view is straightforward and has by far the most advocates. Despite this, substantive views fragment man in ways not supported by Scripture. One theologian says *this* is part of God's image and *that* is not. The *imago* has been equated with man's physical body, essential qualities, intellect, original righteous state, or any part distinctly human. The problem is that none of these distinctions have exegetical support in the creation account.³⁷ Few have exegetical support anywhere in Scripture.

When the *imago* is narrowed to any one feature, significant problems arise. For instance, some have equated man's intellect with the *imago*. If they are right, members of Mensa must greatly bear the image of God, while the mentally disabled hardly bear it at all.³⁸ Others have said that the image is man's original righteousness, something lost at the fall. However, Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9 teach that man, after the Fall, still has the *imago*.³⁹

Calvin had a more expansive view of the image of God, teaching it is all the qualities that distinguish man from the animal kingdom. Yet, his view lacks biblical support and is theologically problematic as well. For instance, if man's physical body is not part of the *imago*, why does Genesis 9:6 condemn murder on the basis of it? The text implies that murder is wrong because the human body is somehow linked to God's image. To harm the body is to harm the *imago*.

Relational and functional views at least have some exegetical support in the creation account. Genesis 1:27 and 5:2 both state that God created man and woman in His own image. Genesis 1:26 makes a link between humanity and dominion-taking. Therefore, it must be affirmed there is male/female plurality within the *imago* and some link between it and taking dominion. This is a good start for these views, but the real question is whether Genesis actually defines the *imago* in these ways or not.⁴⁰

Relational views tend to find more support in religious existentialism than in Scripture. "Existence precedes essence" is the cry of the existentialist, which would mean the task is to find where or if the

³⁷ To Luther's credit, Ephesians 4:24 does refer to the "likeness of God" as righteousness and holiness. His view had exegetical support though not from Genesis 1:26-27. Man's original righteousness and holiness are part of the *imago* and the believer's *imago* is being renewed. However, the creation account indicates the *imago* entails more.

³⁸ Mensa is a non-profit organization open to people who score at the 98th percentile or higher on an intelligence test.

³⁹ Genesis 9:6 states, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in His own image." James 3:9 says, "With [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God." Both indicate that man after the Fall—saved or not—is still God's image.

⁴⁰ Kenneth M. Gardoski, "Is Culture a Reflection of the *Imago Dei*?" (paper presented at the Eastern Annual Conference of the Evangelical Theological Society, Clarks Summit, PA, March 2004) 6-9.

imago exists, not define its content (if it even has any). To the Dialectic theologians, when relationship is present, there the *imago* comes into being by degrees. The *imago* is not relationship itself but something that comes into existence when relationship occurs. However, it must be asked how form can exist without content?⁴¹ Something must exist that God called the *imago*. Views such as these beg the question: What is it?

Though Berkouwer suggested a different path, his *analogia amoris* is equally existential. Other theologians have removed much of the existentialism by equating the *imago* with relationships. However, the idea is foreign to the creation account. Theologically, how can a reprobate who wants no relationship with God still be the image of God? According to this view, some people become God's image in varying degrees while others do not at all.

Functional views equate the *imago* with man taking dominion over the earth. Erickson examined the volitional "Let Us" which appears twice in Genesis 1:26: "Let Us make man in Our image . . . and let them rule. . . ." He believes image-bearing and dominion-making are related though entirely separate.⁴² Clines countered that two volitional verbs separated by the *nam*-conjunction make the second a consequence of the first. In other words, "Let us make man in our own image . . . so that they may take dominion."⁴³ Clines' argument is stronger.⁴⁴

The creation account teaches that taking dominion is one consequence of the *imago*; it is not the *imago* itself. Stated differently, the image of God is innately part of man; the act of ruling is one result. At creation, God's image displayed itself primarily by ruling the earth. Man still rules the earth today and always has, but it raises an important question: Was dominion-making meant to be the primary display of God's image for all time? Functional views emphasize continuity throughout the canon and read dominion into the New Testament.

Theologically, it is unclear how a man who refuses to take dominion of the earth could still be the image of God under a functional view. Being is necessary for doing; thus, the *imago* cannot be an action alone. The *imago* must, at least, have some substantive part that allows man to actually take dominion.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Erickson, *Theology*, 530.

⁴² *Ibid.* 531.

⁴³ Clines, "Image," 96. Clines added, "In [Genesis] 1:6 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters' we have two commands (in form apparently co-ordinate jussives linked by simple *nam*), yet two acts of creation are not referred to; the firmament, in being a firmament in the midst of the waters, in fact is already separating waters above from waters below." He is correct in this statement.

⁴⁴ Clines read a functional view into the passage by saying: "If the second member of the sentence were not true, the first could hardly be so." Whether man takes dominion or not, he is ever and always the image of God. Genesis 1:26 does *not* say man must rule or he is not the image. Lemke noted Clines' inconsistency here as well, see "Meaning of the *Imago*," 7. His discussion of the Hebrew syntax is more in depth as well.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 6.

To define the *imago*, the simplest view that best accounts for all the biblical data should be chosen. In other words, apply Ockham's Razor.⁴⁶ The *imago* is not best understood as various parts of man's being, nor as something existential or an action taken. Each of these fail to explain relevant passages and are fraught with speculation. The simplest explanation is that the image of God is man.

RESPONSE TO THE THREE MAJOR VIEWS

When God gave the Ten Commandments, He forbid that man should ever make an image in His likeness (Exod 20:4). What man was not allowed to do was something God had already done. God did make an image of Himself, and that image was man.⁴⁷ Herman Bavinck wrote:

Man does not simply *bear* or *have* the image of God; he *is* the image of God. From the doctrine that man has been created in the image of God flows the clear implication that that image extends to man in his entirety. Nothing in man is excluded from the image of God.⁴⁸

Genesis 1:27 says, "God created man in His own image." The text does not say that parts of man were created in God's image; it does not state that the image is relational or an action. Scripture simply says that man was created in God's image. Therefore, the totality of a human being is what should be understood as the *imago*.⁴⁹

"Image" or the Hebrew *tselem* ordinarily refers to a three-dimensional model.⁵⁰ Outside the creation account, it is used in reference to an idolatrous statue, a shadow, or a painted image.⁵¹ The central idea is conformity or imitation. As used in Genesis, *tselem* indicates that man was created with some degree of conformity to God. He was modeled after God.⁵²

The opening chapter of Ezekiel uses the word "likeness" (*demuth*) six times with earthly analogies of heavenly things. For instance, from the midst of a fiery cloud came four beings that bore a "likeness" to four living creatures (1:5). In the sky was something with the "likeness" of a throne and seated upon it was someone with the "likeness" of a man (1:26). The Hebrew *demuth* carries a

⁴⁶Each of the three major views in this paper seem more speculative than biblical. Karl Barth, for instance, believed the *imago* is an experience within a relationship. John Calvin held that it is whatever distinguishes man from the animals. Neither have biblical support. The method proposed in this paper is similar to Ockham's Razor. By "cutting out" all the unbiblical assumptions, what is left will be the simplest and most biblical explanation.

⁴⁷ Hoekema, *Image*, 66.

⁴⁸ See *ibid.* 65. Bavinck, like Anthony Hoekema, held to a substantive/functional view of the *imago*, a hybrid view. Therefore, man's being is the image of God but that image also includes man representing God on earth. In this way, the *imago* is static and dynamic, both a noun and a verb.

⁴⁹ Clines, "Image," 80. "Thus, we may say that according to Genesis 1 man does not have the image of God, nor is he made *in* the image of God, but is himself the image of God."

⁵⁰ Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "Form, Image," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 4 vols., ed. Willem A. Van Gemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997) 4:645-46.

⁵¹ The word is used 17 times in 15 verses. See Gardoski, "Culture," 5.

⁵² Van Leeuwen, "Form, Image," 644.

wide range of meaning from an actual likeness to a weakened resemblance.⁵³ *Demuth* underscores and supports the meaning of *tselem* in the Genesis account.⁵⁴ The Hebrew words lead to the conclusion that man is a God-like representative of God.⁵⁵ Anthony Hoekema wrote:

Man, then, was created in God's image so that he or she might represent God, like an ambassador from a foreign country. As an ambassador represents his country's authority, so man (both male and female) must represent the authority of God. As an ambassador is concerned to advance the best interests of his country, so man must seek to advance God's program for this world. As God's representatives, we should support and defend what God stands for, and should promote what God promotes. As God's representatives, we must not do what we like, but what God desires.⁵⁶

Originally, God created man to represent Him by taking dominion over the uninhabited earth and ruling over it. Consequently, it has been demonstrated that taking dominion is a consequence of the *imago*, not an action to be equated with it. Thus, there is no permanency to this action and no need to read it into the New Testament.

At creation, God commanded His image to display itself by taking dominion or ruling on His behalf. At redemption, He has commanded His image to declare a message on His behalf. Believers today are God's ambassadors, representatives of the King calling the world to surrender before the King returns (2 Cor 5:20).

The emphasis of the church is not upon man as ruler but upon man as messenger. In the words of Kevin DeYoung, "God does not send out His church to conquer. He sends us out in the name of the One who has *already* conquered. We go only because He reigns."⁵⁷ Making disciples is the church's mission (Matt 28:18-20); taking dominion is not.⁵⁸ Striving for continuity, functional views are unable to account for this change.

Man is the image of God, and the Lord has commanded His image to represent Him today by proclaiming a message. However, whether ruling or proclaiming, it must be remembered that no

⁵³ A. H. Konkel, "Demuth," *New International Dictionary*, 1:969.

⁵⁴ Clines, "Image," 70.

⁵⁵ Women are God's image as well. The creation account indicates that man and woman are equally God's image (cf. Gen 1:27). Henry Lazenby wrongly concluded, "To affirm that both sexes are equal before God is to admit that each has equal rights and obligations no matter what the differences in physiology between the two. Such differences should not necessitate differences in social roles or ecclesiastical offices" (see Henry F. Lazenby, "The Image of God: Masculine, Feminine, or Neuter," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 30 [March 1987]: 70). Lazenby failed to see that Genesis teaches role differences (cf. Gen 2:20-25). The New Testament does as well (cf. Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:12).

⁵⁶ Hoekema, *Image*, 67-68.

⁵⁷ Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011) 46.

⁵⁸ Again, notice the importance of the question: Is taking dominion a consequence of the *imago* or is it equated with the *imago* in Genesis 1:27-28?

action is the *imago*. Man is God's image not because of what *he does* but simply because *he is*, which means all parts of man enable him to bear a likeness to God and accurately represent Him.

The mind enables man to think God's thoughts after Him (Ps 119:66), to reason, and to apply wisdom in a way similar to his creator. Emotions enable him to feel a God-like sorrow for the lost (Ezek 33:11; Rom 9:1-3), to delight in those who love God (Phil 1:8), to yearn to please God (Ps 119:4-5), and to long to be with Him (Phil 1:21-23; Heb 11:10, 14-16). The ability to make choices and execute plans is a glimpse of the God who commands and directs all things according to His purpose (Isa 46:10). The capacity for fellowship enables man to fellowship with God and others in a way that resembles the harmony of the Trinity (John 17:23). If God is spirit, what is the purpose of the body? The body enables man to bear the image and represent Him in a physical world.

Man was created thoroughly God-like, the physical analogy of God Himself.⁵⁹ Man's creation gives him a dignity and position exceedingly higher than even the angels, and this is also what makes his Fall into sin incomparably tragic. For a God-like being to do hell-bent things is the most damnable perversion. It is God seeing a reflection of Himself doing what He would never do.

When man fell, the *imago* was distorted; and if all of man is the *imago*, then all of man was distorted in the fall. Man became thoroughly perverted. The physical body ceased to be immortal and the spirit within man died (Rom 5:12; 6:23; 1 Cor 15:53-54). Man's desires turned from God (Isa 64:6; Jer 17:9). His actions became wicked and his speech vile (Rom 3:13-16). The mind became futile, the heart hard, and man's understanding of things above grew dark (Eph 4:17-18).⁶⁰

Man is still the image of God but to look upon him today is to see a gross perversion of the God who created him. The amazing fact is that God actually allowed this distortion of Himself to live. Man's fall was more personal and uniquely offensive when compared to the fall of the angels who were not created in God's image. However, in His grace and mercy, the Lord did not destroy but chose to restore.

To dwell in glory forever with God is the destiny of His people (John 17:24; Rev 21:3), but this necessitates a change; it means that redemption is more than penal substitution.⁶¹ Man needs forgiveness, but he also needs a miraculous transformation in order to dwell with God. The *imago* must be restored and, fortunately, God has ordained that those He foreknew would be "predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom 8:29). The destiny of the fallen *imago Dei* is to be conformed to the *imago Christi*. Redeemed men and women will become Christ-like.

⁵⁹ When the religious leaders confronted Jesus about paying taxes to Caesar, He held a coin bearing the Caesar's image and said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (cf. Luke 20:21-25). In other words, what has Caesar's image belongs to him, and what has God's image belongs to God. The implication is that the totality of man is God's image and belongs to God.

⁶⁰ See also, Gardoski, "Culture," 14.

⁶¹ Redemption includes penal substitution but it does not end there. God's goal is not merely to remove sin but to conform the sinner back to His image (cf. Rom 8:29). Therefore, sanctification always follows true conversion.

All who are in Christ have been raised to spiritual life (Eph 2:5). However, between now and the eschatological future they are a work in progress. The hearts and minds of the redeemed are not perfected (Rom 12:2; Col 3:10). They still sin and sometimes represent God in ways appalling to Him. However, they are growing and learning to bear His image more faithfully. The Christian should consider himself a *genuinely* new creation though he is not yet a *totally* new one (2 Cor 5:17).

In this life, the believer is being transformed “from one degree of glory to another” (3:18). When the goal of salvation is complete, all that was marred by the Fall will be restored. In redemption, the effects of sin begin to be undone until the day they are entirely eradicated. However, redemption is more than even this. In Christ, man will exceed his former glory. Adam originally was “able not to sin and die” (*posse peccare et mori*). In Christ, man will “not be able to sin and die” (*non posse peccare et mori*).⁶² Man was and always will be a finite reflection of the infinite God. However, in future glory, he will be like God in His inability to sin and His inability to die (1 Cor 15:54; Rev 21:4).⁶³

A more-than-restored image is the ultimate goal of salvation. God performed so great a work “so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:7). That God would take a vile distortion of His image, restore it, and make it more beautiful than ever before speaks volumes about Him. Man in the coming ages will forever be a trophy of God’s grace and kindness along with His patience, compassion, mercy, grace, power, wisdom, faithfulness, and love. Man was created to be a God-like representative of God and, as surely as the Lord keeps His promises, the redeemed will be more than restored to this.

⁶² Ibid. 92. See also, Jay Adams, *Theology of Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986).

⁶³ 1 Cor 15:54; Rev 21:4.