

# Sermon Series: Imago Dei



## #3 Why are we so faulty? – Genesis 3:1-24

**What evidence of God's goodness do you see in *yourself* from day to day?**

Gods **original intention**, according to the Bible's creation narratives, is that humanity was made to be **iconic**.

We know a bit about **iconic images** today:

- Anyone seeing this picture will tell you it represents the city of **Sydney**
- These golden arches are universally recognized as a place for **clean toilets** and a playground when on a road trip!
- And, everyone knows this symbol represents **greedy commercialism**.<sup>1</sup>



Human beings were meant to be **iconic**; synonymous with God's own **goodness** and **sovereignty**,<sup>2</sup> according to Genesis chapters 1 and 2. We asked the question, “**What are our origins?**” and the Bible revealed that we originally bore the “**Imago Dei**”<sup>3</sup> like **no other** in all the cosmos.

## Something Changed (Genesis 3:8-10)

But Genesis chapter 3 presents a turning point and a change of view. It addresses an important follow-up question, “**If humans were created ‘good’, and life was once harmonious, what on earth went so terribly wrong?**”

Evidence that things are not quite right with humanity keeps turning up in the morning news (not on Facebook of course 😊):

<sup>1</sup> On 19/2/21 Facebook blocked all news sharing on its platform in Australia to flex its commercial “muscles”

<sup>2</sup> In ancient times monarchs would set up their likeness wherever their dominion or charge over territories existed. In contrast, Genesis 1 and 2 depict God's creation democratizing monarchy, so that all humans would represent God's sovereignty (like vice-regents) and would share in governing as stewards over God's creation

<sup>3</sup> “Imago Dei” is Latin for image of God, decreed by God in Gen. 1:26,27

- **Victim-blaming** in Canberra and “**gaslighting**” over claims of rape,
- **Denial** of knowledge of crimes by Casino board members despite extensive money-laundering,
- **Abuses of power** by military leaders in Myanmar, using trumped up charges and brute force to dismantle democracy,
- Many **Aboriginal deaths** in custody,
- **Women dying** at the hands of men in **domestic family violence**.

Our newsfeeds sadly read like a companion book to Genesis chapters 3-11.

Genesis 3 suggests that something fundamentally changed between God and humanity. See how the man and the woman recognize it in verses 8-10:

*[The man and woman] heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden... [The man] said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” (Gen. 3:8,10)*

Jesus of Nazareth observed that it is **from deep within the human heart**, the inner being and thoughts of human beings, the seat of the will, that **evil intent** gives birth to the **bad things** even in people who exhibit such good.<sup>4</sup> And Genesis 3 tells a story of the rejection of **God’s governance, care, and guidance**, in pursuit of **elevated status, power, and god-like control** over life. It speaks to **why we are a mix of both good and evil today**.

Genesis 3 also tells us, whatever happened back then, there’s **no going back**.

In verses 22-24 we read:

*22 Then the Lord God said, the man<sup>5</sup> has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”— 23 therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of*

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<sup>4</sup> See Matthew 15:18,19 for example

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew here is ha-a-dam, the man, remembering that a-dam is Hebrew for “humanity”, returning us to the important reference in Genesis 1:26,27 that God made them, male and female, in God’s image, something forever altered in these events for all people. The text zooms in on the man whose story is told first.

*Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.*

Theologians refer to this **defining moment** of change between humans and God as “**the fall**”<sup>6</sup>. Because they regarded *themselves as gods*, and breached the trust given them in the Garden, Genesis 3 suggests there was to be **no going back** to the harmony and freedoms once enjoyed in the beginning.

- My grandparents called the **First World War** of 1914-1918 “The war to end all wars”. They felt there was **no going back** to the way life once was.  

- 30 January 2020 marks the day W.H.O. declared **COVID-19** a global public health emergency, a date many think may mark a point of no return to “normal”.  

- **Facebook** users will remember Friday 19 February 2021 as the point after which **cat videos** ruled our lives 😊.  


“**What went so wrong?**” we ask of the Bible. The Genesis creation narratives give us a story of origins that points to a point of no return; a fundamental change of relationship between God and humankind, between human beings themselves (especially between the sexes), and between God, people, and the rest of creation.<sup>i</sup>

### Is The Mirror Cracked?

We should now ask a follow-up question: “Are we in some sense still **image-bearers, post-fall?** In what sense, if any, **do we still represent God** uniquely amidst all of creation depicted before “the fall”?<sup>ii</sup>

Your own answers to this question **will greatly affect the way you live** day to day. How we see ourselves before God, before each other, and in our own self-image has great impact on our daily wellbeing and purpose.

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<sup>6</sup> The man and the woman fell from grace by breaking the terms God had presented to them.

You see, the Old Testament books of the Bible give us only a little to address *this* question directly.<sup>7</sup> Instead, it has been the influence of **systematic theologians** down the ages who have shaped the Church's response to questions about the status of the Imago Dei in us post-fall.

- **Ancient Christian scholars** like Philo, Augustine, Aquinas taught that after “the fall” the Image of God in us was greatly marred and disfigured. Some suggested that our capacity for reasoning was **corrupted** as a result. Others focused on deeply compromised **morality** as evidence of our changed status and role. Some taught that our **souls** were lost East of Eden.

If you were taught about your status as an image-bearer by preachers, teachers and authors influenced by those ancient scholars, some **unhelpful results** in daily living may include:

- A very low **self-esteem** before God when you kneel to pray,
- A heavy reliance on the **need for a priest**, or a formal religion to feel deserving of access to God or welcome in God’s “presence”,
- A sense of anxiety that comes with having to **keep rules** or obey **moral guidelines** to be the best a person can be.

- In the times of the **European Reformation**, **Martin Luther**, though he was a champion of the Gospel, greatly emphasised humans as “sinners” leading to much of today’s “church-speak” about ourselves before God. With regard to the image of God in us now, he taught that we bear the likeness of God’s great opponent, Lucifer, this side of “the fall”, not that of God at all. His **polarizing view** of daily **spiritual warfare** elevated the role of “the devil” in one’s daily discipleship.

If the preachers, teachers and authors who shaped your faith were influenced most by Luther, some of the following negative outcomes could be weighing you down:

- a very **stoic** and dour view of one’s self-image before God, and others,

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<sup>7</sup> See the sermon last week on Psalm 8

- **unhealthy fears** of dark and spiritual forces in every corner of daily life,
  - a **lack of ambition** and hope for what your life can become and be purposeful for this side of “heaven”.
- But a more helpful **European theologian of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, John Calvin**<sup>8</sup>, presented a more holistic view of the state of the image of God in humans. Despite the obvious evidence and the biblical assertion that something once good, has gone bad in us, Calvin taught that we are **still image-bearers**, though that representation of God is greatly compromised by sin deep within the heart. But, he taught, the Gospel of Jesus gives us great **confidence** that God is re-making His image in us. The Son of God entered our world as the **perfect image of God**, and the New Testament teaches in various places that we are being conformed to His likeness by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. As the Apostle Paul taught, we are **not trying to get back** to the Garden of Genesis 1 & 2, nor are we called to stay as we are, but are called to **move forward** to what God is **making anew in us**.

Preachers, teachers, and authors influenced by Calvin’s views on Imago Dei will have taught us some very good things for our faith:

- motivating us to **live responsively to the Gospel** daily
- encouraging us to **take seriously the work of God’s Spirit** to transform our hearts and minds to be conformed to Christ
- giving us confidence that we believers, in part, **reflect God’s goodness and glory** by the renewing work of God’s Spirit in us
- and, assuring us that we will **one day attain the full splendour of** image of God we see in Jesus Christ and will share in Christ’s stewardship and care of the new creation to come.

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<sup>8</sup> These particular scholars and theologians are highlighted because they had such “global” and long-lasting impact on Western Christian thought such that all subsequent theologians have had to reference from their views to make their own.

## Bearing God's image today

In Colossians chapter 3 the Apostle Paul tells Christians that because of Jesus' death for sins,

*...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 (Col. 3:9-11)*

He goes on to write how an appropriation of what Christ did for us through his death on the cross **should radically change** the way we view the **image of God in others**. The **old barriers** we erect based on **race, status, background, gender**, to conquer and divide are broken down when we embrace the Gospel of Jesus. Relationships **radically change** when we see each other the way Jesus views people, and see God in the way Jesus Christ **represents** God to us.

When pressed on one occasion as to **what is most important** in life, Jesus once taught that we should **love others as we do ourselves**<sup>9</sup> – that's not a bad summary of what Imago Dei should look like in us now.<sup>10</sup>

Firstly, you should learn to see **yourself** in the light of the Gospel, and perhaps then will you truly be able to love others as God loves them.

I asked at the outset, **what evidence of God's likeness** do you see **in yourself**?

Perhaps a review is in order? Did the preachers and authors of the past in your journey teach you well about **yourself**? About humans and their **mix of good and evil**? About the power of the **Gospel**?

Author Aimee Byrd says,

“It's hard to think of a future when our minds will be free from sinful thoughts, our hearts will long only for righteousness, and our bodies will serve God with perfect stewardship. It sounds too good to be true. But it is true!”<sup>11</sup>

One thing is clear, though we may still bear some representation of God's goodness and sovereignty before the watching world, we have, the Gospel

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<sup>9</sup> Matt. 22:39

<sup>10</sup> With the help of God's Spirit in the light of the Gospel

<sup>11</sup> Aimee Byrd, Why Can't We Be Friends?: Avoidance Is Not Purity

message, the perfect Imago Dei to show to people everywhere - **Jesus Christ**, the true likeness of God, of whom we are witnesses of His goodness and glory.<sup>12</sup>

**Jesus is iconic!** His life, death and resurrection are synonymous with God. Let's make Him known that others may join us in being renewed, restored, and conformed to the image of our creator.

**Steve Webster    St Michaels North Carlton    2021**

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<sup>12</sup> Col. 1:15, Heb. 1:1-2

## More on Views about “Imago Dei”

Genesis 1 and 2 present human beings as bearers of the image of God. But what does that mean?

Imago Dei is Latin for "image of God," a theological doctrine common to Jews, Christians, and Muslims that denotes humankind's relation to God on the one hand and all other living creatures on the other. Traditionally, only human beings are seen as being made in the image of God, and it is by virtue of this image that human beings are moral and spiritual creatures. But the precise meaning of this term “Imago Dei”, especially as it appears in the text of Genesis chapter 1 in the Bible, varies in significant ways in its understanding in history, tradition, and politics.

Humans bring to mind God and show something of God, and moreso than any other created being or thing. But how? The actual manner in which we humans reflect God to the rest of creation is not totally clear in Scripture. Some common opinions in scholarly circles are:

- **Substantive:** Imago Dei is a quality or characteristic of God in us e.g. physical, psychological or spiritual – capacity for reason and reflection or possession of a soul. Fulfilment of destiny is possible in us (e.g. Augustine of Hippo)
- **Relational:** it's the capacity for relationships who can love God and love others as male and female – vertical and horizontal (e.g. Karl Barth)
- **Functional:** it's not a quality, it's not capacity for relationships, it is the exercise of holding dominion over creation – reflects God's own dominion/stewardship over the universe (e.g. Von Rad)
- **Royal:** it's being created to rule, like the kings of the ancient world who were regarded as special servants of the gods (e.g. Egypt sun god Rah). A royal status is conferred on us, we are considered “royal” in God's eyes. Once thought to be restricted to a few, ruling (benevolently) is democratized in Genesis. As vice-regents of God, humans have responsibility and privilege to take on the role of carers and governors. Kings made likenesses of themselves and placed them in many places to indicate who ruled in that territory (e.g. Mike Bird).

The term “image of God” is found in the biblical **book of Genesis**, where it occurs three times (1: 26–27, 5: 1–3, 9:1–7). In the **Ancient Near East** history kings would install statues of their likeness throughout the regions which they ruled over which may have some influence on the biblical narrative (as indeed there are flood stories in the ancient world not unlike that found in the Bible). In many **Oriental myths** referring to creation the gods made creatures in their image.

The meaning of the term in the original **Hebrew** context has been much debated, although current scholarship has moved to understanding it as a designation of stewardship or representation of God's sovereignty.

In Genesis 1:27 we read:

So God created [*'adam*] in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

*'adam* has two uses in Genesis 1-3 – it refers to humanity in chapter 1 and to “the man” in chapters 2-3. The first time it is used as a name is in 4:25. Old Testament Hebrew has no other common term for humanity other than *'adam*. It’s a word that existed before Genesis appeared on the scene. Hebrew has only masculine and feminine, no neuter. Any suggestion that God or the writer chose intentionally to choose or invent a masculine word for preference in gender is doubtful, and arguments against male headship on a linguistic basis abound. The plural “our” image is interesting too. While relational activity is not explicitly linked as essential to the image of God here, it has resonance with those who later propose it and it fits with New Testament revelation well. But neither gender division, relational capacity, marriage, or fruitfulness are linked closely by the text as essential to image – only dominion and stewardship have this reference in the context (vs. 26); and only in the Genesis 1 setting of creation unaffected by sin. Such stewardship is given to male and female. In Genesis 1 there is nothing to undermine the equality of the male and female.

Whereas Gen 1 describes God as creator of the cosmos and all life, Gen 2 is the creation of the man along with his home, work and companion (a similar doublet literary approach is present throughout Gen 1-11). In Gen 2 it is always “the man” making clear that *'adam* is not a name at this point, instead it is a

play on words from the word ‘*adamah*, meaning “the ground” from which he is made. Connection to the garden the man will tend is intended here. Note that God addresses ‘*adam* re the tree of the fruit of knowledge and not Eve [‘*havvah*] because in the chronology she has not yet been created. When she is made (from ‘*adam*’s side, neither above or below), the terms ‘*ish* for man and ‘*isha* for woman show their likeness. ‘*Adam*-ah had already been used (the feminine) for ‘the ground’ and so ‘*adam* and ‘*adamah* were already taken, in a sense.

The woman is a “helper corresponding to” [‘*ezer kenegdo*] the man in Gen 2. Marriage referred to in 2:24 is not to establish marriage (assumed in the Bible) but to show the reuniting of what God divided in making the female (“flesh”).

The image of God in humanity in Gen 1-2 may be complex indeed, but the main reference to dominion and stewardship is important to understand. Genesis considers ‘*adam* as different from creation (as possessing the image of God and the role of dominion), though also part of creation (as sexually differentiated and capable of reproduction, e.g. Ps. 8). The Hebrew verbs to rule (*kabash*) and to dominate (*radah*) is [in the ideal world of Gen. 1] is best illustrated by the way the man “works and takes care of” the Garden and names the animals. The inference is that this dominion extends to the ongoing activity of God in ordering and creating in the world and in civilization. Thus, in the ideal picture of where we come from in Gen 1, ‘*adam* describes humanity as a whole, not the male only.

The understanding of the image of God changed significantly in the Christian New Testament, where it is used primarily by the apostle Paul, who speaks of Christ as being in God's image and of human beings being re-made in the image of Christ. Subsequently the history of Christianity has presented varying views of what *Imago Dei* stands for.

Some of the ‘Church Fathers’ distinguished between **image** and **likeness**, as in the writings of Irenaeus (200CE). For **Augustine**, much later, this likeness to God was a kind of intellectual soul. For Thomas **Aquinas**, even later, the likeness was moral, and needed restoration to goodness.

In the European reformation **Martin Luther** didn’t distinguish between image and likeness, seeing these as different words but same meaning as in many

Hebrew idioms. But he split image into 'public' (will and intellect shared by all irrespective of "the fall") and 'private' (that intimate righteousness lost through sin). Luther saw Paul's writings in the New Testament as addressing the 'private' image of God in need of redemption and restoration. **Calvin**, on the other hand, saw the image of God primarily in the human soul: 'God's glory shines forth in the outer man, yet there is no doubt that the proper seat of his image is in the soul', consisting of 'righteousness and true holiness'. This interpretation is based on Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:24.37. The fall affected the image of God in humanity in Calvin's thought. The image of God was corrupted or distorted by sin. Adam, when he fell from his state, was by this defection alienated from God. Therefore, even though we grant that God's image was not totally annihilated and destroyed in him, it was so corrupted that whatever remains is a frightful deformity. Through sanctification, believers are renewed into the image of Christ. Christ, the true and perfect image of God, restores the believer into the image and likeness of God. Calvin says that part of the image of God is now being manifested in the elect because they have been born of the Spirit, but they will attain its full splendour in heaven, where they will be glorified. Calvin also points out that the angels are created in the image of God; one day believers will become like them when they are glorified (Matt 22:30).

In more recent theological interpretations, **Von Rad** saw the whole person as created in the image and likeness of God and this is not limited to any part of humanity (i.e. the spiritual, rational, physical characteristics). He argues that we correspond to God in totality, but he understands the image of God in a predominantly corporeal sense. He cites Psalm 8:5 to support his view, and he concludes that the image of God in Genesis 1:26-27 does not refer directly to God, but to angels. Like the angels, man has a corporeal or physical body. Von Rad sees the commission of humans to rule creation not as belonging to the definition of the image of God, but as a consequence of the image of God (i.e. we can rule over creation because we are created in God's image).

**Skinner** compares ancient narratives of Babylon to point to a vague correlation to Genesis and the idea of the image of God.

**Karl Barth** sees the image of God in Genesis 1:26-27 as consisting of both the **vertical relationship** between humanity and God and in the **horizontal**

**relationship** between humans. He says that scholars who have tried to locate the exact substantive qualities in humanity, which the image of God consists of, have missed the mark. According to Barth, the relational aspect is seen in the fact that we are created in the image of God, **male and female**. Man is capable of having a relationship with God, and other human beings. Therefore, Barth concludes that God created people for fellowship with Himself and for fellowship with fellow human beings. According to Barth, sin did not affect the image of God. The image of God in man remains unchangeable, regardless of the fall or sin (Gen 3), saying “We certainly cannot deduce from this [the fall] that man has lost it through the fall, either partially or completely, formally or materially.”

**Berkouwer** interprets the image and likeness of God in Genesis 1:26-27 from relational and substantive perspectives. He says that the image of God primarily denotes a person’s relationship to God, but this relationship to God includes **a moral likeness** to God. Humans are distinctive because we can relate to God; this is the image of God.

**Daniel Simango** sees Genesis 1-11 as the context in which the *imago Dei* (Gen 1: 26-27) is to be examined.<sup>104</sup> Simango views the image of God in Genesis 1:26-27 from the substantive and relational perspectives: it involves moral likeness to God and a relationship between God and human kind like that between parent and child. Humans' relationship to God was based on trust, faith, love, dependence, and obedience. They were tempted and they fell into sin, the moral and relational aspects of the image of God were corrupted. Morally, humankind is like the serpent, for example, Cain and Ham.

Relationally, humankind is seen as the offspring of the serpent and enslaved to sin (e.g. Cain and the wicked in general). However, humankind is also renewed into the image of God through a creative act of God. For example, Abel is like light, God's new creation. He is a righteous man. He is seen as the regenerate man. The image of God was not totally defaced by the Fall, yet despite the corruption, part of the image of God still remains in humankind.<sup>107</sup> Like Von Rad,<sup>108</sup> Simango views dominion or ruling as a consequence of being in the image of God, and not the essence of the divine image. Simango also argues that the substantive, relational and functional aspects of the image of God are also brought out in the narrative and legal sections of the Pentateuch. General

statements, for example, the overall summary of the law found in Leviticus 19:2 ('You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy'), suggest defining God-likeness (morally) is one of the purposes of the law. The Israelites are portrayed as God's children. This implies they are in his image since sonship implies image. Passages in the law speak of dominion for Israel in a way that suggests that dominion is the consequence of Israel being in the image of God. When he comes to the New Testament, Daniel Simango sees Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the perfect expression of the image of God. Christ is equal to God in essence. Through his work on the cross, believers are adopted as God's children and are to be morally like him. Believers are called to be like Christ. They are to imitate Christ's moral-likeness and submission to the Father.

### **Conclusion/Summary**

I have not covered some other views such as those of a functional nature and some progressive views today. But from many and varied historical interpretations of the term "Imago Dei" (the image of God in Latin) taken from Genesis 1:26-27 we see that the Bible requires of us great self-awareness and attention to intellectual humility as we interpret its meaning and significance today. For example,

- to lean hard on morality as essential to the image of God in (as with Augustine, Aquinas) can lead to a **narrow definition** of what is good and what is bad for political power and societal order and the demonizing of those who don't comply.
- to define "dominion" as **license to exploit** can lead to capitalistic havoc and great disparity between rich and poor. To narrowly define gender, family and marriage as essential to the image of God can exclude and marginalize those who should be regarded as whole persons, wonderfully made (Ps. 139).
- to misread the use of '*adam*' as the name of the man in Gen 1-3 instead of reference to all humanity can allow for a reading of the priority of male over female by way of chronology in the creation narrative. From this many a convenient and destructive **power-distance theology** of male over female has emerged or been justified, distorting the equality of the two genders present in the pre-fall vision of life in Genesis 1 and 2.

Many interpretations of chapters 1-3 of Genesis have attracted many and varied views through history, especially with regard to the precise meaning of *Imago Dei*.

- Best to note our **relational capacities**, with God and with each other (e.g. Karl Barth) as a sign of bearing the image of God (“...let us make humankind in *our* image” not merely a royal term, but a hint of community existing within God).
- Best to appreciate that our **corporeal existence** and **consciousness** is a likeness of God and not vice-versa; not our projection upon God of God’s nature from what we see in ourselves; it is via a divine revelation outside of our own wisdom. Then, we can humbly learn from God’s Word what we are truly like and seek grace to become more like Christ, who is the perfect image and reflection of God’s likeness (Heb. 1:1-3) and the mean for us to become so (Rom. 6:22)
- Best to interpret “dominion”, the description of *Imago Dei* in the verses where it is first introduced (Gen. 1:26-27), but not as a license to exploit the earth, but as **stewardship of and care of creation** as seen in the nature and actions of God, with God’s vision for the world as a guide.

Those three “best” points above inform our discussions on the importance of knowing **where we come from** with strong links to the message of the Gospel in the New Testament. We can use our knowledge of our origins in Scripture to address issues important to us today such as our role in addressing climate change, our connectedness to creation, to gender politics and community life, to body image and self-esteem and wellbeing, to global politics, and more.

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<sup>i</sup> Subsequent generations of humans recorded in the Bible constantly ask the question, “How can we discern good from evil, right from wrong?”

- Priests in Leviticus 27 will need to be able to classify gifts from people as either good or bad (12,14)
- Israelite spies will have to determine whether the land is good or bad (Num. 13:19)
- Adults will be expected to know good from bad when raising children (Deut. 1:39, Isa. 7:15,16)
- Whole communities of faith will need to perceive the difference between the choice of life and the choices that lead to death (Deut. 30:15; contrast Amos 5:14-15)
- David will be helped by an angel to discern good from evil (2 Sam. 14:17)
- Solomon will pray for wisdom in these matters (1 Kings 3:9)

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## <sup>ii</sup> PHILO

The following discussion dealing with Philo's view on the image of God (Gen 1:26-27) is based on De Lacey's research.<sup>6</sup> Philo refers to the image of God in his discussion of the logos. Within Philo's framework of ideas, man is not himself the image of God, but he is created 'after' or 'according to it'.<sup>7</sup> When it comes to the interpretation of the image and likeness of God, Philo distinguishes between the man of Genesis 1:26-27 and the man of Genesis 2:7, the former being a platonic ideal and the latter, the concrete species of mankind. Philo equates the ideal man with the logos which comes close to identifying man with the image, but he does not explicitly identify man with the image or logos because he strongly believes that God cannot be conceived of as physical.<sup>8</sup> According to Philo, the image consists of the mind or reason, which is spoken of in terms of a divine spirit breathed by the Maker into the individual.<sup>9</sup> Philo's interpretation of the image and likeness of God in Genesis 1:26-27 is based on Greek philosophy. Philo was influenced by the Greek philosopher Plato. He makes no reference to the Scriptures when he explains what the image of God is.

## IRENAEUS (D. OA 200 AD)

Irenaeus' view of humanity was that 'man is a mixed organisation of soul and flesh, who was formed after the likeness of God and modelled by His hands - that is, by the Son and Holy Spirit, to whom also He said, 'Let Us make man [Gen 1:26]'.<sup>10</sup> According to Irenaeus, unbelievers who are made in God's image possess a twofold nature: body and soul. Believers, however, who are made in God's image and likeness, possess a three-fold nature: body, soul, and spirit. The Holy Spirit is missing in the soul of the unbeliever, therefore the unbeliever is a carnal person, he is an imperfect being, and he possesses the image [of God] in his formation but does not receive the likeness [of God] through the Spirit.<sup>11</sup> According to Irenaeus, at the fall (Gen 3) man lost his likeness to God and yet he retained the image of God.<sup>12</sup> Irenaeus views the residual image in man as consisting of man's rational faculty and ability to choose, but in a corrupt way.<sup>13</sup> Irenaeus views the likeness of God as the 'robe of sanctity', which implies the holiness and righteousness that the Holy Spirit had bestowed on Adam.<sup>14</sup> In his writings, Irenaeus says that at the fall man lost 'true rationality' and he began to live 'irrationally, opposed the righteousness of God, giving himself over to every earthly spirit and serving all lusts'.<sup>15</sup> Christ is the one who enables salvation for mankind through his death on the cross.<sup>16</sup> Through his own blood, Christ restores believers back to the image and likeness of God.<sup>17</sup>

## AUGUSTINE (D. OA. 430 AD)

Augustine's starting point was that man is made in the image of the triune God. The image of God in man is to be found in his soul (i.e. rational or intellectual soul). The image of the Creator, which is immortal, is immortally implanted in its immortality in man. According to Augustine, the mind is Trinitarian in constitution which is composed of memory, understanding, and will.<sup>18</sup> Augustine views the image of God in Genesis 1:26-27 as the power of reason and understanding set over all irrational creatures:

But the mind must first be considered as it is in itself before it becomes a partaker of God, and His image must be found in it. For, as we have said, although worn out and defaced by losing participation of God, yet the image still remains. For it is His image in this very point, that it is capable of Him; which so great good is only made possible by its being His image.<sup>19</sup>

When man fell, the image of God was corrupted. The participation of the soul in God was lost, but God restores this loss of participation through redemption. The participation in God brings the image to perfection.<sup>20</sup> Augustine sees Jesus Christ, the first-born of all creation, as the perfect image of God who reflects God perfectly.<sup>21</sup>

He shares the same likeness with God the Father. In support of his view, Augustine cites Romans 12:1-2 and he points out that the believer's mind is renewed so that he can understand the truth. When the mind of the

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believer is renewed, he does what is good, acceptable and perfect in the eyes of God. Therefore, 'according to the image of God is a man renewed in the knowledge of God.'<sup>22</sup>

### **THOMAS AQUINAS (1225-1274 AD)**

This discussion on Aquinas' interpretation of the image of God is indebted at many points to Hoekema (1986, 33-35).<sup>23</sup> Like Irenaeus, Aquinas distinguishes the image and likeness of God in humanity. According to Aquinas, the 'likeness of God' is moral, for human beings were created good. When man fell, sin corrupted the moral likeness to God and perverted the will. Man lost the supernatural grace that God had bestowed upon him in the beginning but did not destroy man's essential identity as a rational being. Aquinas points out that the fallen man needs supernatural grace from God so that his moral likeness may be restored.<sup>24</sup> In his work, the *Summa Theologica* (Summary of Theology), Aquinas identifies the image of God primarily in man's rational faculty, intellect, or reason. He points out that rational, intellectual creatures are in the image of God when he says: 'It is clear, therefore, that intellectual creatures alone, properly speaking, are made [according] to God's image.'<sup>25</sup>

Aquinas goes on to say that the image of God is found more perfectly in angels than in man, because their intellectual nature is more perfect.<sup>26</sup> Aquinas views the image of God in three senses. Firstly, the general sense of the image of God is seen in all people because of their rational faculty. Secondly, the richer or higher sense of the image of God is seen only in believers who are being conformed to the grace of God (Christ), though they are imperfect. Thirdly, the highest sense of the image of God is seen in believers who have been glorified. These three senses of the image of God are seen in the following:

Firstly, because man possesses a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God and this aptitude consists in the very nature of the mind, which is common to all men. Secondly, because man actually or habitually knows and loves God, though imperfectly and this image consists in the conformity of grace. Thirdly, because man knows and loves God perfectly and this image consists in the likeness of glory.<sup>27</sup>

Aquinas' understanding of the image and likeness of God is similar to that of Irenaeus, which probably suggests to us that his view could have been influenced by Irenaeus' writings.

### **SUMMARY OF PHILO, IRENAEUS, AUGUSTINE, AND AQUINAS' INTERPRETATIONS**

They all interpreted the image of God in man as the power of reason, but the basis of their interpretations is different. Philo's view was strictly influenced by Greek philosophy, while the interpretations of Irenaeus, Augustine and Aquinas were predominantly influenced by the New Testament.

### **MARTIN LUTHER**

Unlike Irenaeus and Augustine, Luther does not distinguish the image of God from the likeness of God. However, he distinguishes the image of God into two parts: the 'public image' and the 'private image'. In a way, this reminds of the distinction between image and likeness in Irenaeus and Aquinas. The public image is universal among men and it consists of the will and intellect, which has been preserved after the fall. The private image is the original righteousness that has been lost at the fall and can only be restored to believers when they are converted.<sup>28</sup>

When discussing the private image, Luther says that originally human beings were created good, holy, and pure as God himself.<sup>29</sup> When man sinned (Gen 3) the image of God was corrupted, man became a sinner, though he was not so when he was created (Gen 1:26-27). Luther sees the devil as the great opponent of God because he deceived our first parents and led them to sin against God in Genesis 3. The devil's moral characteristics and works (deception and leading men into sin) contradict God's ultimate will for creation and for man.<sup>30</sup> Luther points out that human beings, in general, are threatened by the devil at all times and are

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subject to temptation: therefore the power of God and the power of the devil are opposed to each other. The devil wants to be God and he is 'the ruler of this world' (John 12:31; 14:30). Therefore, Luther sees mankind as either belonging to the kingdom of the devil or to the kingdom of God.<sup>31</sup> The fallen man is seen to be in the image of the serpent or devil (thus the corrupt image) and this is opposite to God-likeness (Gen 1:26-27). We all bear the image of the fallen Adam.<sup>32</sup>

Coming to the New Testament, Luther says that Paul in his letters addresses the private image rather than the public image because it was affected by the fall (Cairns 1953, 122). Redemption restores the shattered image of God (Col 3:10; Eph 4:24). Christ is the heavenly image who restores the corrupted image through redemption. God makes the believer righteous and holy, and he lives in conformity to God's character.<sup>33</sup> This corrupted image in man will be restored completely on the last day when believers are glorified.<sup>34</sup>

## JOHN CALVIN

Calvin sees the image of God in man primarily in man's soul: 'God's glory shines forth in the outer man, yet there is no doubt that the proper seat of his image is in the soul.'<sup>35</sup> Calvin also points out that our outward physical form distinguishes and separates us from animals. Like Luther, Calvin does not distinguish the two words 'image' and 'likeness.' He says the word 'likeness' was added as a way of explanation of the first word 'image'. This was a common practice or custom among the Hebrews.<sup>36</sup> Unlike Luther, Calvin does not resort to public and private images. He sees the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-27) as consisting of 'righteousness and true holiness'. This interpretation is based on Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:24.<sup>37</sup>

According to Calvin, the fall affected the image of God in man. The image of God was corrupted or distorted by sin. There is no doubt that Adam, when he fell from his state, was by this defection alienated from God. Therefore, even though we grant that God's image was not totally annihilated and destroyed in him, it was so corrupted that whatever remains is a frightful deformity.<sup>38</sup>

Calvin's conclusion that the image and likeness of God in man was corrupted by the fall is based on the New Testament Scriptures. In the New Testament, Paul teaches that the gospel transforms believers into the image of God, which means that when man sinned, the image of God was corrupted and man became alienated from God. Through sanctification, believers are renewed into the image of Christ. Christ, the true and perfect image of God, restores the believer into the image and likeness of God.<sup>39</sup> Calvin says that part of the image of God is now being manifested in the elect because they have been born of the Spirit, but they will attain its full splendour in heaven, where they will be glorified.<sup>40</sup> Calvin also points out that the angels are created in the image of God; one day believers will become like them when they are glorified (Matt 22:30).<sup>41</sup>

## RECENT COMMENTARIES AND THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

This section lists the various interpretations of the image of God under the following headings: substantive views, relational views, functional views, and a combination of two or three of these views.

### Substantive views

August Dillman interprets the image and likeness of God in man (Gen 1:26-27) as his mental endowment, power of thought, self-consciousness, freedom of will, capacity for the eternal, the true, and the good.<sup>42</sup> Dillman points out that man's bodily form, his expression and instrument of the mind, is not to be separated from his spiritual nature; all these are not to be excluded from the concept of the image of God. Like Luther and Calvin, Dillman does not distinguish the two words 'image' and 'likeness'. He says the word 'likeness' has the same meaning as the word 'image', 'but in a cumulative way, to make it more expressly prominent'.<sup>43</sup> When Dillman comes to the New Testament, he sees the concept of the image of God as having a deeper meaning: it denotes the idea of moral-religious perfection. Therefore, the image of God in the New Testament is something that has been destroyed by sin, and only restored and restorable through Christ.<sup>44</sup>

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Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch held a similar view. They suggested that the image and likeness of God in Genesis 1:26-27 consist of the spiritual personality of man. They believed that the 'spiritual personality of man' is not merely to be understood from a psychological perspective, where it is a combination of self-consciousness and self-determination, or a conscious free ego, but on the basis and form of the divine likeness.<sup>45</sup> The spiritual personality of man consists of the free self-conscious personality, which is 'a creaturely copy of the holiness and blessedness of the divine life'.<sup>46</sup> When man fell, this concrete essence of divine likeness was corrupted by sin. According to Keil and Delitzsch, it is only through Christ that the corrupted divine likeness is restored (Col 3:10; Eph 4:24). Keil and Delitzsch's interpretation of the image of God is based on their understanding of the New Testament.

John Skinner says that the concept of the image of God (Gen 1:26-27) probably originated from Babylonian mythology and he gives examples from Babylonian mythology creation accounts which are similar to Genesis 1:26-27.<sup>47</sup> According to Skinner, the image and likeness of God denotes primarily the bodily form, but includes spiritual attributes, which he does not describe.

It might be truer to say that it [the image of God] denotes primarily the bodily form, but includes those spiritual attributes of which the former is the natural and self-evident symbol.<sup>48</sup>

Skinner argues that his view is strongly suggested by a comparison of Genesis 5:3 and 5:1: the fact that Seth was in the image and likeness of Adam denotes physical resemblance, therefore the image of God is corporeal or physical in nature. He also asserts that God is said to have a form in the Old Testament and he cites Numbers 12:8 and Psalm 17:15 to support his interpretation.<sup>49</sup>

Like Skinner, Von Rad says that the concept of the image and likeness of God in Genesis 1:26-27 is similar to that of the Oriental myths where a god makes a man (or a god) in his image.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, the concept should not be detached from its broader connection with Oriental ideas. Von Rad sees the whole man as created in the image and likeness of God and this is not limited to any part of man (i.e. the spiritual, rational, physical characteristics). He argues that man corresponds to God in his totality, but he understands the image of God in a predominantly corporeal sense. He cites Psalm 8:5 to support his view, and he concludes that the image of God in Genesis 1:26-27 does not refer directly to God, but to angels. Like the angels, man has a corporeal or physical body.<sup>51</sup> Von Rad sees man's commission to rule creation not as belonging to the definition of the image of God, but as a consequence of the image of God (i.e. man can rule over creation because he is created in God's image).<sup>52</sup>

### **Relational views**

Karl Barth sees the image of God in Genesis 1:26-27 as consisting of both the vertical relationship between man and God and in the horizontal relationship between men.<sup>53</sup> He says that scholars who have tried to locate the exact substantive qualities in man, which the image of God consists of, have missed the mark.<sup>54</sup> According to Barth, the relational aspect is seen in the fact that man is created in the image of God, male and female.<sup>55</sup> Man is capable of having a relationship with God, and other human beings. Therefore, Barth concludes that God created man for fellowship with himself and for fellowship with fellow human beings.<sup>56</sup> According to Barth, sin did not affect the image of God. The image of God in man remains unchangeable, regardless of the fall or sin (Gen 3),

We certainly cannot deduce from this [the fall] that man has lost it through the fall, either partially or completely, formally or materially.<sup>57</sup>

The fall or sin concealed man's nature from himself and his fellow human beings, but not from God. According to Barth, man learns about his nature by studying Christ: 'As the man, Jesus is revealing himself the revealing Word of God, he is the source of our knowledge of the nature of man as created by God.'<sup>58</sup> This does not mean that we, as human beings, can equate our human nature with that of Jesus Christ,<sup>59</sup> for he is superior to us by far and his humanity is pure in form and he is the full image of God.<sup>60</sup>

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Westermann shares a similar view to that of Barth. He sees the image and likeness of God in Genesis 1:26-27 as consisting of the relationship between God and man.

He says that God created man so that he can have a relationship with him just as in the Sumerian and Babylonian texts, where people were related to the creator god as servants of the gods.<sup>61</sup> Westermann writes, 'humans are created in such a way that their very existence is intended to be their relationship to God'.<sup>62</sup> Like Barth, Westermann says that man has an interactive relationship with God. Man is God's counterpart, a creature that corresponds, speaks and listens to God.<sup>63</sup> In support of his view, Westermann points out that Genesis 1:26ff with its pre-history is derived from an independent circulative narrative parallel to Genesis 2, not originally part of the creation account.<sup>64</sup> So to him, Genesis 1:26-27 has nothing to do with creation. The major concern of Genesis 1:26-27 and Genesis 2 is the relationship between God and human beings.

Commenting on Genesis 1:26, Westermann says, as if it is common knowledge, that 'what is striking is that one verse about a person, almost unique in the Old Testament, has become the center of attention in modern exegesis, whereas it has no such significance in the rest of the Old Testament, and, apart from Ps 8, does not occur again'.<sup>65</sup> 'Gen 1:26f. is not making a general and universal valid statement about the nature of humankind; if it were, then the Old Testament would have much more to say about this image and likeness'.<sup>66</sup> Westermann does not make some sort of weighty argument to support his position.

### Functional views

Clines interprets the image and likeness of God in Genesis 1:26-27 from a strictly functional perspective, in which the image of God in man is the visible corporeal representative of the invisible, bodiless God.<sup>67</sup> Man functions as a representative (not a representation) in his exercise of dominion:

The image is to be understood not so much ontologically as existentially: it comes to expression not in the nature of man so much as in his activity and function. This function is to represent God's lordship to the lower orders of creation. The dominion of man over creation can hardly be excluded from the content of the image itself.<sup>68</sup>

Clines thinks that there is nothing in the context of Genesis 1:26-27 which gives meaning to the image of God; rather he sees the Ancient Near Eastern concept of the image of a god as the key to the interpretation of the image of God in Genesis 1:2627.<sup>69</sup> In the Ancient Near East, the image functioned as a kind of representative of or a substitute for a god wherever it was located, and certain individuals (especially the kings) were regarded as representatives of various gods and they ruled on their behalf.<sup>70</sup> Clines sees the same idea behind the concept of the image of God in Genesis 1:26-27. According to Clines, the fall did not affect the image and likeness of God. Mankind does not cease to be the image of God as long as they are men, 'to be human and to be the image of God are inseparable'.<sup>71</sup>

When he comes to the New Testament, Clines sees a change of interpretation to a substantive view.<sup>72</sup> The image of God is seen in connection with Christ, the Second Adam, who is the true and perfect image of God. Christ is the 'image of the invisible God' (Col 1:15). Christ is the logos the image, who reflects the glory of God and bears the very character of God. Christ is the head of the new community of believers. The image of Christ, rather than the image of God, comes to the forefront when the believer's conformity with the image is spoken of. Bearing the image of Christ is an eschatological concept. The complete conformity with the image of Christ will be fully attained at the end of the age when the believer is glorified. Man is God's representative on earth. Christ in a *sensus plenior* is God's 'one' representative on earth and the community of believers becomes the dwelling-place of God on earth. In Christ, man sees what being human was meant to be. Man is in God's image in the New Testament as long as he is like Christ. Clines's understanding of the image of God in the New Testament is not functional, but substantive. He says that the believer is transformed and becomes more and more like Christ in character. The believer is progressively renewed into the image of Christ (Col 3:10-11). The full image of God is realised only through obedience to Christ. This is how man becomes fully man, thus being in the image of God.<sup>73</sup>

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Ian Hart agrees with the view of Clines of the image and likeness of God in Genesis 1:26-27.<sup>74</sup> Like Clines, he sees the image as the function of dominion and he is also convinced that the Scriptures support this functional view.<sup>75</sup> He argues that the two phrases in Genesis 1:26, 'Let us make man in our image' and 'let them have dominion...the earth' should be connected not by 'and' but 'so that', because when a simple vav is followed by an imperfect it usually expresses the purpose of the preceding verb.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, he suggests that Genesis 1:26 should be translated as 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, so that they may have dominion over...the earth' [emphasis added]. Hart also cites Psalm 8:5 to support his view. He says that because man is created a little lower than God, he is God's representative. According to Hart, the idea of the image of God was democratised in Israel. The Egyptian and Mesopotamian (or ANE) concept of a king being in a god's image was broadened to make mankind in general in such an image.

The 1983 Bible translation in Afrikaans opted for the functional view rather than a free translation of Genesis 1:26-27. 'Man is God's "verteenvwoerdiger" [representative].

Richard J. Middleton interprets the image and likeness of God in Genesis 1:26-27 from a functional or 'Royal' perspective.<sup>77</sup> According to Middleton the 'royal' flavour of the text 'does not depend only on the close linking of image with the mandate to rule and subdue the earth and its creatures in verses 26 and 28 (typically royal functions). Beyond this royal mandate, the God in whose image and likeness humans are created is depicted as sovereign over the cosmos, ruling by royal decree ("let there be").'<sup>78</sup> Middleton argues that Genesis 1:26 is parallel to Isaiah 6: in both cases God is addressing the heavenly court. In Genesis 1:26, God addresses his court with the words 'let us make humanity in our image'; an address which is parallel to God's question to the seraphim in Isaiah 6:8: 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us.' Just as Isaiah saw Yahweh 'seated on a throne, high and exalted' (Isa 6:1), so the author of Genesis 1 portrays God as King over the heavens and the earth.<sup>79</sup> According to Middleton, the immediate context of Genesis 1:26-27 does not clarify the meaning of the *imago Dei*, so he views the Ancient Near East as the background of the *imago Dei*.<sup>80</sup> According to Middleton, the *imago Dei* 'designates the royal office or calling of human beings as God's representatives and agents in the world, granted authorised power to share in God's rule or administration of the earth's resources and creatures'.<sup>81</sup> Middleton sees the creation account of Genesis 1 as a polemic against the ancient Near Eastern polytheism.<sup>82</sup> According to Middleton, Genesis 1:26-27 'was intended to subvert as an oppressive social system and to empower' God's people with dignity as God's representatives in the world.<sup>83</sup>

When he comes to the New Testament, Middleton sees Jesus Christ as portrayed as the image of God par excellence (Col 1:15; Heb 1:3; 2 Cor 4:4-6). The term Messiah or Christ was understood as a royal designation. Jesus explicitly exemplifies what is implicit in Genesis 1 and explicit in the Old Testament, 'namely that the right use of power is not oppressive control of others, but their liberation or empowerment'.<sup>84</sup> The church inherits Christ's representative task. The church is renewed in the *imago Dei* (Eph 4:24; Col 3:9-11; 2 Cor 3:17-18), is sent by Christ and is called to imitate Christ's paradigm of self-giving, thus witnessing to God's rule in its communal life.<sup>85</sup>

## A COMBINATION OF TWO OR THREE VIEWS

Berkouwer interprets the image and likeness of God in Genesis 1:26-27 from relational and substantive perspectives. He says that the image of God primarily denotes man's relationship to God, but this relationship to God includes a moral likeness to God. Man is unique because he can relate to God; this is the image of God.<sup>86</sup> According to Berkouwer, when man fell into sin, the image of God in man was affected, part of the image of God was lost and the other part was retained. The fallen man is still man.<sup>87</sup> Like Calvin, Berkouwer points out that the New Testament sheds light on the meaning of the image of God. Firstly, by what it says about the restoration of the image of God in the lives of believers; and secondly, by what it says about Christ, who is the image of God.<sup>88</sup> Through sanctification, believers are renewed into the image of God, and this manifests itself in 'the fullness of the new life, which can be described as a new relationship with God, and in this relationship as the reality of salvation'.<sup>89</sup> In Berkouwer's understanding, this new life is a life in conformity to the will of God, a life of newness, fellowship, and joy.<sup>90</sup> The believer becomes more and more like Christ in character. Morally, he becomes like Christ. The believer should constantly strive to be like God in God's strength each day of his life (Eph 5:1-2). The renewal of man into the image of God is a product of God's

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redemptive work. According to Berkouwer, man will fully reflect the image of God in the life to come.<sup>91</sup> From the above discussion, Berkouwer's interpretation of the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-27) seems to be mainly influenced by the New Testament Scriptures.

Meredith G. Kline views the image of God in Genesis 1:26-27 from functional, substantive, and relational perspectives. The functional aspect of the image of God consists of man's likeness to God in having authority and exercising dominion. The substantive aspect of the image of God consists of ethical characteristics or attributes of God, thus holiness, righteousness, and truth. As well as the formal-physical glory likeness, man's physical body reflects the glory of God (not the body of God). At creation, man was made 'a little lower than the angels' (Ps 8:5) and he was crowned with glory and honour in the likeness of the enthroned Glory.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, Kline views the image and glory as twin models, which express man's likeness to the divine Original.<sup>93</sup> The relational aspect of the image of God is seen in the father-son relationship between God and man. 'To be in the image of God is to be a son of God.'<sup>94</sup> Kline writes:

Adam's fathering of a son [in his image and likeness, Genesis 5:3] provides a proper analogy to God's creating of man and the relationship of Seth to Adam is analogous to man's relationship to his Maker.<sup>95</sup>

Kline argues that the same notion is seen in Luke's genealogy (Luke 3:38), where Luke traces Jesus' lineage back to Adam, who is called the son of God. The origin of the second Adam (Jesus Christ) is attributed to the overshadowing presence and power of the Glory-Spirit.<sup>96</sup>

Under the concept of man as the glory-image of God, the Bible includes functional (or official), formal (or physical), and ethical components, corresponding to the composition of the archetypal Glory.<sup>97</sup>

According to Kline, the ethical likeness to God (or ethical Glory) that belonged to man was corrupted by the fall, when man fell into sin (cf. Rom 3:23). Man was stripped of righteousness, holiness, and love of the truth. Man's original condition can only be restored by divine grace. By common grace, a measure of the glory-image was being preserved in spite of the fall. The image of God in man is restored through sanctification (which is the work of the Spirit) where man is re-created after the image of God in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10).<sup>98</sup> With respect to this ethical glory-likeness to God, the Spirit of the Lord transforms man from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18; 4:16; Rom 12:2). Man is restored to the hope of the formal-physical image-glory of resurrection immortality and spiritual existence.<sup>99</sup> Man will possess the full image of God when he is glorified (when the kingdom of God is consummated) and this eschatological glorification will transform man into a transfigured glory, the image of the radiant Glory-Spirit.<sup>100</sup>

Edward M. Curtis interprets the image and likeness of God in Genesis 1:26-27 from the relational and functional perspectives.<sup>101</sup> He says that man is capable of relating to God. Like Kline, he points out that Adam's fathering a son in his image and likeness (Gen 5:3) provides a good analogy to God's creation of man, and Seth's relationship to his father, Adam, is analogous to Adam's relationship to God. Curtis writes:

Genesis 5:3 reports that Adam fathered a son "in his likeness, according to his image". This suggests that the way in which the son resembles the father is in some sense analogous to the way in which the human is like God.<sup>102</sup>

Curtis says that it is possible to deduce from this analogy (father-son relationship) that the image of God in man is also functional. The son is the image of his father because he functions like his father and on behalf of his father. Like Cline, Curtis also views the image of God in man as the visible corporeal representative of God and man functions as a representative of God in his exercise of dominion. Like Cline, he thinks that there is nothing in the context of Genesis 1:26-27 which gives meaning to the image of God; rather, he sees the Ancient Near Eastern concept of the image of a god as the key to the interpretation of the image of God in Genesis 1:26-27. Because the image functioned as a kind of representative of or a substitute for a god wherever it was located in the Ancient Near East and certain individuals, especially kings, were regarded as representatives of gods and they ruled on their behalf, Curtis thinks that idea of the image of God probably

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originated in Egypt and was borrowed by the Israelites during their settlement in Egypt and they transformed it to suit their theology.<sup>103</sup>

Daniel Simango sees Genesis 1-11 as the context in which the *imago Dei* (Gen 1: 26-27) is to be examined.<sup>104</sup> Simango views the image of God in Genesis 1:26-27 from the substantive and relational perspectives: it involves moral likeness to God and a relationship between God and human kind like that between parent and child. Humans' relationship to God was based on trust, faith, love, dependence, and obedience. They were tempted and they fell into sin, the moral and relational aspects of the image of God were corrupted. Morally, humankind is like the serpent, for example, Cain and Ham. Relationally, humankind is seen as the offspring of the serpent and enslaved to sin (e.g. Cain and the wicked in general).<sup>105</sup> However, humankind is also renewed into the image of God through a creative act of God. For example, Abel is like light, God's new creation. He is a righteous man. He is seen as the regenerate man.<sup>106</sup> The image of God was not totally defaced by the Fall, yet despite the corruption, part of the image of God still remains in human kind.<sup>107</sup> Like Von Rad,<sup>108</sup> Simango views dominion or ruling as a consequence of being in the image of God, and not the essence of the divine image.<sup>109</sup> Simango also argues that the substantive, relational and functional aspects of the image of God are also brought out in the narrative and legal sections of the Pentateuch. General statements, for example, the overall summary of the law found in Leviticus 19:2 ('You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy'), suggest defining God-likeness (morally) is one of the purposes of the law.<sup>110</sup> The Israelites are portrayed as God's children. This implies they are in his image since sonship implies image.<sup>111</sup> Passages in the law speak of dominion for Israel in a way that suggests that dominion is the consequence of Israel being in the image of God.<sup>112</sup>

When he comes to the New Testament, Simango sees Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the perfect expression of the image of God.<sup>113</sup> Christ is equal to God in essence.<sup>114</sup> Through his work on the cross, believers are adopted as God's children and are to be morally like him.<sup>115</sup> Believers are called to be like Christ. They are to imitate Christ's moral-likeness and submission to the Father.<sup>116</sup>

## SUMMARY OF RECENT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE IMAGE OF GOD (GEN 1:26-27)

The modern period shows a wide range of opinion regarding the image of God. The image and likeness of God in Genesis 1:26-27 are interpreted from the functional, relational, and substantive perspectives or a combination of these. The image of God is seen as having dominion over creation (Gen 1:28), having fellowship with God, as consisting of corporeal resemblance, denoting the bodily form, as well as spiritual, psychological, and moral attributes or qualities. From the history of recent interpretation, it is evident that most interpreters and commentators do not think that the biblical context of Genesis 1:26-27 is sufficient to define what it means to be created in the image of God. Many commentators interpret the image of God from a New Testament perspective in which Christ restores the image of God in man, (not attempting any Old Testament development of the theme) to justify their interpretation of the image of God that may be substantive, relational, functional or a combination of these.

Although there is a wide range of interpretations of what the image of God refers to, many commentators and scholars agree that Christ is the perfect or true image of God. He is the second Adam, who restores the corrupted or distorted image in man; this happens when he is regenerated and sanctified through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

## CONCLUSION

Philo, Irenaeus, Augustine, and Aquinas interpreted the image of God in man as the power of reason. Luther and Calvin interpreted the image of God in man as moral likeness to God. The fall corrupted the image of God and redemption restores the shattered image of God. The modern period shows a wide range of opinions regarding the image of God. The image and likeness of God in Genesis 1:26-27 are interpreted from the functional, relational and substantive perspectives or a combination of these.

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