George C. Hammond, M.DIV., D.MIN.
Foreword by Peter Lillback

It Has Not Yet Appeared What We Shall Be

A Reconsideration of the Imago Dei in Light of Those with Severe Cognitive Disabilities

REFORMED ACADEMIC DISSERTATIONS

"Parents of children with severe disabilities face a sobering truth: I will not be able to 'fix' my child, and, in all likelihood, I will not see him or her 'grow up,' marry, and have a life of his or her own. It is common, sadly, for such a despairing situation to yield wreckage. But out of just such a burden, Dr. Hammond has given us a vital window into the heart of God for the broken, and wisdom for the ongoing question of what it means to be made *imago Dei*. Dr. Hammond's work is a gift born out of much affliction of soul and mind. I for one am grateful for it. In an age when the secular discussion of 'personhood' runs parallel to the theological discussion of *imago Dei*, Dr. Hammond gives us a careful, clear, and theologically detailed treatment of this vital doctrine for our day. May God use this resource to help the church respond in a manner that honors God and His image present in all people, no matter how disabled they might be."
—**Michael S. Beates**, Dean of Students, The Geneva School, Winter Park, Florida

"Are severely challenged people nevertheless made in the image of God, or has their disability barred them from this unique class? After reading this study, you will have no doubts. The *imago* does not depend on being healthy, agile, brilliant or without limitations, but on God's kind act of creation. This book is a gem, for it defends the traditional view of who we are in the face of the relevant theological and scientific issues. Dr. Hammond's presentation of the disabled child is heartbreaking, at first, but then deeply heart re-making. Parents, but also church leaders, as well as the average person should find much encouragement in this study. It is unique, powerful, biblically sound, and practical. I am not aware of anything quite like it."
—**William Edgar**, Professor of Apologetics, Westminster Theological Seminary

"I read this new book with great interest since I myself have a niece who has severe cognitive disabilities. This book has risen out of the crucible of personal experience and serious, sustained engagement

with the biblical text and secondary literature. Hammond challenges many commonly held *shibboleths* about the *Imago Dei*. Although I may not be persuaded by all of the book's formulations, this is a book that deserves a careful read and will be of great benefit to our thinking about the *Imago Dei* and also to families and churches who seek to love and care for those with severe cognitive disabilities."
—**Bryan D. Estelle,** Professor of Old Testament, Westminster Seminary California

"Are those with severe cognitive disabilities God's image bearers? Prompted by the author's own deeply personal quest, the historical and theological reflection he provides, solidly grounded in Scripture, shows convincingly that the image of God does not reside in any one or more capacities or functions that mark human beings but is simply (and profoundly) what *all* human beings *are* and so are to be valued as such. Addressed as well are the important and practical implications this conclusion carries including how the church is to deal with the cognitively disabled in its midst so that they are not neglected but cherished and cared for appropriately—all the more important at a time when 'quality of life' and value ethics views are increasingly undermining Scripture's understanding of what a human person is."
—**Richard B. Gaffin Jr.**, Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology, Emeritus, Westminster Theological Seminary

"The doctrine of the *imago Dei* has suffered inattention and often misrepresentation by the church. Such negligence has caused many to misunderstand the fundamental nature of humanity, that being image bearers of God. Nowhere is this better illustrated than with the mentally disabled, who historically have been viewed as not bearing that divine image. Nothing could be further from the truth. In his book, *It Has Not Yet Appeared What We Shall Be*, not only does Dr. Hammond articulate the biblical truth of the *imago Dei* with biblical and theological acumen, he also writes with pastoral sensitivity and wisdom. As he has personal experience with a mentally

disabled child, his comments are also filled with fatherly care. I have no doubt that his thoughts will minister to many who wrestle with loved ones with mental illness, reminding them that absolutely no one is beyond the reach of our sovereign God."
—**Peter Y. Lee**, Associate Professor of Old Testament, Reformed Theological Seminary, Washington DC

"*It Has Not Yet Appeared What We Shall Be* is a powerful study of the image of God and also of the practical impact that our beliefs hold for our treatment of those who are mentally broken. This carefully researched and well-written book will move, disturb, challenge and bless readers. I am privileged to know George and Donna Hammond, to have met Rebecca, and now to have read this book. I commend the study of these pages to professors, pastors, and students, and urge the consideration of its argument upon those engaged in the care of the cognitively disabled."
—**Chad Van Dixhoorn**, Chancellor's Professor of Historical Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary, Washington DC

It Has Not Yet Appeared What We Shall Be

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John J. Hughes

It Has Not Yet Appeared What We Shall Be

A Reconsideration of the Imago Dei in Light of Those with Severe Cognitive Disabilities

George C. Hammond

P&R PUBLISHING
P.O. BOX 817 • PHILLIPSBURG • NEW JERSEY 08865-0817

It Has Not Yet Appeared What We Shall Be: A Reconsideration of the Imago Dei *in Light of Those with Severe Cognitive Disabilities*. George C. Hammond, M.Div., D.Min. Submitted to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA, 2014, for the D.Min. degree. Supervisor: David Curry.

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-1-62995-313-7 (pbk)
ISBN 978-1-62995-314-4 (ePub)
ISBN 978-1-62995-315-1 (Mobi)

For my daughter Rebecca who has taught me about
what it means to be made as the image of God, and for my wife
Donna who has so often been her interpreter to me.

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P&R Publishing has a long and distinguished history of publishing carefully selected, high-value theological books in the Reformed tradition. Many theological books begin as dissertations, but many dissertations are worthy of publication in their own right. Realizing this, P&R has launched the Reformed Academic Dissertation (RAD) program to publish top-tier dissertations (Ph.D., Th.D., D.Min., and Th.M.) that advance biblical and theological scholarship by making distinctive contributions in the areas of theology, ethics, biblical studies, apologetics, and counseling.

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John J. Hughes
Series Editor

Foreword

Human assessments of the dignity of human life range from views reflecting moral darkness to perspectives that sparkle with compassion. The Nazis devised the deadly dictum of "life unworthy of life," leading to their heinous death camps. More recently, Peter Singer, having rejected the Judeo-Christian "myth" of man's origin and fall in Genesis, has argued that animal life can have greater dignity than human life, for example in the case of the severely impaired. Even the great Reformer, Martin Luther, once shockingly described a profoundly handicapped person as "a mass of flesh without a soul," and suggested that the disabled yet ravenous being should be strangled rather than fed. The eugenics movement, sometimes even supported by the church, continues to challenge the classic Judeo-Christian view of the image of God and the value of all human life.

The classic Judeo-Christian evaluation of man, however, is found in the creation account in Genesis 1:26–27 that teaches that man is made in the image of God. Although humankind is fallen and broken (Genesis 3), the Scriptures portray man as still possessing in some measure the image and likeness of God (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9). Experientially, we have learned from others such as Joni Eareckson Tada, the modern Disability Rights movement and l'Arche that there is beauty and dignity in those who are severely disabled. Moreover, did not Jesus teach that when his disciples cared for "the least" of Christ's brethren, by clothing, feeding visiting and serving them, that they were doing the same for Him?

While we are grateful for the beauty that emanates from handicapped individuals such as Joni Eareckson Tada, does not an

emphasis on a hierarchy of ability in the midst of disability eventually exclude the significance of those who are so severely disabled that they will never speak, never consciously communicate or create and never relate interpersonally? How do we explain the theological significance of those who have severe cognitive disabilities? Do the severely disabled and especially those with severe cognitive disabilities reflect the lofty biblical anthropology that man is made in the image of God? For example, Augustine's fascinating Trinitarian understanding of the *imago Dei* in terms of intellect, memory and will can clearly apply to many handicapped people; but not to those with severe cognitive disabilities.

The Rev. Dr. George Hammond, a Presbyterian pastor and an alumnus of Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia, has sought to engage these questions. His study begins with a deeply moving account of his fatherly love for his daughter. Rebecca, his fourth child, was born with severe cognitive disabilities. Her very existence created a stunning theological crisis, compelling him to wrestle with the traditional understandings of what it means to be made in the image of God. From his heart-rending questioning, his research was born. His scholarly investigation pulses with a passionate quest to address the possibility that his beloved yet helpless child was perhaps only an image bearer of God by "exception".

"It Has Not Yet Appeared What We Shall Be": A Reconsideration of the Imago Dei in Light of Those with Severe Cognitive Disabilities is the result of his scholarly labors. This well written and sanctifying D. Min. project was completed at Gordon-Conwell Seminary. Herein, Hammond offers a valuable survey of the historical views concerning the image of God including the Patristic Period, the Medieval Period, the Reformation Period and the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. He also supplies a survey of recent literature touching on this question. He summarizes the categories held by theologians concerning the image of God by the following positions:

- The identification of the *imago Dei* is identified as some *constituent* or component part of man.
- If this is understood *substantively*, it is likely interpreted as the soul or the intellect of man.
- If it is taken *formally*, it is generally seen as the human body and the human's upright posture.
- If the *imago Dei* is taken *functionally*, it is usually identified as mankind's rule or dominion over the creation.
- More recently, the view of Barth is that the *imago* is to be understood in an I-Thou *relationship* between God and man. In this, Barth has rejected the traditional substantive and functional views. An analogy of relationship is seen in the relationships between man and man as well as between male and female. Thus for Barth's understanding of the *imago Dei*, the analogy of being between God and man in the *imago* is replaced by the analogy of relationship.
- Is there an eschatological element to the *imago Dei*? If so, perhaps the image points into the future to what mankind will become when all of God's purposes are finally fulfilled in redemptive history. The eschatological significance of the image means that there is a forward look to the once coming person and work of Christ and now to the hope established by His resurrection and the consummation of that hope in the final resurrection.

The historian and the systematic theologian will benefit by the succinct summary of the views of the *imago Dei* provided in this study. The exegete will also find suggestive and helpful analyses of such passages as Genesis 1:26–27; 3:1–5; 1 Corinthians 15:45–49; Colossians 3:9–10; 2 Peter 1:4. Hammond's research also provides sources for understanding contemporary compassion ministries and relevant literature and resources. His extensive survey of current American pastoral views regarding the *imago Dei* demonstrates how the various understandings of the *imago* have impacted contemporary

Christian ecclesiastical traditions. His study is also eminently practical in regard to the church's role in caring for the severely disabled, providing substantial insights for both pastors and professors.

While the Scriptures teach that man is made "in the image of God", Hammond argues that they do not insist that the image of God is "in" man. Rather, Hammond argues that the Hebrew can well be translated that man was created "*as* the image of God". His conclusion is that the image of God is not substantive (something humans possess such as intellect or posture), or functional (dominion), or relational (conscious interpersonal interaction), or even ultimately telic or eschatological (the final glorification of the believer in Christ). While such things may well and do distinguish humans from animals or angels, and can be seen as part of the multi-perspectival understanding of the *imago Dei*, they are not its precise expression. Rather, he asserts that the *imago Dei* is "what God created human beings to be. Because man-the-image-of-God is predicated upon the creative purpose and action of God, human beings, regardless of how broken in body or soul, cannot be anything other than *imago Dei*." He explains, "Connecting all the data points in Scripture, we conclude that from the moment of conception human beings are constituted as 'living souls' and are thus *imago Dei*. Whatever distortions of body or soul take place in their development *in utero* or *ex utero*, they are still the image of God. Because of sin in the world, all people bear distortions, some more notable and visible than others; but all are no less the image of God despite the distortions. *Imago Dei* is simply what man *qua* man is constituted."

I gratefully and highly recommend Dr. Hammond's work. It is a rare gem of pastoral and theological scholarship. Its facets unite the pathos of a father, the ethos of a long-term care giver and the logos of a pastoral theologian. His persuasive study sparkles with insight as it deepens our understanding of a precious doctrine and how it can and should be more fully understood and more deeply applied.

As a result, Rebecca has proved to be an exception after all. Not in regard to the *imago Dei*, but in regard to how her precious yet

fragile life has blessed the church through her father's penetrating investigation and her mother's and family's loving care. Hammond's *Reconsideration* provides a fuller understanding of who all of us humans are now *as* the image of God as well as "what we shall be" when Christ, the true and ultimate image of God, appears.

Dr. Peter A. Lillback
President, Westminster Theological Seminary
Philadelphia

Preface

This book encompasses much of the work of my doctoral thesis for Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary with minor changes. The third chapter of the original thesis containing a study I conducted to better understand the thinking of modern Protestant clergy in the U.S. regarding the doctrine of the image of God has been relocated to the appendix for those to whom the data collected and collated may be of interest.

The other major change has been the addition of an appendix dedicated to a treatment of Herman Bavinck's discussion of the image of God in his *Reformed Dogmatics*. Bavinck's work is important and deserves to be treated. However, in this book I deal specifically with modern systematic theologians starting with Barth, and as Bavinck predates Barth by a few years, he was omitted. I was persuaded by Dr. Chad Van Dixhoorn that Bavinck's work with respect to the question under consideration needed to be analyzed, and I have done so in Appendix 4.

To write about the doctrine of image of God necessarily requires referring to human beings, but in the post-modern world questions of how to do so can be vexing. According to Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary Tenth Edition, the primary meaning of the word "man" is "an individual human." For centuries the English word "man" has been understood to have at least two meanings. While it could be used to refer to the male member of the human species, it has often been used to indicate an individual human being of either gender. In recent years, sensitivity has developed toward language that is suspected of being gender exclusive.

The word "man" has thus come to be viewed with misgivings, despite its lexical meaning.

This work endeavors to employ the inclusive nouns "humanity," "humankind," and "people" when possible. However, to say "humanity is made in the image of God" may convey that only the human race collectively, and not individuals, is made in the image of God. The inclusivity of nouns such as "humanity" and "humankind" is found in their collective nature, but it is precisely their collective nature which connotes that what is in view are human beings jointly, rather than human beings severally. The word "man" is often employed in this book as being the most accurate expression of the thought being conveyed, or for stylistic reasons. The reader should understand that unless the clause is gender conditioned, "man" as it is used here is employed in its lexical sense of "an individual human" without respect to gender.

Acknowledgments

This book and the reconsideration is presents would not have possible without my daughter Rebecca. Her presence in my life has brought me great, though not easily come by, joy. Because of her I have come to learn more deeply and lean more greatly upon the grace of God. She has opened my eyes to an aspect of the world I was ignorant of, and forced me to re-examine what it means for human beings to be made in the image of God.

It would be impossible to express too much gratitude to my wife Donna. Because of the difficulties that attend Rebecca's care, I had given up the hope of pursuing any further formal education or writing. Her insistence that I do both was undergirded by her taking up more than her share in caring for Rebecca and our other children to make time for me for this work. She epitomizes the word *ezer*, and the woman described in Proverbs 31:10–31.

Introduction

The doctrine of the image of God in its dominant contours throughout history has been criticized for being technically exclusive of persons with severe cognitive disabilities. Modern disability theologians have dealt with this by normalizing disability, seeing disability as a "good" of creation and discounting the disastrous effects of the fall on all faculties of body and soul.

This book reconsiders the doctrine of the image of God in light of those with severe cognitive disabilities. The study critically examines the literature ancient to modern dealing with the *imago* doctrine. It evaluates the attitudes of society and of the church with respect to those with cognitive disabilities in light of the *imago* doctrine. It interacts with modern disability theologians and examines their assumptions in the light of the Scripture. An exegetical analysis of pertinent texts serves as the basis to recast previous theological insights and to establish a more accurate and inclusive *imago* theology.

Abbreviations

ALGNT	Friberg, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*
BDAG	Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*
BDB	Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*
CHALOT	Holladay, *Concise Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*
ESV	English Standard Version Bible
HALOT	Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*
KJV	King James Version of the Bible
LSJ	Liddell and Scott, *Greek English Lexicon*
LXX	Septuagint (from BibleWorks 9)
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version Bible, 1984 (unless otherwise noted)
RSV	Revised Standard Version Bible
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*
TGELNT	Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TWOT	*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
VUL	Latin Vulgate
WCF	Westminster Confession of Faith
WLC	Westminster Larger Catechism
WSC	Westminster Shorter Catechism

Prologue

"Come here, Rebecca."

She was oblivious to my voice. She was busily engaged in rocking back and forth, making a monotonous droning sound. In her right hand was a Little People's truck which she held by one of the wheels and which she was incessantly spinning. She looked intently at the rows of books on the shelves. Not the titles, just the fact that they stood in orderly rows.

"Come here, Rebecca."

She continued to ignore me, lost in her own world. I got up and walked over to her. "What are you doing, Honey?" Her actions indicated that she was completely unaware of my presence. I reached my hand down and stroked her hair. She did not notice. She was bent on spinning the truck, rocking, making the monotonous sound, and looking at rows of books for no reason I could tell. She looked busy but not happy.

I hugged her from behind. "Honey, come over here with Daddy." She stopped for a moment and turned her face approximately toward me, but I wasn't really sure that she saw me. She seemed to look past me. She must have been aware of me, though, because she reached out her unoccupied hand and placed it on my face. I felt a rush of joy at this expression of love and intimacy. But my feelings were premature. She had reached for my face only to push it away.

It was not an unusual day.

My daughter Rebecca was born with severe cognitive disabilities. That something was wrong was manifest by the onset of seizures when she was eight months old. At four years old she was still

diagnosed as having cognitive delays, but by time she was eight we realized that these were no mere delays. Rebecca would contend her whole life with her disabilities.

Sometimes Rebecca will look at me. Sometimes she will hug me. Sometimes she will even seek me out to sit by me. But not very often. And when it happens it is for a very short duration. For much of her life, Rebecca lives in her own world oblivious to my existence. The activities she busies herself with are not productive. Her undertakings are not a help; they simply cause more work.

Rebecca has no idea where her food and clothing comes from. She is helpless to do anything to care for herself; to get food or drink, to get dressed, to get washed, to use the toilet. She accepts all of these things without gratitude and without any discernible cognizance that they are provided by the love of others (most often her mother).

Meaningless, repetitive behavior. Existence in her own world without too much acknowledgment or regard for others. An expectation that she and all her needs will be taken care of without gratitude, and in fact with frequent complaining on her part.

The world calls people like Rebecca "special." I much prefer that label to "useless eater," the alternative proposed by the National Socialist Party of Germany in the 1930s and endorsed in concept today by Peter Singer who teaches ethics at Princeton University.

Rebecca is special to me, but it is not her condition that makes her special. She is broken. Utterly and profoundly broken. What makes her special to me is that she is my daughter and, dimmed and diminished by her disabilities as it may be, she is made in the image of God.

I see Rebecca's brokenness because she stands out as being unable to do for herself and others what other people can typically do. I don't see my own brokenness so easily because it's not very different from yours. We tell ourselves, perhaps even congratulate ourselves, that we are "normal."

But it occurs to me as I watch Rebecca . . .

I wonder if God sees me very much like I see Rebecca. Meaninglessly spinning things for no apparent reason, back and forth here and there, droning on incessantly, intently observing things that don't matter. Too busy for my Father. Too occupied in my own world to acknowledge his goodness, except sporadically, assuming that all the good things that come to me in life just appear. Too intently occupied with my affairs to listen to his voice except for a moment here or there. Too absorbed in my world to listen to his call to fellowship and intimacy, and seeking his face only to push it away.

Too self-focused to understand that he longs for my healing and wholeness. And yet . . .

He is patient with me in my brokenness, not rewarding me according to my ingratitude or obliviousness to him. He loves me because he's made me his son, and broken as I am, he sees in me his own image which he will restore.

That work was started and will be completed by what he did two thousand years ago. He sent his only-begotten Son to live with the consequences of my brokenness in a broken world. He was very busy while he walked among us, and yet he was never too busy for his Father, never too occupied with the world to acknowledge his Father's goodness; not employed with his own affairs, but doing the will of his Father. Finally, having been himself battered and broken on the cross, he rose from the dead for my healing, for my health, for my restoration. All while I was oblivious, ungrateful, powerless. Worse than that, while I was an enemy.

And that's where the similarity ends. I am powerless to do anything about Rebecca's condition. He is all-powerful to do something about my condition and Rebecca's as well.

1

The Problem and Its Setting

Introduction

This study was born out of a crisis of my own faith. When I was a divinity student at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia in the early 1990s I was required to take a biblical anthropology course titled *The Doctrine of Man* taught by D. Clair Davis. It was in this class that I was introduced to some of the complexities associated with the consideration of the doctrine of the Image of God. *That* mankind was created in the image of God lays on the surface of the text. *What* exactly it means for mankind to be made in the image of God has been the occasion for on-going reflection from the patristic period to the present day.

The course introduced me to the various historical approaches to and perspectives on in what exactly the *imago Dei* consists. Generally, these approaches can be summarized under three headings: 1) The *imago Dei* may be seen as something *substantive* in man, a God-like component or aspect of man (*analogia entis*) often presented as being manifested in those qualities which separate man from the animals (e.g., faculties of rationality, spirituality, self-conscious volition, morality, etc.). 2) The *imago Dei* may be seen in terms of man's *function* in the world. In this view Genesis 1:26b often is seen to be the epexegetical commentary on Genesis 1:26a. "And let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock,

over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" is the explanation of what it means for mankind to be made "in our image, and after our likeness." 3) The *imago Dei* may be seen in terms of *relationship*. Following Barth, many modern theologians have seen the *imago Dei* as consisting in the ability of human beings to create and maintain complex interpersonal relationships (*analogia relationis*).

Having been favorably influenced by Poythress' multi-perspectival approach to theology,[1] I saw value in all of these approaches to the doctrine and no reason to choose among them. These perspectives were complementary, not mutually exclusive.

I was ordained to the ministry in 1993. In 2001 my fourth child, Rebecca, was born. It would not be until she was about a year old that we would be told that she had severe developmental delays. When she was about five years old these were reclassified as disabilities. Over the next few years it became apparent that short of miraculous intervention on the part of God, Rebecca would never speak, never calculate a math problem, never attend college, never live on her own or exercise authority over any sphere of her life, would never marry, and would never be a friend to anyone (if being a friend is defined as consciously and sacrificially giving of one's self for the good of another).

One day while I was watching Rebecca play by herself (the only way she plays) a thought occurred to me that filled me with horror: *My daughter does not bear the image of God*. The thought was abhorrent to me; every fiber of my being told me that my conclusion must be false. But there was no denying my theological grid. If the *imago Dei* is to be found substantively in those things which separate us from the animals such as language and intellect; if it is to be found functionally in the ability to exert dominion over the environment and other creatures; or if it is to

[1] See Vern S. Poythress, *Symphonic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001).

be found relationally in creating and maintaining intricate human relationships, then it was evident that Rebecca's life did not fit these criteria.

As I began to pay closer attention to what I heard and read about the image of God, I discovered that my theological grid of exclusion was not unique. In his book *Receiving the Gift of Friendship* Hans Reinders reaches much the same conclusion: by traditional definitions those with severe cognitive disabilities are disqualified from the image of God.[2] Yet Reinders also notes that Christians who care for or come in contact with those with such disabilities are not willing to bar them from humanity, and will in fact include them either inexplicably (i.e., "Such people may not fit my definition of the image of God, nor my definition of what it means to be human, but they still are in the image of God and human") or by exception.[3]

While it is encouraging that Christians intuitively will not exclude these people from humanity, it is problematic that they include them either by making an exception for them in their theology or with no theological basis at all. One would think that the doctrine of the image of God should surely provide the basis for the inclusion of some of humanity's neediest members. In fact, however, in dealing with this doctrine theologians throughout history have frequently (though perhaps inadvertently) presented the doctrine in such a way as to exclude those with severe intellectual disabilities from participation in the *imago Dei*. Reinders notes,

> When I first began thinking about this problem [i.e., the humanity of those with cognitive disabilities], my intuitive response—as a Christian theologian—was that the Christian tradition could handle it easily because of the doctrine

[2] Hans S. Reinders, *Receiving the Gift of Friendship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 1–4.

[3] Ibid., 19–48.

> of the *imago Dei*. . . . When I started to explore this question, however, it soon became clear to me that the Christian tradition might have been one of the major sources of the commonsense view [that humanity is to be found in certain intellectual, stewardship, and relational abilities].[4]

The sacrosanct nature of human life as it is presented in the Scriptures rests upon mankind being made in the image of God. The first instance of a *lex talionis* in the Scripture prescribes the death penalty for the one who (unjustly) takes a human life. The reason given for the severity of the penalty is that mankind is made *ad imago Dei*: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has he made man" (Gen. 9:6).

The secularized modern world began to speak of the universality of human dignity and rights after World War II, but it did so (and continues to do so) using the unacknowledged borrowed capital of the *imago Dei* doctrine. John Behr notes that before the wide-spread acceptance of the *imago* doctrine, Greco-Roman culture had no notion of the universal rights, dignity, or worth of all human beings.[5] He questions whether a modern philosophical anthropology uncoupled from the biblical *imago* doctrine can long bear the weight of the affirmation of universal human personhood, dignity, worth, and rights. His concerns are well-founded.

Dismissing the creation account as a "Hebrew myth,"[6] Peter Singer feels free to question whether severely cognitively disabled human beings really qualify as "persons."[7] With the myth of the *imago Dei* disposed of, Singer maintains that the right to life does

[4] Ibid., 2.

[5] John Behr, "The Promise of the Image," in *Imago Dei Human Dignity in Ecumenical Perspective*, ed. Thomas Albert Howard (Washington, DC: The Catholic University Press, 2013), 15–37.

[6] Peter Singer, *Rethinking Life and Death* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 171.

[7] Ibid., 183, 201, 219–22.

not extend to all innocent human beings.[8] Indeed, it could be argued that if mankind is not made in the image of God, the *right* to life does not extend to *any* human being. Similarly, Steven Pinker has argued that the notion of universal human dignity is "stupid," the invocation of "obstructionist bioethics," and "hardly up to the heavyweight moral demands assigned to it."[9]

Few Christians would question whether all human beings are "persons" and universally are possessed of dignity, rights, and worth. But are all human beings created in the image of God? The reflexive answer to this question by Christians is "of course." Yet the way in which the doctrine of the *imago Dei* has been conceived and set forth throughout history may leave doubt that this is the case.

The *Imago Dei*: A Brief Historical Overview

Theology may be defined as the human echo of the divine voice. The Scriptures themselves were not given in abstraction, but rather were given in and to particular and specific historical contexts. Good hermeneutics requires the consideration of the context of a given book or passage of Scripture for sound exegesis.[10]

Theology likewise has a context. Theologians engage in the task of understanding and applying the Scriptures to their particular situation and setting. In this regard there is no "pure theology" if that phrase means theological formulation uninfluenced by the theologian's own setting. There is always a "hermeneutical spiral" between the text and the reader's context which affects, limits, and gives insights into what one concludes from a given text of Scripture.[11]

[8] Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 71–93, 123–90.

[9] Steven Pinker, "The Stupidity of Dignity," *The New Republic* (May 28, 2008): 28–31.

[10] See Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 60–65, 113–32.

[11] See Harvie M. Conn, *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic* (Grand Rapids, MI:

As the *imago Dei* is considered in the light of those with severe cognitive disabilities, it is important to note that until the twentieth century such people were not as visible, and perhaps not as prevalent, as they are today.[12] This is so not only because factors in the modern world may actually increase the risk of cognitive disability,[13] but also because before the advent of modern medicine many of the underlying or concomitant physical conditions of severe cognitive disability made it less likely for such people to survive childhood.

Even apart from underlying physical conditions, severe cognitive disability carries its own risk of mortality. In the wake of the Second World War, First World nations have seen a marked increase in both the number of labor saving devices and the amount of living space. Practically speaking, this means that parents of ambulatory severely cognitively disabled children are able to keep them in safer and more spacious confines, and are freed from many of the labor-intensive tasks that consumed their ancestors' time and attention. This has allowed them to be more attentive to the safety of their children than was possible in the past. The risk that cognitively disabled people can pose to themselves is seen anecdotally in the first encounter Jesus had when he came down from the mount of transfiguration: "'Lord, have mercy on my son,' he said. 'He has seizures[14]

Baker, 1988), 194*ff*; and J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 34–40.

[12] For a North American history of those with disabilities from pre-Columbian until present times, see Kim E. Neilson, *A Disability History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012).

[13] According to a report by the Centers for Disease Control, rates of Autism Spectrum Disorder rose from 1 in 150 in 2000 (birth year of subjects was 1992) to 1 in 88 in 2008 (birth year of subjects was 2000). It is unclear whether the increased rate is due to better diagnosis and reporting, but many believe that environmental factors have increased the actual rates. See Centers for Disease Control, "Autism Spectrum Disorders, Data and Statistics," http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html (accessed February 15, 2013).

[14] Σεληνιάζομαι; many who suffer from severe cognitive disabilities also have seizure disorders.

and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water'" (Matt. 17:15 NIV).

The Christian doctrine of the *imago Dei* traces its history back to the earliest Christian centuries. For much of the history of the church, theologians did not regularly encounter and thus did not much consider those with severe cognitive disabilities in their formulations of the doctrine. Not until the 1960s and the advent of the l'Arche communities did such people come to the attention of theologians in any notable way. It has only been in the last two or three decades that any thought has been given to a theology of severe cognitive disability.

What follows is a brief historical sketch of the contours of the development of the *imago Dei* doctrine. The purpose of the sketch is to set a background for this study. It is indicative, not exhaustive, delineating the ideas of the *imago Dei* that have widely shaped the doctrinal contours of the Christian community in the west.

For the purposes of this study it is important to understand, not the subtleties of well-known theologians with regard to this doctrine, but how these theologians have been understood by their interpreters, and the broad contours of the development of the *imago* doctrine. In the history of the church there have been lesser known theologians in the Renaissance period whose synthesis of an Augustinian substantivism and an Eastern telic theosis may have taken the discussion in a different direction, but the names of Ficino, Morandi, and Mirandola are not widely known, much less their theological reflections on the *imago Dei*.[15]

The Patristic Period

Although their understanding of the image of God is not monolithic, almost without exception the early church fathers expressed a substantive understanding of the doctrine of the *imago Dei*. "Sometimes the Fathers attribute the character of the 'image of

[15] See Middleton, 29.

God' to the Kingly office of mankind. . . . Sometimes the Fathers see the 'image' in the spiritual aspect of human nature, in the soul, or in the governing aspect of our nature. They have seen it in the mind, the higher powers, such as the intellect or human self-determination . . . ."[16] The patristic writers largely localized the *imago* in some component or aspect of man, focusing on those attributes which man shared in common with God and which distinguished man from the rest of the terrestrial creation. Most made a sharp distinction between "image" (*imago*) and "likeness" (*similitudo*),[17] though what attributes and characteristics they assigned to either word differed significantly.[18]

Irenaeus of Lyons (d. 200) believed that man was created in the image and likeness of God, that he retained the image of God after the fall, but that the likeness of God was lost and was being restored in the redemption of Christ. Irenaeus identified the image of God specifically with rational thought, freedom, and responsibility. He identified the likeness with sanctity which was lost in the fall.[19]

David Cotter notes that for Origen (d. 254), the "image" was given to man in his creation, but the "likeness" awaited the consummation for fulfillment, thus showing an eschatological orientation.[20] In sharp distinction from Irenaeus, Origen believed that the image was not to be found in any way in the physical frame of man: "We do not understand, however, this man whom Scripture said was made 'According to the image of God' to be corporeal. For the form of the body does not contain the image of God. . . . But it is the inner man,

[16] Christoforos Stavropoulos, *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, trans. Stanley Harakas (Minneapolis, MN: Light and Life Publishing, 1976), 25.

[17] Εἰκών and ὁμοίωσις respectively among the Eastern fathers.

[18] See David W. Cotter, *Berit Olam Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry in Genesis* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2003). "[Early] Christian commentators were very much taken with Genesis 1:26–27, the creation of humanity in the image and likeness of God. Customarily they distinguished between the two," 21.

[19] See Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 33–35.

[20] Cotter, 21.

incorporeal, incorruptible, and immortal, that is made 'According to the image of God.'"[21]

The great Cappadocian father Basil (d. 379) saw elements of the image of God functionally in man's ruling over the beasts of the field, and somatically in his upward gaze,[22] but even in these aspects of the *imago* the human intellect is the primary and prominent substance. Contemplating mankind's task to exercise dominion over the animals, Basil asks, "By the body or by the mind? . . . The flesh is weaker than that of many animals. . . . But in what is the ruling principle? In the superiority of reason. What is lacking in strength of body is encompassed by the employment of reason."[23] Basil distinguishes between image and likeness in the following way: "By our creation we have the [image] and by our free choice we build the [likeness]. . . . For I have that which is according to the image in being a rational being, but I become according to the likeness in becoming a Christian."[24]

Diadochus of Photice (d. 486) believed that "All men are made in God's image; but to be in his likeness is granted only to those who through great love have brought their own freedom into subjection to God."[25] Thus while the image of God is present in man by virtue of his creation, the likeness has an eschatological orientation even in the pre-fallen Adam.

[21] Origen, *Ancient Christian Commentary on the Scripture Genesis 1–11*, vol. 1, *Old Testament* ed. Andrew Louth (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 31.

[22] "God created you upright. He gave this special structure to you as distinct from the rest of the animals. . . . grazing animals are structured according to the things toward which they aim by nature. . . .[The sheep] has his head inclined downward looking at the stomach . . . since the fulfillment of the happiness of these animals is filling the stomach. But the human being['s] . . . head is lifted high toward things above, that he may look up to what is akin to him." St. Basil the Great, *On the Human Condition*, trans. Nonna Verna Harrison (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005), 61.

[23] St. Basil the Great, 35.

[24] Ibid., 43–44.

[25] Diadochus in Louth, 30.

For Gregory of Nyssa (d. 395), the "image" is what man presently is; the "likeness" is what man aspires to.[26] Here again man's full affinity to God has an eschatological orientation.

Severian of Gabala (d. *circa* 408) also saw a distinction between image and likeness. Diverging slightly from others before him, Severian saw in the image not a possession but a potential. The image of God consists in virtues that people are called to exhibit, and in exhibiting them they will show forth the image of God. Severian sees the likeness as associated specifically with man's dominion. He is thus one of the earliest theologians to propose a functional view, though of the *similitudo Dei* rather than of the *imago Dei*.[27]

Augustine of Hippo (d. 430) maintained that since God was the archetype of being, all of creation—everything that *is*—in some way reflects the nature of God. By simply being, creation participates in the nature of "*the* Being" (ὁ ὤν, Ex. 3:14 LXX). This participation is hierarchical, and so those creatures which are living bear greater resemblance to God than does the inanimate creation. Similarly, those living creatures which can perceive other living creatures are more like God than those which cannot. Pelikan notes that for Augustine too the apex of the image of God is found in reason:

> But among the creatures that perceived other creatures, those that were able to *reason* [italics added] about this perception were in a unique position in relation to the divine Origin and bore his image in a special way. Therefore "that which is rational [bears the likeness of the supreme nature] more than that which is incapable of reasoning." God has put his image into man so that he might be aware of him, ponder him, and love him. Man could not do this because of his sin, unless God "renewed and reformed" the image. And yet the rational

[26] Cotter, 21.

[27] Severian, *The Ancient Christian Texts Commentaries on Genesis 1–3: Severian of Gabala and Bede the Venerable*, ed. Michael Glerup (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 64–65.

> mind continued to be created "according to the likeness" of the supreme wisdom of God. Therefore it was incumbent on any "rational creature . . . to express by its voluntary activity this image that has been impressed on it by natural power." This it did when it applied all its power to "remembering, understanding and loving the Summum Bonum."[28]

Augustine is the first theologian to suggest that the *imago Dei* should be understood in terms of *imago trinitatis*. He sees a reflection of the Trinity in the constitution of man-made-in-God's-image, and thus posits that man is made in the image of God because there is within him a trinity-like intellect, memory, and will.[29]

Brian Brock, a theologian who works with people who are cognitively disabled, has pointed out that Augustine sees a strong association between rationality and what it means in essence to be human. He notes that "Augustine *wants* to say that all human life is valuable, but his basic account of God and humanity problematizes his achieving this aim. . . . [The most] worrying implication of such an intellect-focused account of the human . . . is that it appears to allow that those without intellect are sub-human."[30]

While there are numerous differences between the patristic writers with regard to the *imago Dei*, there are three similarities: 1) The patristic writers nearly uniformly make a distinction between the "image" and the "likeness," 2) although some patristic writers highlight a functional aspect of the *imago Dei*, all the patristic writers in one way or another identify the image of God substantively,

[28] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 3, *The Growth of Medieval Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 260.

[29] See Augustine, *The Trinity*, Books X and XIV, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991), 286–303, 370–94.

[30] Brian Brock, "Augustine's Hierarchy of Human Wholeness and Their Healing," in *Disability in the Christian Tradition A Reader*, ed. Brian Brock and John Swinton (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 71.

identifying it with something *in* man (and nearly always associated with rationality and intellect), and 3) nearly all of the patristic writers see an eschatological, unrealized, and potential telos that characterized man in his creation. This unfulfilled telos is a part of the make-up of the pre-fallen Adam; the eschatological orientation is particularly seen among the Greek fathers, a precursor to the theosis doctrine. Among them the image (εἰκών) was understood to be what man possessed statically and the likeness (ὁμοίωσις) was what he dynamically aspired to:

> This static description of the image of God in man is coupled with a dynamic description of the likeness of God in man. Man was created perfect, not in finality, but in the sense of perfect potentiality. He did not possess his end, union with God, but was rather called to it. Thus "[t]he perfection of our first nature lay above all in this capacity to . . . be united more and more with the fullness of the Godhead." As a result of this unrealized capacity, we can say that "man at his first creation was innocent and capable of spiritual development." Hence, according to the Eastern church, humanity's perfection was something it was called to realize fully. The image is "a gift within man but at the same time a goal set before him, a possession but also a destiny. . . ."[31]

The Medieval Period

Theologians throughout the medieval period largely retained the distinction between *imago* and *similitudo*. The western writers particularly put even more emphasis on man's intellect as the locus of the *imago Dei*.

Bede (d. 735) indicated that the *imago Dei* entails dominion (functional) which is possible because man excels in reason over

[31] Jonathan D. Jacobs, "An Eastern Orthodox Conception of Theosis and Human Nature," *Faith and Philosophy* 26 (5), (2009): 617–18.

the beasts. He states, "Put in this place of honor, if he does not understand that he should live well, he will be put on the same level as senseless creatures over which he has been placed, just as the Psalmist testified."[32]

Greatly influenced by Augustine, Bonaventure (d. 1274) emphasized man's intellect with regard to his fellowship and interaction with God, and what it means for man to be made in the image of God. He believed that by introspection it was possible for God to lead us "to the point of entering into ourselves, that is, into our minds in which the divine image shines."[33] Through one of the faculties of reason, specifically memory, it becomes evident that ". . . the soul itself is the image of God and His likeness . . . ."[34] For Bonaventure the image of God is conceived of substantively, and identified with something that is *in* man.

Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109) also stressed the importance of the mind. Although not dealing directly with the *imago Dei* he nonetheless speaks of apprehending the divine image by the intellect. Visser and Williams note that for Anselm "The most excellent created essence, the one that is most like God, is the rational mind. For the mind is the only creature that can remember, understand, and love itself—or better still, remember, understand, and love God—and is thus 'a true image of that essence who through his memory and understanding, and love of himself constitutes an ineffable Trinity.'"[35]

From his *Summa Theologica* Thomas has been interpreted to have maintained that the image of God is virtually identified with

[32] Bede, *The Ancient Christian Texts Commentaries on Genesis 1–3 Severian of Gabala and Bede the Venerable*, ed. Michael Glerup (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008)129. Bede refers to Psalm 38:12 (Vulgate).

[33] Bonaventura, *The Mind's Road to God*, trans. George Boas (Indianapolis: Bobs-Merrill, 1953), 22.

[34] Ibid., 23.

[35] Sandra Visser & Thomas Williams, *Anselm* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 195.

the intellect. While all people bear the image of God there is a hierarchy: "The first stage [of the image of God] is to be found in all men, the second only in the just [believers], and the third only in the blessed [saints]."[36] These stages have been widely understood to reflect a hierarchical sanctification of the intellect in which the image bearer is more or less cognizant of God, is more or less possessed of sound reason, and thus more or less reflects the divine image. With complete logical consistency (if questionable exegesis), Thomas maintains that since the *imago Dei* is located in the intellect, the image of God must be found more perfectly in angels than in men because by nature "angels are more perfectly intelligent than men."[37]

More recent writers like John Berkman[38] and Miguel Romero[39] have argued that Thomas did not exclude the *amentes* (severely cognitively disabled) from participation in the *imago Dei*. Their theses, and the arguments and evidence they put forth are intriguing and (in the case of Romero) convincing. However, the tide of Thomastic scholarship has generally seen Thomas as exalting the intellect above other considerations, and it is this understanding that has influenced the church's disposition toward the doctrine of the *imago Dei*.

The medieval theologians span a millennium and thus it would be difficult to say in any monolithic sense what they believed about the image of God. In general, however, it may be concluded that

[36] *Summa Theologica I.93.12* quoted in Hoekema, 36.

[37] Ibid.

[38] John Berkman, "Are Persons with Profound Intellectual Disabilities Sacramental Icons of Heavenly Life? Aquinas on Impairment," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 26 (1) (2013): 83–96. Berkman's discussion is helpful in providing a balance to Hans Reinder's conclusion that since severely cognitively disabled people cannot reach a telos of intellect in this life, Thomas excludes them from consideration. Berkman points out that for Thomas, the telos is in the resurrection. Reinders' understanding of Thomas is, however, the common one.

[39] Miguel J. Romero, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Disability and Profound Cognitive Impairment" (Th.D. diss., Duke University, 2012).

they maintained a substantive view of the *imago Dei*, identifying it with some component found within man. During this period there is an even greater emphasis on the intellect of man as the specific locus of the *imago Dei*.

The Reformation Period

The Protestant Reformation of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was originally rooted in practical and ethical matters. As the movement progressed, however, an unbridgeable chasm opened between Rome and the Reformers around the doctrine of justification and how people are made acceptable to God. This inevitably led to a reconsideration of the doctrine of the *imago Dei*.

Luther himself rejected the notion that the *imago* was to be identified solely with the intellect. Taking issue with the patristic version of the substantive view of the image of God, he nonetheless replaced it with an ethical substantive view, i.e., the image of God existed in original righteousness.[40] He pointed out that if the *imago Dei* was to be located in the intellect then Satan was more the image of God than any man.[41] Although Luther says that the image of God was lost in the fall, it is clear that he did not thereby mean that the image was completely obliterated.[42] Although not prominent in his theology, Luther maintained that the *imago Dei* has a telic and eschatological orientation. Even in the unfallen Adam, the *imago Dei* was a potential that was not yet fully realized.[43]

Luther's rejection of the intellect as the *imago Dei* seems to have been a polemic against the schoolmen, the intelligentsia of the day. It clearly was not a rejection of the patristic and medieval idea

[40] Martin Luther, *A Critical and Devotional Commentary on Genesis*, trans. John Nicholas Lenker (Minneapolis, MN: Lutherans in All Lands, 1904), 115–24.

[41] Ibid., 115. Luther seems to thus have profoundly disagreed with Thomas Aquinas that the angels were created *ad imago Dei*.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., 120.

that the intellect was necessary to the *imago*. In discussing severe birth defects with his table fellows, his disciple Dietrich recorded, "When someone asked him whether monstrosities of this kind ought to be baptized, he replied, 'No, because I hold that they are only animal life.'"[44]

Eight years later in a discussion in the same setting, the topic came up of a boy whose described symptoms may indicate a severe form of Prader-Willi syndrome: "In Dessau there was a twelve-year-old boy like this: he devoured as much as four farmers did, and did nothing else than eat and excrete. Luther suggested that he be suffocated. Somebody asked, "for what reason?" He [Luther] replied, 'Because I think he is simply a mass of flesh without a soul.'"[45]

Although Calvin maintained that the image of God was displayed in some ways in the body of man, it was to be primarily identified with the soul,[46] and the human soul was identified specifically with rational faculties. Thus the image of God was expressed by ". . . full possession of right understanding, when he had his affections kept within the bounds of reason . . . .[47] This image was deformed in the fall, but Calvin believed that the *imago* had not been lost.[48] *Contra* the patristic and medieval writers, Calvin saw the *imago* and the *similitudo* as synonymous.[49] For Calvin, the *imago Dei*, damaged by the fall, was being restored in Christ progressively. Although its full restoration awaited an eschatological *telos*,[50] Calvin's clear focus

[44] "Table Talk," LW 54:44–45 (1532) reprinted in Stefan Heuser, "Luther and Disability," in Brock and Swinton, 211.

[45] "Table Talk," LW 54:396–97 (1540) reprinted in Heuser, in Ibid., 214.

[46] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1:15.3.

[47] Ibid., 1:15.3.

[48] Ibid., 1:15.4.

[49] Ibid., 3:7.6.; John Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis 1–31*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2005), http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom01.vii.i.html (accessed February 16, 2013).

[50] See Hoekema, 46–48.

was on the *imago* as a present possession. For Calvin also, the image was conceived of substantively. He, like Luther, saw the image of God as something *in* man.

Unlike Luther, Calvin did not address disability in any direct way. Deborah Creamer points out, "Calvin tends to discuss issues of impairment . . . in ways that relate to all people (e.g., that none of us can clearly see or understand God's grace) . . . . He rarely talks about disability in and of itself, making it seem that he had little interest in disability either as a concept or as an experience."[51] In this regard, Calvin is not different from theologians prior to or contemporary with him. As theology is an intellectual endeavor, done with a view to engaging other intellects, there is usually little impetus for theologians to consider lack of intellect.

Ulrich Zwingli took a novel approach to the doctrine of the *imago Dei*. He saw the image of God in man in terms of a desire for justice. This image, distorted by the fall, is restored in Christ and seen in those who strive to live innocent and good lives.

> Some refer to [the image as] dominion over the creatures, that humans should preside over all, just as God does; others connect it to the mind. But I think this image and likeness is what we call the law (*ius*) of nature: "What you would have done to you, do to others!" This image is inscribed and impressed on our hearts. . . . Those who attend to justice, who seek God, who imitate God and Christ in innocence of life toward all as well as doing good to them in turn—these are the ones in the final analysis, who bear that ancient image of God, which has been cleansed and restored by Christ.[52]

[51] Deborah Beth Creamer, "John Calvin and Disability," in Brock and Swinton, 219.

[52] Ulrich Zwingli, *Reformation Commentary on the Scriptures of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, *Genesis 1–11*, ed. John L. Thompson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 44.

Zwingli's approach to the doctrine is notable for giving no consideration (and perhaps no credence) to the image of God in terms of a telos. For him, the *imago Dei* is something that was bestowed in man's creation, damaged in the fall, and restored presently in Christ.

Departing from Luther, the Lutheran theologian David Chytraeus' (d. 1600) expression of the doctrine more closely approached the Reformed doctrine:

> So while human beings ought to be a polished mirror and the express image of God, through the fall of our first parents we've become the devil's fright mask. And yet just as a mirror spattered with mud still renders some image, however obscure, so too in us do some marks of the traces of God remain even after the fall, and these are gradually given luster in this life by the Son of God, until the entire image of God is restored.[53]

As in the patristic and medieval periods, in the Reformation there was a divergence of opinion as to what the *imago Dei* consisted in. However, there was a certain commonality of trajectory: 1) there was wide agreement that the image and the likeness were synonyms and did not have two separate referents. 2) Although the reformers were beginning to broaden their consideration of what exactly the *imago* is, there was a residual tendency to locate the *imago Dei* substantively in the intellect. The doctrine of the *imago Dei* in this period is best understood in terms of a substantive view, viz. the image is something that is *in* man. 3) Among many of the Reformers there was an emphasis on the telic and eschatological orientation of the *imago Dei*. This seems to have been overshadowed, though, by the focus on the *imago Dei* as a present possession of even fallen man (Luther being the exception).

[53] David Chytraeus, *Reformation Commentary on the Scriptures of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, *Genesis 1–11*, ed. John L. Thompson)Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 51.

The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Old Princeton Seminary was the bastion of rigorous Protestant orthodox scholarship through the nineteen and early twentieth centuries. Her theologians thus represent a good pulse for the Protestant understanding of the *imago Dei* of that time.

From 1851 until his death in 1878, Charles Hodge was principal of Princeton Seminary. Though Hodge taught many disciplines at Princeton, he is best remembered as a systematic theologian. In his three-volume *Systematic Theology* Hodge discusses the image of God, summing up the discussion in this way: "[Man] is the image of God, and bears and reflects the divine likeness among the inhabitants of the earth, because he is a spirit, an intelligent, voluntary agent . . . ."[54] Hodge expresses a modified substantive view of the *imago Dei*, clearly identifying it in some way with intellect.

James Orr served as professor of theology and apologetics at Free Church College (now Trinity College) in Glasgow from 1900 until his death in 1913. In 1905 he published the book *God's Image in Man*, a compilation of addresses given for the Stone lecture series at Princeton Seminary in September and October 1903. In taking up the question of what exactly constitutes the image of God in man, Orr says, "The image of God . . . is a mental and moral image. It is to be sought for in the fact that man is a person—a spiritual, self-conscious being; and in the attributes of that personality—his rationality and capacity for moral life . . . ."[55] Orr proceeds to identify the image with rationality, specifically the rationality that separates man from the "lower animals." "It is the ground of man's capacity for rising to general truths, and of framing such higher ideas as infinity, eternity, God, duty, religion. This power, almost every psychologist will acknowledge, the animals do not possess. It

[54] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, reprinted 1982), 99.

[55] James Orr, *God's Image in Man* (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1905), 57.

belongs to that true, self-conscious rationality in which man is the image of God."[56]

J. Gresham Machen taught at Princeton Seminary from 1906 until its reorganization in 1929. At that time Machen withdrew to found Westminster Seminary with the expressed goal of carrying on the old Princeton tradition. Shortly before his death in 1936 Machen did a series of popular radio broadcasts entitled "The Christian View of Man." These were collected into a book that was published posthumously. Machen writes, "The 'image of God' cannot well refer to man's body, because God is spirit; it must therefore refer to man's soul. It is man's soul which is made in the image or likeness of God."[57]

Machen spoke of the image of God as consisting in man's personhood, freedom, and goodness. Perhaps most telling is the title of the chapter "God's Image in Man," which seems to indicate that Machen, like Orr, thought of the *imago Dei* as something located somewhere *in* man, and not man himself *as* the image.

As late as the early twentieth century, there is thus in evidence an increasing tendency to identify the *imago Dei* with intellect or rationality. During this time, however, there were also some lines of emerging theological thought which would eventually take the consideration of what it meant to be made in the image of God in a different direction.

Notable in this period is the seminal work of Geerhardus Vos. In a departure from traditional theological methods, Vos brought the discipline of biblical theology to the North American dogmatic landscape. This precipitated a slow but significant shift away from a systematic theological *ordo salutis* to a biblical-theological *historia salutis*.[58] The approach was marked by less emphasis on abstract

[56] Ibid., 64.

[57] J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian View of Man* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, reprinted 1984), 145.

[58] See Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology Old and New Testaments* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, reprinted 1975).

thought and philosophical methodology, and more emphasis on biblical grammatical-historical exegesis set in the context of a metanarrative. This and other influences led to an increased emphasis on an intertextual approach to Genesis 1:26–27, the consideration of historical contexts, and the use of cognate languages. These considerations have supplied grist for the theological mill as modern theologians attempt to grind out the ingredients for a doctrine of the *imago Dei*.

Karl Barth has been perhaps the most universally influential theologian since Friedrich Schleiermacher. His work on creation in *Church Dogmatics* represents a turning point in the consideration of the doctrine of the image of God.

Barth specifically rejected the idea that the *imago Dei* was to be found in man's intellect, or indeed in any "part" of man. In contrast to theologians before him who maintained a substantive or substantive/functional view of the image of God, Barth was the wellspring of the *relational* understanding of the image of God. He believed that the image of God was to be found specifically in the "I-Thou" relationship of confrontation. This "I-Thou" relationship exists within the Godhead ("I" because there is one God; "Thou" because this one God exists eternally in three distinct persons). The "I-Thou" relationship also exists in man ("I," in both men and women as human; "Thou" in both men and women as distinguished by gender; and in the distinction between God and mankind). Thus the image of God is not to be found in an analogy of being (substantive), but rather in an analogy of relationship.[59] For Barth, the *imago Dei* was not something that is *in* human beings. The image of God *is* mankind-in-relationship. The influence of Barth is evident in the thought of Stanley Hauerwas, John Swinton, Hans Reinders, Nancy Eiesland, and others doing theological work with regard to severe cognitive disability.

[59] See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 3:1 "The Doctrine of Creation" (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 176–88.

In more recent years biblical scholars such as D. J. A. Clines, Meredith Kline, J. Richard Middleton, and Catherine Beckerleg have sought to incorporate the discoveries of scholars in the field of Old Testament and ancient Near Eastern studies in the on-going discussion of the *imago Dei*. The watershed contribution of Karl Barth coupled with these newer approaches have had a notable effect on modern systematic theologians such as G. C. Berkouwer, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann, Herman Hoekema, Douglas Hall, Charles Sherlock, and Philip Edgcombe Hughes.

While there is a divergence of emphases in these later writers spanning the substantive, functional, and relational aspects of man in the image of God, two concepts commonly appear in all of them: 1) there is wide agreement that the use of the word צֶלֶם (cf. *imago*) does not allow for the exclusion of the human body from consideration of the doctrine of the *imago Dei*, and 2) modern theologians increasingly do not look for the image of God in some atomized component or aspect of man, but have a greater appreciation for considering the whole man with respect to the image of God.

Societal and Ecclesiastical Acceptance of Those with Disabilities: A Historical Overview

In seeing the *imago Dei* in substantive terms as something *in* man, in associating the image with those abilities that make mankind different from the animals, and generally identifying the image with the intellect, the contours of theology through much of the church's history has laid an unintended groundwork that could be construed as virtually excluding those with cognitive disabilities from being deemed full participants in humanity.

Moltmann has indicated what is at the root of the problem. Taking up the question "What constitutes the human being's likeness to God?" he delineates how theologians have tended to identify the *imago Dei* as some constituent part or component in man, either substantively (in the soul or intellect of man), formally (in the body

and upright posture of man), or functionally (in the dominion of man). He is also critical of Barth's relational identification of the image of God. He states,

> We find the starting point for all these answers in 'the phenomenon human being.' They all begin with characteristics which distinguish the human being from animals, and interpret whatever is specifically human about men and women in religious terms as their likeness to God. Likeness to God then means the human being's general relationship to God, which distinguishes him from the animals. But this point of departure is based on a false inference. The human being's likeness to God is a theological term before it becomes an anthropological one. It first of all says something about the God who creates his image for himself, and who enters into a particular relationship with that image, before it says anything about the human being who is created in this form.[60]

Hans Reinders points out that despite the recent acceptance by society at large of those who are disabled there is a definite "hierarchy of disabilities." Those who are capable of self-sufficiency, self-direction, and achievement (generally those with physical or mild cognitive disabilities) are regarded to be superior in the hierarchy to those who are not capable of those things (generally those with severe cognitive disabilities).

> . . . the hierarchy of disability reflects the hierarchy of moral values in our culture. People move upward on the ladder of cultural attraction because of what they are capable of achieving. . . . this hierarchy of moral values reflects a basic assumption about our human nature, namely that selfhood

[60] Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 220.

> [i.e., a self-consciousness] and purposive agency are crucial to what makes our lives human in the first place.[61]

The recognition of an implicit hierarchy is not limited to the typical or non-disabled population, but is evident even among that portion of the population that has disabling conditions in common. Anita Cameron who herself has multiple disabilities has noted, "There is an unspoken hierarchy in our community [i.e., people with disabilities], with well-heeled, well educated, good looking, clear speaking athletic types at the top and folks who are less able, poor, not so good looking . . . , less educated or intellectually challenged at or near the bottom. . . . Of all of the discrimination I've experienced, disability on disability discrimination is hardest to understand and deal with."[62]

The presence of such a hierarchy means that the worth of a person, in fact his or her right to be regarded as a participant in humanity, is contingent (although not often explicitly stated) upon what place in the hierarchy the individual is capable of achieving. Increasingly in the modern world a "moral taxonomy" (Reinders) is developing which includes in or excludes from participation in human dignity those with severe cognitive disabilities.

Eugenics in the United States and Germany

The Eugenics movement had its origin in the work of Sir Francis Galton. Eugenics was conceived to be the science of improving the human race through good breeding. Galton was the cousin of Charles Darwin, and he drew upon Darwin's work to develop his ideas. Despite Darwin's tip of the hat to God at the end

[61] Reinders, *Receiving the Gift of Friendship*, 27.

[62] Anita Cameron, "A Call to Action for the Disability Community to Come Together," *The Mobility Resource*, entry posted October 25, 2013, http://www.themobilityresource.com/the-disability-community-need-to-come-together/ (accessed October 31, 2013).

of *The Origin of Species*,[63] Darwin's natural selection was presented as a substitute for a Designer, and quickly became regarded as the cause for the emergence of all life, including human life, among intellectuals. God's existence was not denied, but he was relegated to the status of "irrelevant" for biology. Given the Scientific Revolution and its practical outworking in the emerging Industrial Revolution, and an increasing sense of progress and optimism, the development of the Eugenics movement was inevitable. Being at the cutting edge of progress, the United States embraced the "science" of Eugenics with vigor.

In 1919 William E. Kellicott, professor of biology at Goucher College, published a book entitled *The Social Direction of Human Evolution: An Outline of the Science of Eugenics*. Kellicott's work indicates that although Eugenics was largely focused on racial issues, there was also a goal of increasing the intelligence of the population.[64] It is important to note that for Kellicott and other eugenicists working in the U.S. the focus was on reducing the number of "idiots, imbeciles, and the feeble-minded"[65] in the future, and not on eliminating such people in the present. However, it is a short step from eliminating such people in the future to eliminating them in the present. The Eugenics movement in Germany in the 1940s eventually led to the cognitively

[63] Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (New York: Signet Classics, reprinted 2010), 459. *"There is a grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless life forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved."*

[64] See William E. Kellicott, *The Social Direction of Human Evolution An Outline of the Science of Eugenics* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1919), e-reader, under "The Sources and Aims of the Science of Eugenics."

[65] Ibid. Shocking as these terms sound to modern ears, they were technical terms in the day used for those with cognitive disabilities, and not intended to be insulting. They do, however, indicate a sense of superiority on the part of those who so designate other people.

disabled being labeled as "useless eaters" who took resources from society and returned nothing, and were thus targeted for systematic elimination.[66]

In 1921 Horatio Pollock published an article entitled "Eugenics as a Factor in the Prevention of Mental Disease" in the journal *Mental Hygiene*. Pollock begins the article by pointing out the enormous costs society bears—$200,000,000 annually, a huge sum in 1921—as a significant reason why society must strive to prevent cognitive disability in the future.[67] In keeping within the generally accepted ethical guidelines, Pollock does not suggest that those with cognitive disabilities should be eliminated. It is clear, however, that given the then (and now) current abilities of medical science, the only way to prevent cognitive disabilities in the future is to prevent those with such disabilities from being born, a likely factor in why Stanley Hauerwas has answered the question "Should we prevent retardation?" with a resounding "no."[68]

The Church's Support of the Eugenics Movement

Galton coined the term "eugenics" (good birth) in *An Inquiry into Human Faculty and Development* published in 1833.[69] The discipline remained largely theoretical until it was embraced in the United States by Charles Davenport, a man who came from a long

[66] See Richard Weikart, "The Specter of Inferiority: Devaluing the Disabled and 'Unproductive,'" and "Killing the 'Unfit'" in *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 89–102 and 145–62. See also Henry Friedlander, *Origins of Nazi Genocide From Euthanasia to the Final Solution*, (n.l.: Henry Friedlander, 1995). The title is somewhat misleading as the book in its entirety outlines the systematic exclusion, isolation, and murder of the handicapped.

[67] Horatio Pollock, "Eugenics as a Factor in the Prevention of Mental Disease," *Mental Hygiene* 4, 4 (October 1921): 807–12, e-reader.

[68] Stanley Hauerwas, "Suffering the Retarded: Should We Prevent Retardation?" *Journal of Religion, Disability, and Health* 8, 3/4 (2004), 87–106.

[69] See Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race*, (Washington, DC: Dialog Press, 2012), 12–16.

line of New England Puritan ministers. Davenport sought to escape the austerity of his religious upbringing by retreating into academia. Davenport pursued doctoral studies at Harvard, eventually teaching zoology at his alma mater and later at the University of Chicago.[70] It was Davenport who brought Eugenics out of the realm of the theoretical at the turn of the twentieth century.

With funding from the Carnegie Institute, Davenport was able to establish the Eugenics Record Office. A tireless advocate for "elevating humanity," Davenport persuaded the federal and state governments to institute programs of sterilization for "unfit" people.[71] The effectiveness of his efforts is evidenced in the case of *Buck v. Bell* adjudicated by the United States Supreme Court in 1927. Carrie Buck, a "feeble minded" woman, was institutionalized against her will, became pregnant in the institution and was being compelled against her will to be sterilized. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote the opinion for the eight judge majority:

> Carrie Buck is a feeble minded white woman who was committed to the State Colony . . . . She is the daughter of a feeble minded mother in the same institution, and the mother of an illegitimate feeble minded child. . . . The Commonwealth [of Virginia] is supporting in various institutions many defective persons who if now discharged would become a menace but if incapable of procreating might be discharged with safety and become self-supporting with benefit to themselves and society. . . . It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind. . . . Three generations of imbeciles is enough.[72]

[70] Ibid., 32–33.
[71] Ibid., 43–62, 87–124.
[72] Buck v. Bell 274 U.S. 200 (1927) quoted in Ibid., 120–121.

Partnering with Davenport, John Merriam, president of the Carnegie Institute, enlisted the aid of Harry H. Laughlin to spread the eugenics message abroad to Europe in the hope of stemming the flow of "unfit" immigrants at the source.[73] Less than a decade later, in 1933, Adolph Hitler became chancellor of Germany. Over the next ten years he would consolidate power, tap into a cultural and ideological meme taking the title of *Führer* ("leader"), and require an oath of personal fealty. The church in Germany was not immune to Hitler's jingoistic spell. A large segment of the church in Germany aligned itself with Hitler against the "godless Bolsheviks." Prostituting herself in service to the state, this segment of the church ". . . boldly called themselves the *Deutsche Christens* and referred to their brand of Christianity as 'positive Christianity.'"[74] Hitler used the church to his advantage, creating a *Reichskirche*, with Ludwig Müller being elected *Reichsbischof* over the church through political maneuvering. This new consolidated church was to be grounded in "love," Müller maintained, but the "love" of the *Deutsche Christens* had

> . . . a hard, warrior-like face. It hates everything soft and weak because it knows that all life can only then remain healthy and fit for life when everything antagonistic to life, the rotten and indecent, is cleared out of the way and destroyed.[75]

This philosophy dovetailed with Hitler's own. As early as 1929, Hitler had proposed that 700,000 of the "weakest" Germans be "removed" from society each year. In 1939 the T-4 euthanasia program was instituted to eliminate "life unworthy of life." The removal began in earnest, though mercifully not in the numbers that Hitler had hoped for:

[73] Ibid., 185–205.

[74] Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 151.

[75] Ibid., 173.

> In August 1939 every doctor and midwife in the country was notified that they must register all children born with genetic defects—retroactive to 1936. In September when the war began, the killing of these "defectives" began. In the next few years five thousand small children were killed.[76]

All totaled, some 200,000 disabled people of all ages were the objects of "mercy killing" by the Nazis before Hitler rescinded the policy in August of 1941. Even after that time, however, the killing of such people continued passively by withholding medical treatment, medication, or food.[77]

Not all of the church in Germany was party to these atrocities. The Theological Declaration of Barmen in 1934 distinguished the Confessing Church from the *Deutsche Christens* and repudiated the movement, including its denigration of those with disabilities. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Münster, Clemens August von Galen, called upon all Christians to actively oppose the killing of the handicapped.[78] But it should not escape notice that at least some segment of the church in Germany found little objectionable in "removing" those with cognitive disabilities for the good of society.

Martin Luther had rejected the notion that the intellect was the seat of the *imago Dei*, but he had made unguarded statements that would later be used by the Nazis to justify killing those with intellectual handicaps. Later Lutheran theologians continued to promote the idea that the image of God was substantive, something *in* man that could be observed and distinguished. That observable distinction was often set forth as those abilities that separate human

[76] Ibid., 354.

[77] Doris Zames Fleisher and Frieda Zames, *The Disabilities Rights Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 139.

[78] See Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, s.v. "T4 Program," http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/714411/T4-Program and s.v. "Blessed Clemens August, Graf von Galen," http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/223894/Blessed-Clemens-August-Graf-von-Galen (accessed February 25, 2013).

beings from animals. As the German *volk* longed for a return to the days of Germany's glory, they saw as an impediment to that goal a class of people in whom there were no observable abilities that distinguished them from animals.

It would be saying too much to claim that the contours of the doctrine of the *imago Dei* from the Fathers through the Reformation were at the root of the eugenics movement and some of the atrocities that it spawned. What can be said is that the doctrinal formulations, conceiving as they did the *imago Dei* as some component within man, left the church with scant defense for those who were evidently unable to contribute to society or even to their own care due to intellectual disability. Genesis 9:6 gives as the rationale for the prohibition against taking human life: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God he made man." If the *imago Dei* is conceived of as something to be found *in* mankind, and that something is not present, or is at least not discernible, there is little direct theological reason for not "removing" them if they become a burden to society. Luther himself had said that certain people were "masses of flesh without souls," a hitherto little known quote from the great reformer that the Nazis made (in)famous.

The atrocities of Nazi Germany brought the United States' flirtation with eugenics to a swift halt, but America had been the world leader in the eugenics movement from the late nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries. With aims little different than those of the *Deutsche Christens*, advocates of the Social Gospel embraced the eugenics movement in the interests of the betterment of American society.

Christine Rosen has demonstrated that it was a certain kind of minister in the U.S. who gravitated toward the eugenics movement in the early twentieth century, ". . . ministers anxious about the changing culture but also eager to find solutions to its diagnosable ills."[79] In 1917 Walter Rauschenbusch published his *Theology for the*

[79] Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American*

Social Gospel. Fifteen years before that he had warned an audience at Rochester Theological Seminary that immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were "introducing 'alien strains of blood' into American society."[80]

> . . . in 1926, hundreds of . . . clerics representing nearly every major Protestant denomination . . . preached eugenics across the country. . . . They grafted elements of the eugenics message onto their own efforts to pursue religious based charity in their churches and adopted eugenic solutions to the social problems that beset their communities. They explored the eugenic implications of the biblical Ten Commandments and investigated the heredity lessons embedded in the parables of Jesus.[81]

It bears repeating that eugenics as conceived by Galton and embraced by Progressives in the U.S. sought to control the population by making sure that certain kinds of people, among them the cognitively disabled, did not reproduce. Advocacy for the logical conclusion of eugenics as practiced by the Nazis (eliminating living persons who were severely cognitively disabled) was entirely lacking.

Foreshadowing the pushback of the Confessing Christians against the *Deutsche Christens*, the theological conservatives in the U.S. opposed the eugenic enthusiasm of their progressive and Modernist fellow clergyman, but seldom for any reason other than a suspicion and distrust of the extravagant claims of modern(ist) science. A consideration of the *imago Dei* with regard to those who were "severely retarded" was not in evidence.

Eugenics Movement (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), e-reader under "Fervent Charity."

[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid., under "Introduction."

THE DOCTRINE OF THE *IMAGO DEI* has been criticized for technically excluding people who suffer from severe cognitive disabilities. With such people in mind, Hammond reexamines the doctrine and sets forth a more accurate and inclusive understanding. This work concludes with implications and practical applications to help seminary professors, pastors, and church members include, embrace, and welcome people with severe intellectual disabilities and their families.

"A gift born out of much affliction of soul and mind. . . . In an age when the secular discussion of 'personhood' runs parallel to the theological discussion of *imago Dei*, Dr. Hammond gives us a careful, clear, and theologically detailed treatment of this vital doctrine for our day."

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WORLDVIEW & ETHICS
ISBN: 978-1-62995-313-7
54999
9 781629 953137