

Imago Dei as “Original Righteousness” in the Old Testament

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AS CHRISTIANS, WE OFTEN SAY THAT we are “created in the image of God.” This phrase is used to express the idea that we are deeply loved and cherished by God, and that’s true enough. But what does it really mean? Are we just like God? Or do we have just a few attributes of deity? Can we be recognized as children of God in a literal sense? Or is the *imago* simply a relationship with God?

And to make things more confusing, we actually have two different versions of the *imago Dei*—what Helmut Thielicke describes as “original righteousness,” which is the image of God we receive in creation, and the “final righteousness,” which is the image of God the Christian receives in regeneration and is dependent upon faith.¹ For the purposes of understanding the sanctity of human life in this essay, I would like to focus on the original righteousness given by God in the Old Testament, since this aspect of creation better dictates our posture toward the sanctity of life for all human beings, whether believers or not.

God’s Word

TO ANSWER WHAT “CREATED in the image of God” truly means in its “original righteousness,” we start, as always, with Scripture. In the creation account in Genesis 1:26-27, we read that

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.²

Von Rad notes that the verb *bara* (בָּרָא) “create” is repeated three times in these verses to emphasize this “high point and goal” of God’s creativity. Indeed, man is

the capstone of God's creation.³ Brunner writes, "it is not human arrogance to believe that he is the crown, the goal of creation."⁴ Brunner even follows the thinking of the scholastics when he explains that man's "'upright' [posture] shows that he is called to this 'elevated position.'"⁵ The distinctive nature of the immortality of the human soul also reiterates the unique imprint of the *imago Dei*.⁶

Von Rad further explains that the text includes two nouns, *selem* (צֶלֶם) and *d'mut* (דְּמוּת), which are often translated as "image" and "likeness" in English versions. He translates *selem* (צֶלֶם), referencing different verses in the Old Testament, to mean "an actual plastic work, a duplicate, sometimes an idol... , a painting,"⁷ while *d'mut* (דְּמוּת), is more abstract, translated as "'appearance,' 'similarity,' 'analogy,'" or "'the copy.'"⁸ So *d'mut* (דְּמוּת) slightly modifies *selem* (צֶלֶם), indicating a deeper, more spiritual meaning. In Von Rad's exegesis, attributes such as dignity, personality, or the ability to make a moral decision are excluded.⁹ Interestingly, he notes that the "let us" refers to God among the angels, and so this "prevents one from referring God's image [in man] too directly to God the Lord."¹⁰

To Von Rad, our "likeness" to God is seen in our common lordship with the Lord. Just as God creates and rules over heaven and earth, man's role is to have dominion over the creatures of the earth. Man takes the God-given role of vassal of the Lord almighty. And in this role, he rules the earth under God's authority. Von Rad notes that "the text speaks less of the nature of God's image than of its purpose."¹¹

But it also appears that gender was part of God's creation plan, since we see that "male and female he created them." Von Rad asserts that "by God's will man was not created alone but designated for the 'thou' of the other sex."¹² Brunner agrees, quoting Gen. 2:18, "'it is not good for man to be alone.' The Creation of Man is not finished until the partner is there... Because God is Love, because in God's very Nature there is community, man must be able to love: thus 'man' has to be created as a *pair* of human beings. He cannot realize his nature without the 'Other'; his destiny is fellowship in love."¹³ Brunner notes that therefore, "the true greatness of man is not his reason, by which he learns to know, but consists in the fact that he has been made for communion with God and his fellows."¹⁴

Another pericope that explains that we were created in the image of God is Genesis 9:5b-6. God says to Noah, "From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. 'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.'" Here, Scripture elaborates a little further on what it means to be "created in God's image." The human being is indeed a precious creature, and the killing of a man is punishable by death. This isn't the case with the killing of an animal, so we see a greater value in God's eyes for a human being than for other creatures. It appears that the human is ontologically different from an animal, and much more precious, so precious that God imposes capital punishment

for the ending of a human life. Von Rad notes that God's "divine sovereign right over human life is expressed apodictically and unconditionally ... because man is God's possession and [he] was created in God's image."¹⁵

Psalm 8:48 elaborates even further on what it means to be created in the image of God. The psalmist writes, "What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas." Here, man is described as being "a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honor," and because of this glorious creation, man is able to administer the multi-faceted world God created with wisdom. This verse is perhaps the best example of the privileged position man possesses in the eyes of God.

James emphasizes the importance of human value when discussing how we should speak to one another. In his epistle, he explains that, "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be" (James 3: 9-10). So why shouldn't we curse each other? It's because we have "been made in God's likeness." Each person has been given a certain God-given dignity that should never be denigrated.

Protestant Perspectives on the *Imago Dei*

PROTESTANT THEOLOGIANS USUALLY DESCRIBE the *imago Dei* as a grace or gift relationship between God and man. Through His creation, God enters into a permanent loving relationship with man. This is what it means to be made in the image of God. Furthermore, this relationship is permanent, assured by the very grace of God himself.

Luther

So let's examine Protestant views on the *imago*, starting with Luther. Luther focuses on the phrase "Let us make," which he sees as a clear reference to the inner deliberations of the Trinity, in contrast to the Jewish claim¹⁶ that this "us" refers to God among the angels. Luther writes, "here, when He wants to create man, God summons Himself to a council and announces some sort of deliberation."¹⁷ This serious deliberation also indicates a very special creation, quite distinct from the creation of plants and animals. Luther states that this is why God repeats the noun "image" *selem* (סֵלֶם) in verse 27 "as an indication of the creator's rejoicing and exulting over the most beautiful work He had made."¹⁸

Luther also takes from Peter Lombard¹⁹ the idea that if Adam had not fallen into sin, God at some time would have translated him and his offspring into the spiritual state. From this idea, Luther explains that mankind, unlike the animal kingdom, was always destined to receive eternal life.²⁰

Interestingly, though, according to Luther, the second half of verse 27, “male and female He created them,” does not indicate that man was created to love; rather, it means that women receive this image just as men do.²¹

But then Luther addresses the core issue, aiming to explain the nature of the *imago* itself. He begins with a full refutation of the scholastics. Luther explains that what contemporary scholars of his time believed about the *imago* came from Augustine’s *De Trinitate*, which, according to Luther, was written using Aristotle’s classifications of the memory, the mind (or intellect), and the will.²² Luther writes that, according to Augustine, “man is created according to the similitude of God; that is, the intellect is enlightened by faith, the memory is made confident through hope and steadfastness, and the will is adorned with love.”²³ The result of this theology, Luther asserts, was disaster. He states, “this was the origin of the dangerous opinion that in governing men God permits them to act under their own impulse,” and “from here the conclusion was drawn that free will co-operated as the preceding and efficient cause of salvation.”²⁴ To support his point that these endowments aren’t given to man, Luther explains that the devil also has the attributes of memory, the mind (or intellect), and will—actually, he has them in even greater capacities than man does! Therefore, by that argument, the devil must have been made in the image of God as well.²⁵ But one might wonder about this objection. If one assumes that the devil was created as the angel Lucifer in his unfallen state in heaven, is it offensive to think that the devil also bears the image of God in some way?

Even worse, according to Luther, is Pseudo-Dionysius’s belief that these natural endowments of mind, memory, and will remain unimpaired after the fall.²⁶ This would undermine the need for a savior to justify human beings and would allow man to justify himself instead.

So what is the *imago Dei* according to Luther? Well, since the *imago* was lost during the fall, Luther says it’s hard to determine what’s left. He still recognizes that we have memory, mind, and will, but they are now “most depraved and most seriously weakened.”²⁷ Luther likens the post-fall *imago* to a leprous man. He writes, “even though in his leprous flesh everything is almost dead and without sensation,”²⁸ the human being is still there. So what is this *imago* according to Luther? It appears to be Peter Lombard’s promise of eternal life to Adam, an impaired image that awaits restoration in the last days through the power of Jesus’s merits.²⁹

Barth

Moving into the 20th Century, famed theologian Karl Barth proposes a God-centered focus on the *imago Dei*. He writes,

That God will create a man in his image implies that it is not man but God who is first a living Person as One who knows and wills and speaks. It was as such that He was the Creator, that He revealed Himself and acted in commencing time. Thus the creature in his totality was allied to this living, divine Person, being wholly referred to it for its existence and essence, its survival and sustenance. It came into being as the work of the Word of God corresponding to His utterance. So originally and intimately was it disposed for the grace of God! So little did it acquire a place from which it might legitimately withdraw itself from the grace of God!³⁰

And so, like Luther, Barth avoids defining any possible attributes that man receives and retains in the creation. Barth writes, “It is striking, but incontestable, that in his description of the grace of God in this final and supreme act of creation, the biblical witness makes no reference at all to the peculiar intellectual and moral talents and possibilities of man, to his reason and its determination and exercise.”³¹

But unlike Luther, Barth believes that being created “male and female” denotes a special status of man as the capstone of creation. Barth writes, “It is he first and alone who is created ‘in the image’ and ‘after the likeness of God.’”³² As to the significance of the “male and female” designation itself, Barth believes that verse 27 reflects primarily the “relationship between Jesus Christ and his Church, secondarily the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, and only finally—although very directly in view of its origin—the relationship between the sexes.”³³

And yet there is no new image in man in himself, rather “Let us make man in our own image” (repeated twice) means instead that “there exists a divine and therefore self-grounded prototype [in God] to which this being can correspond... by which, when existence is given to it, it will in fact be legitimated and justified.”³⁴ So “the divine likeness [in man] is a copy and not an original; a reflection and not a prototype,”³⁵ and this “permission and promise”³⁶ given in the *imago* will never be permanently retracted, nor is it in any way lost through the fall, as Luther believed.³⁷

This new existence then distinguishes men “from all other creatures with autonomous life, by a superior position, by a higher dignity and might, by a greater power of disposal and control.”³⁸ Man now is now assigned a “exalted position of lordship within the surrounding animal kingdom....a *primus inter pares* among those over whom he rules.”³⁹

Being a Reformed theologian, Barth views this relationship through the lens of covenant theology. Barth writes, “In this way He [God] wills and creates man as a partner who is capable of entering into covenant-relationship with Himself—for all the disparity in and therefore the differentiation between man as a creature and his Creator.”⁴⁰

Brunner

Let’s continue with the work of Barth’s colleague, Swiss Reformed theologian Emil Brunner. Brunner writes that “In the thought of the Old Testament the fact that man has been made in the Image of God” means something that man can never lose: even when he sins, he cannot lose it.” But with this irrevocable gift also comes responsibility. Brunner explains that the

heart of the creaturely existence of man is freedom, selfhood, to be an “I,” a person. Only an “I” can answer a “Thou,” only a Self which is self-determining can freely answer God. An automaton does not respond; an animal, in contradistinction from an automaton, may indeed *re-act*, but it cannot *re-respond*. It is not capable of speech, of free self-determination, it cannot stand at a distance from itself, and it is therefore not *re-sponsible*.

The free Self, capable of self-determination, belongs to the original constitution of man as created by God. But from the very outset this freedom is limited.... He has been *made* to respond—to God.⁴¹

But even though Brunner recognizes an innate “freedom” or “selfhood” in man, he nevertheless criticizes an allegedly erroneous conception of the *imago Dei* in the Catholic tradition, which he describes as an understanding of this freedom in light of a formal “reason” that the human possesses “*in himself*.” Brunner believes that “*this* view of the *Imago Dei* is the gate by which a pantheistic or an idealistic deification of man can enter.”⁴² In this state, “Man ... possesses the divine reason in himself; his spirit is then a ‘spark’ from the Divine Spirit. He has ‘divinity within himself’; ‘*est Deus in Nobis*’ ... [and then to fulfill his destiny] man will only need to become aware of this divine reason within himself....”⁴³

Thielicke

Another prominent Protestant voice on the *imago* is the late Lutheran Hamburg University professor, Helmut Thielicke. Thielicke makes the argument that the *imago Dei* in man is teleological rather than ontological, “a state of relation and not a state of being.”⁴⁴ In Gen. 1, we see a clear break in the sixth day from the creation of animals to the creation of man who holds a special position in the created world. Thielicke writes that “the effect of this special position in the cosmos is that man is to rule over the rest of creation.”⁴⁵ So the *imago* isn’t a change or infusion

of essence, rather it's a function: the operation of man's lordship over the world.⁴⁶ It is a divine address to man, that solely consists of "God's remembrance of us," existing in God's own consciousness.⁴⁷ Furthermore, this *imago* is not dependent upon man's obedience; it remains despite the fall, it is "a *character indelebilis*."⁴⁸ God becomes a model for one to model himself against, instead of just "that 'from which' I come."⁴⁹

Thielicke categorically rejects ontological qualities of the *imago* "such as personality, freedom, responsibility, conscience, dignity, or the free exercise of the moral disposition."⁵⁰ He writes, "now there is nothing of this whatsoever in Genesis, and we believe we have shown that this silence is more than just an inadvertent omission, that there are actually sound reasons for it both soteriologically and in the nature of the matter itself."⁵¹

Jenson

Let's conclude our review of recent Protestant views on the *imago Dei* by reviewing the insights of famed Lutheran theologian Robert W. Jenson.⁵² Jenson spends a great deal of time laying out his views in the second volume of his popular systematic theology textbook.⁵³ Here he calls the "Let us make" of verse 26 a "portentous new locution" for the "out-of-rhythm act" that "is the creation of humanity."⁵⁴ He cites Augustine, agreeing that man is superior to the other animals in that he was created in the image of God. This distinction gives man dominion over the other creatures.⁵⁵ Jenson follows Claus Westermann in translating "image" *selem* (מְלֶכֶת) as "counterpart." This translation confirms man's status in relationship with God: man is addressed by God himself, and he responds.⁵⁶

Jenson spends much of this discussion contemplating the ontological nature of man as created in the *imago Dei*. Not unlike the scholastics, he ponders the distinctiveness of human attributes, i.e. that man "seems to be the only species of featherless bipeds and seems also to have certain neurological capacities not found otherwise, though this is not so certain."⁵⁷ These attributes are the "traces of the Trinity" that Augustine hinted at in *De Trinitate*.⁵⁸

Jenson also warns against "anthropological nihilism," the idea that humans should be treated no better or worse than the animals.⁵⁹ In Jenson's opinion, these ideologies have led to the scourges of abortion and euthanasia. Jenson writes,

Abortion on demand is already established in America and parts of Europe—and indeed in post-civilized China there is mandatory abortion⁶⁰—and euthanasia and infanticide on demand apparently soon will be. These terminations serve the individual purposes of the terminators—the individualism is most remarkable when these are simultaneously the terminated—and they are justified by sentiment about the inferior life predictable for the terminated or

about the superior rights of the terminators. As we destroy crippled horses, so we kill born and unborn children whose mothers for whatever reasons do not think they should raise them, or elders who have lost hope and burden the system or their families, or trauma victims in disheartening coma, or persons simply in pain they do not wish to endure or we do not wish to see them enduring. *And there is no reason why we should not, if there is no ontological difference between humans and other animals.*⁶¹

Despite his ontological reflections, Jenson lands at a predictable Protestant position on the *imago*. He believes that the *imago* is God's speech,⁶² and he sees "humanity's specific relation to God as *itself* our uniqueness.... Our specificity in comparison with the other animals is that we are the ones addressed by God's moral word and so [are] enabled to respond—that we are called to *pray*.... [Indeed] we are the praying animals."⁶³

Catholic Perspectives on the *Imago Dei*

AS DISCUSSED ABOVE, CATHOLIC THEOLOGIANS have often seen the presence of the *imago Dei* as demonstrated in the unique faculties God gave human beings in the creation itself. This can be seen in the early writings of the church fathers. For instance, Irenaeus believed that the image of God bestowed upon human beings consists of "natural qualities," such as reason, which made humans distinct from other earthly creatures. And Tertullian suggested that the image of God (and its attendant attributes) was retained even after sinning.⁶⁴ As we have already seen, Augustine followed in this thinking. However, perhaps the most influential Catholic commentator on the *imago*, Thomas Aquinas, rose to prominence nearly eight centuries later.

Thomas Aquinas

Thomas notes that man is the only creature truly fashioned in the image of God. He writes in question 72, article one of his *Summa Theologica* that, "animals and plants may be said to be produced according to their kinds, to signify their remoteness from the Divine image and likeness, whereas man is said to be made *to the image and likeness of God*."⁶⁵ So far so good. But in question 93, article two Thomas goes much further, citing Augustine (*De Genesi Ad Litteram* vi. 12) to explain that "man's excellence consists in the fact that God made him to His own image by giving him an intellectual soul, which raises him above the beasts of the field."⁶⁶

As shown above, nearly all Protestant commentators see this final exegetical conclusion as unbiblical and rooted in scholasticism. In their view, this assertion and the previous ones have led to centuries of incorrect anthropology, self-righteousness, Semi-Pelagianism, indulgences, and more.

But isn't it undeniable that man has been endowed with intellectual abilities that put him above every creature on earth? Would it have made sense that God would have created something stupider than the animals if he wanted a creature who might have dominion over them? And aren't God and man the only rational beings in this story—doesn't their similarity as rational beings have something to do with all this?

The origin of the scholastic influences of Thomas's work is certainly beyond the scope of this essay, so I won't comment on them here. However, I do think it's a stretch to say that the intellectual superiority of humankind cannot be deduced from Genesis 1. One must admit that the theology of an inherent God-like nature in man can tip the scales towards man-centered ways of understanding our relationship with God. Yet, to deny the ontological distinctions between man and animals seems to be an unnecessary brake on the contemporary theological defense of human life.

Perhaps in light of the conclusions made by scholars shown above, Thomas' scholastic conclusions appear downplayed in Catholic doctrine today. Take paragraph 357 in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1991), which explains what it means to be created "in the Image of God." Here, we see no scholastic "spark" of deification, but instead a human being, created with the capacities of personhood, who is now able to respond to the grace of God in his love toward his Lord and other people. The catechism states:

Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead.⁶⁷

John Paul II

One of the most prominent recent Catholic scholars on this subject (and undoubtedly a huge influence in the creation of the catechism) has been Pope John Paul II, who spoke at length about the imago and other life topics in a series of Wednesday audiences in St. Peter's Square from 1979-1984 now known as the *Theology of the Body*. In these talks, the late Pope starts, presumably with Thomas, noting that "Man, whom God created 'male and female,' bears the divine image impressed in the body 'from the beginning.'"⁶⁸ This also gives "life to the '*communio personarum*' that man and woman form . . . essentially the image of an inscrutable divine communion of Persons" in the Trinity.⁶⁹

The Pope explains that the first creation narrative is the immutable basis of all Christian anthropology and this creation imbues man as an *anima rationale*, a

rational being.⁷⁰ He notes that this is a “unassailable point of reference’ in order to understand who we are (anthropology) and how we are to live (ethics).”⁷¹ In this creation, the pope writes, “the Creator orders him [man] to subdue and rule the earth (Gen. 1:28).”⁷² Following from this is our Lord’s command to “be fruitful and multiply,” which in the John Paul II’s words, “enables [us] to participate in the creative, covenant love of God.”⁷³ In all these thoughts, the Pope is mining from the rich store of traditional Catholic creation theology.

But in the lectures, John Paul II downplays the importance of the rationality of man, emphasizing instead, the “gift,” of the communion of persons. *Theology of the Body* expert Christopher West explains the pope’s thinking that, “not only as a rational individual does the human person image God (not only in the experience of original solitude), but also in the communion formed by man and woman (the experience of original unity).”⁷⁴ This communion is of course, the image of the loving communion of members of the Trinity itself, creating life in their own divine relationship.⁷⁵ To demonstrate this, John Paul II opines (not unlike Luther did) that the members of the Trinity seem to pause before creating man, “as if he entered back into himself to make a decision, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness’ (Gen. 1:27).”⁷⁶

The Pope continues in this motif of “gift-giving.” He notes that everything in the world was created and it was “very good,” and that human beings, therefore are “very good” gifts from God himself.⁷⁷ He writes: “As the action of God, the creation signifies not only calling from nothingness to existence and establishing the existence of the world and of man in the world. It also signifies, according to the first narrative [Gen. 1] *beresit bara*, giving. It is a fundamental and ‘radical’ giving, that is, a giving in which the gift comes into being precisely from nothingness.”⁷⁸ As stated above, his giving becomes realized fully after the creation of Eve and consequently Adam’s fulfillment as a person in this relationship. This “giving” motif is also seen in the second creation account in which the Pope describes the encounter as one in which Adam is lovingly made a “partner of the absolute,” in a “unique, exclusive, and unrepeatable relationship with God himself.”⁷⁹

Pro-Life Implications of the “Original Righteousness” of the *Imago Dei*

NOW THAT WE HAVE A CLEARER UNDERSTANDING of what it means to be created in the image of God, I would like to conclude by further explaining how a correct understanding of the *imago Dei* might be used to educate about, and advocate for, the defense of all human life.

1. God imprints an image of himself upon every human being, believer or not. We have learned that every human being, whether Christian or not, has received the image of God from the moment of conception (the creation moment) as an

“original righteousness.” This *imago* is described in various ways: as a relationship with God, a promise of eternal life, a gift, or as innate capacities such as reason, mind, and will. While the *imago* may be tarnished due to sin, and a fuller reception will be received through regeneration and faith, this image is nevertheless held by all persons. All human beings are therefore precious to God and equal in his sight, and their lives are worthy of protection.

2. This image is unique: it is not seen in any other of God’s creations. Scripture makes it clear that other creatures do not receive this same image. As such, the life of a human being is more precious in the eyes of God than that of an animal. Therefore, “anthropological nihilism” must be rejected.
3. This image is permanent, a *character indelebilis*. The *imago Dei* can’t be aged away, and it can’t be sinned away. Every commentator agrees that this image lasts throughout a person’s life, at least in some degree. The permanence of the *imago* is indispensable in understanding the sanctity of life among the aged. Their God-given dignity is not diminished by age nor by any loss of faculties.
4. The ontological nature of the *imago* is indispensable for understanding the preciousness of human life. While most Protestant commentators have rejected the ontological nature of the *imago*, it appears that this rejection is based more on an aversion to scholasticism and fear of the works righteousness it might lead to, rather than sound exegesis. One can infer inherent qualities such as reason, mind, and will (regardless of the origins of these categories) from the dominion God gives man in Genesis 1:28. Jenson saw the danger of the loss of an ontological *imago* in a society that now readily allows abortion and euthanasia. When we reject the ontological *imago*, which John Paul II called the “unassailable point of reference” for our ethics, we do so at our own peril.

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Notes

1. Helmut Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, Vol. 1: *Foundations*, ed., William H. Lazareth (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2007), 154.
2. Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008). All citations in this essay use the ESV translation.
3. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, rev. ed., trans. John H. Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 57.

4. Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption: Dogmatics: Vol. II*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974 [London: Lutterworth Press, 1952]), 66.
5. *Ibid.*, 67.
6. *Ibid.*, 68.
7. Von Rad, *Genesis*, 57.
8. *Ibid.*, 58.
9. *Ibid.*, 58.
10. *Ibid.*, 59.
11. *Ibid.*, 59.
12. *Ibid.*, 60.
13. Brunner, 64.
14. *Ibid.*, 67.
15. Von Rad, *Genesis*, 132.
16. Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 1-5*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 1, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1-30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-76); vols. 31-55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress Press, 1957-86); vols. 56-82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 57-58. Henceforth, LW.
17. LW 1: 56.
18. LW 1: 68.
19. See Peter Lombard, *Sententiarium libri quatuor*, II, Dist. XX.
20. LW 1: 56-57.
21. LW 1: 69.
22. LW 1: 60.
23. LW 1: 60.
24. LW 1: 61.
25. LW 1: 61: "If these powers are the image of God, it will also follow that Satan was created according to the image of God, since he surely has these natural endowments, such as memory and a very superior intellect and a most determined will, to a far higher degree than we have them." WA 42:46.7-10: "*Si enim istae potentiae sunt imago Dei, sequetur etiam Satanam ad imaginem Dei conditum esse, qui profecto illa naturalia longe habet validiora, quam nos habemus, sicut est memoria et intellectus summus et voluntas obstinatissima.*" Here Luther is following the opinions of Origen and other church fathers who believed that angels, and therefore fallen angels like Lucifer, were not created in the image of God as men are.
26. LW 1: 61.
27. LW 1: 61.
28. LW 1: 62.
29. LW 1: 64.

30. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Volume III: *The Doctrine of Creation*, Part I, trans. J. W. Edwards, O. Bussey and H. Knight, ed. G.W. Bromley and T. F. Torrance (New York: T. T. Clark, 2004 [1945]), 110. Henceforth, CD.
31. CD III.1: 185.
32. CD III.1: 184.
33. CD III.1: 322.
34. CD III.1: 183.
35. CD III.1: 189.
36. CD III.1: 189.
37. CD III.1: 200.
38. CD III.1: 187.
39. CD III.1: 187.
40. CD III.1: 185.
41. Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, 56-57.
42. *Ibid.*, 60.
43. *Ibid.*, 60.
44. Thieliicke, *Theological Ethics*, 154.
45. *Ibid.*, 155.
46. *Ibid.*, 157.
47. *Ibid.*, 165.
48. *Ibid.*, 159.
49. *Ibid.*, 152.
50. *Ibid.*, 160.
51. *Ibid.*, 160.
52. Interestingly, Jenson was one of the founders of the pro-life organization, Lutherans For Life www.lutheransforlife.org in 1978, and therefore he has a unique perspective of relating the *imago Dei* to the sanctity of life; see Dennis R. Di Mauro, *A Love for Life: Christianity's Consistent Protection of the Unborn* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008), 78.
53. Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2: *The Works of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
54. *Ibid.*, 15.
55. *Ibid.*, 15-16.
56. *Ibid.*, 16.
57. *Ibid.*, 56.
58. *Ibid.*, 65.
59. *Ibid.*, 56-57.
60. Jenson writes this before the repeal of the Chinese one child policy, which allowed two children per couple in 2015, and then three children in 2021. This is not to say that couples might be forced to undergo abortion today if they exceed the three-child limit.

61. Jenson, 57-58. Italics has been added to the text for emphasis.
62. Ibid., 61-62.
63. Ibid., 58-59.
64. Jared V. Ingle, "Imago Dei: Qualities and Nature," *Patheos*, April 11, 2019, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jaredingle/2019/04/imago-dei-qualities-and-nature/>. Accessed October 9, 2025.
65. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Volume I: 1^a QQ. 1-119, 1^a II^{ae} QQ. 1-4, q. 72, art. 1 (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press Christian Classics, 1981 [New York: Benziger Brothers, 1948]), 352. Hereafter, ST.
66. ST, vol. 1, q. 93, art. 2, p. 470. The Roman Catholic view of Sirach as inspired may have also had an influence on this theology, see Sirach 17:3.
67. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New Hope, KY: Urbi et Orbi Communications, 1994), paragraph 357, p. 91.
68. Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained: A Commentary on John Paul II's Man and Woman He Created Them* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2007), 91.
69. John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Media and Books, 2006), 163.
70. John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997), 448-449.
71. West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 91.
72. John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 135.
73. West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 91.
74. Ibid., 108.
75. John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body*, 450.
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77. Ibid., 128.
78. John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body*, 59.
79. Ibid., 38.

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