

The Image of God in Man: A Reformed Reassessment (3)

Rev. Angus Stewart

In the last issue of the *BRJ*, we critiqued the *traditional* view that the image of God may be spoken of in broader and narrower senses. According to this view, the *imago dei* in the narrower sense, consisting of knowledge, righteousness and holiness, was lost at the fall, but the *imago dei* in the broader sense, consisting of intellect, will, etc., was retained. We objected to this broader sense of the image of God on biblical, confessional and theological grounds, and noted how heterodox theologians exploit this faulty doctrine.¹⁰⁵

In our final installment on the image of God in man, we will defend the spiritual/ethical view of the *imago dei*, that it consists entirely of knowledge, righteousness and holiness, and so we will deny that unbelievers are the image of God in any sense. Since all three of the *Three Forms of Unity* and all three documents of the *Westminster Standards* define the *imago dei* in terms of these ethical virtues, we shall call this the *confessional* view.

(V) A Defence of the Confessional View

Beside the facile objection that this view of the divine image is Lutheran,¹⁰⁶ two charges against the confessional view may be made. First, it is alleged that three Scriptures teach that fallen man is in the image of God in some sense. Berkhof may be taken as representative of this view: “Notice that man even after the fall, irrespective of his spiritual condition, is still represented as the image of God, Gen. 9:6; I Cor. 11:7; Jas. 3:9.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵For example, one of the main arguments used by those in support of homosexual Canon Jeffrey John’s appointment as Bishop of Reading was that all men are in the image of God. In other words, since sodomites are in God’s image, they should not be excluded from high office in the church.

¹⁰⁶Bavinck seems to think that this automatically discounts it (*In the Beginning*, pp. 185-186). Similarly, Hodge speaks of the Lutheran view as the “opposite extreme” of the Socinians who made the *imago* consist solely in dominion (*Op. cit.*, p. 97; cf. also Laidlaw, *Op. cit.*, p. 149).

¹⁰⁷Berkhof, *Op. cit.*, p. 204. Van Oosterzee (*Op. cit.*, p. 375), Strong (*Op. cit.*, p. 315), Gentry (*Op. cit.*, p. 179 n. 8), G. H. Kersten (*Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], p. 174), John Murray (“Man in the Image of God,” in *The Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 2 [Great Britain: BOT, 1977], pp. 35-37) and Blocher (*Op. cit.*, p. 94) also appeal to these three texts.

The first of these, I Corinthians 11:7 reads,

For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

The argument for broader and narrower senses of the *imago dei* is this: "man" is here spoken of. This refers to all men without exception. Therefore, all men are the image of God, in some sense.¹⁰⁸ However, the meaning of this verse is clear to all who believe that a text ought to be understood in its context. Paul is speaking about prayer (vv. 4-5) in the church institute (v. 16). Thus I Corinthians 11:7 is not dealing with the heathen but the apostle's "brethren" (v. 2) who are imitators of him as he imitates Christ (v. 1). It is simply not true that "the head of every man is Christ" (v. 3), if this is applied to those other than those renewed in God's image in regeneration (Eph. 4:24, cf. I Cor. 11:1). Therefore I Corinthians 11:7 provides no support for a divine image in every man head for head. Thus some more astute scholars have only included Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9 in their proof texts for the broader/narrower view of the image of God.¹⁰⁹

Genesis 9:6 is the second text appealed to for an image of God in all men:

Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

The exponents of the traditional view are correct in their assertion that this text speaks of all mankind and not just believers. They are wrong, however, in stating that it says that all men are *now* in the image of God. The text simply does not say this. It merely reiterates Genesis 1:26-27 that God made man after his likeness and thus points us back to the sixth day of the creation week. At the fall Adam lost the *imago dei* and begat children in his image (Gen. 5:1-3), the image of the devil (cf. *Canons* III/IV:1-2). How then is the creation of man in the image of God a reason for the capital punishment of murders? Man, unlike all other creatures, was created in God's image as the crown of creation. Man as a rational-moral creature shows himself, unlike the beasts, to possess a constitution which is able to bear the divine image of knowledge, righteousness and holiness. Anyone who murders a human thus attacks God, for the divine image

¹⁰⁸Even this understanding of the text would, however, only teach that *males*, not females, are in God's image.

¹⁰⁹E.g., Laidlaw, *Op. cit.*, pp. 144-145.

was given to the human race at creation and not to apes or ants. Thus the confessional view, contrary to the claims of John Murray, does full justice to “the gravity of the offence of murder,” “the gravity of the penalty” and “the reason for the latter’s infliction.”¹¹⁰

James 3:9, the third verse, provides slightly more difficulty for the confessional view. David Cairns, who holds that “humanity in general” does bear the image of God, states, “The most direct reference [to all men bearing the divine image in the New Testament], and it is *oblique*, is James 3:9.”¹¹¹ Concerning the believer’s tongue, the inspired Scriptures read,

Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

The traditional position claims that “men” here is generic, including all men and not just believers. From the text alone, this would seem to be the case. Certainly the commentators seem to think so.¹¹² Furthermore, the verb *gegonotas*, translated “are made” in the *Authorized Version*, is in the perfect tense which indicates a past act with present effect. Thus the “men” in our text are those who were made and, hence, presently are, in the image of God. Clearly the explanation of James 3:9 cannot proceed along the same lines as that of Genesis 9:6, namely that the text speaks of Adam as created. Are not all men then in the image of God in some sense? Here two points need to be pointed out. First, the Greek (*tous anthropous tous kath homoiosin theou gegonotas*) translated “men, which are made after the similitude of God,” literally speaks of cursing “the men, the ones made after the similitude of God,” that is “the made-after-the-similitude-of-God men.” The text does not say that all men are in God’s image. In itself, the phrase could be universal, referring to all men head for head, or restrictive, referring to those men, and those alone, who have been regenerated and, therefore, are the image of God. Second, the Scripture’s overall teaching

¹¹⁰Murray, *Op. cit.*, p. 36.

¹¹¹Cf. Hall, *Op. cit.*, p. 218 n. 24; italics mine. Hall also holds that the broader sense of the *imago dei* is a “marginal” idea in the Bible’s teaching on the subject (p. 218 n. 24).

¹¹²James B. Anderson in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament on James* (3:9) writes, “the *imago dei* is not toally destroyed.” From this erroneous view of the image of God, he denies *total* depravity (that all men are completely evil in will and intellect) holding merely to *partial* depravity stating that “there is no part of our being which is not in some degree infected by sin” (*The Epistle of James* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976], p. 146 and n. 31). Thus Anderson, like Timothy Ware and Harry Boer, uses the alleged broader sense of the *imago dei* deny total depravity.

and the context must determine which of these two are being spoken of. We have seen that the Bible supports the restricted sense and a careful reading indicates that the context does too. James 3:1 raises the issue as to who should be teachers (*didaskoloi*) in the churches. Christians must be “perfect” (*teleios*; v. 2) in their words (vv. 2-12) and “wise” (*sophos*; v. 13) in their deeds (vv. 13-16), and certainly teachers must be thus qualified. Chapter 4 tells us directly that there were “wars” and “fightings” in the churches (v. 1) and pride in their midst (vv. 5-10). So bad was it that these “brethren” were *speaking* “evil one of another” (v. 11) and so “judg[ing] another” (v. 12). Thus James 3:9 tells us that we must not curse *our brethren* who were created, and therefore are, in the *imago dei*.¹¹³ Thus we can safely conclude that those in the image of God in James 3:9 are believers in the churches “of the twelve tribes scattered abroad” (1:1).¹¹⁴

The second charge against the confessional view is that, unlike the traditional view, it does not see in the image of God an expression of the “mannishness of man,” to use Francis Schaeffer’s phrase. According to James Orr, the image of God is “determinative of the Biblical idea of man.”¹¹⁵ Reymond sees the divine image as stating the difference between men and beasts.

The Bible’s answer to the questions, “Is mankind distinct from all other animate life, and if so, in what way?” may be framed in one sentence: “Man, and man alone, is the very image of God (*imago Dei*).”¹¹⁶

Berkhof goes further, using the *imago* to express man’s relationship both to God and animal life:

The doctrine of the image of God in man is of the greatest importance in theology, for that image is the expression of that which is most distinctive in man and in his relation to God. The fact that man is the image of God distinguishes him from the animal and from every other creature.¹¹⁷

¹¹³Thus the meaning of James 3:9 is similar to I John 4:20.

¹¹⁴Thus, contrary to John Murray, referring those “which are made after the similitude of God” (James 3:9) to the godly is anything but “arbitrary” (Op. cit., p. 37). It is the traditional view which pays no regard to the context.

¹¹⁵Orr, *Op. cit.*, p. 54.

¹¹⁶Reymond, *Op. cit.*, p. 425.

¹¹⁷Berkhof, *Op. cit.*, p. 206.

One cannot deny the attractiveness of a view of man's being in the divine image that enables us, in one pregnant phrase, to present man's place in the world vis-à-vis God and beasts. Certainly this language has greater power and poignancy than speaking of man as a "rational-moral creature."

Nevertheless, since, as we have seen, the Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions know nothing of the broader sense of the divine image, this apparent gain will have to be forfeited lest other, greater losses accrue. Yet we hasten to add that the confessional view of the *imago dei* does not at all deny man's unique place in the universe. It merely does so *in different terms*. The same *Belgic Confession* which defines the divine image in terms of spiritual virtues (XIV) declares that God gave "unto every creature its being, shape, form and several offices ... for the service of mankind, to the end that man may serve his God" (XII). Here we have God, man and all creatures related without any reference to the wider aspect of the *imago dei*. After limiting the image of God to man's original righteousness (III/IV:1), the *Canons of Dordt* have no difficulty in speaking of fallen man still as a man. He consists of body and soul (II:1), possessing understanding, heart, will, affections and mind (III/IV:1) and capable of reproduction (III/IV:2). Moreover, fallen man still has a conscience. He knows that God is and that certain actions are good and others evil. He can, to a certain extent, understand natural things, such as the arts and sciences. He even realizes the benefits of civil order (III/IV:4). Man remains man possessed of the constitution of man, still a rational-moral creature, natural and earthy (I Cor. 15:44-45). Neither the wider sense of the image of God nor common grace are necessary for these things. Thus the confessional view of man, without recourse to the *imago dei*, can, with Schaeffer, insist on the mannishness of man, and, with Calvin, on the importance of the sciences and the liberal arts.¹¹⁸

Fallen man is still man, but he is a man who bears the *imago diaboli*. Redeemed man is also man, a man who bears the *imago dei*. Both believing and unbelieving men are necessarily imagebearers but they differ regarding the one whose image they bear. For one it is God; for the other it is Satan. Both believing and unbelieving men play, marry, procreate, govern, use tools, work, study, think, will, speak, etc. But they do so out of two radically different internal principles, in the service of two totally opposed masters and for two completely different goals, at least in so far as the regenerated saint acts in accordance with his new nature. The wicked hate God from the heart and serve the devil, pressing all into the service of sin and selfishness. Thus they image their father the

¹¹⁸Calvin, *Institutes*, pp. 53-54 (1.5.2), 112 (1.11.12).

devil. The righteous, in accordance with their degree of sanctification and by God's grace, serve the Most High God seeking His glory and not their own. In this way they image the glory of their Father in heaven and are holy as He is holy (I Peter 1:15-16). Thus one must agree wholeheartedly with Anthony Hoekema: "the most important thing about man is that he is inescapably related to God."¹¹⁹ But with the confessional view of the divine image the unbeliever is always related to God *as a rebellious sinner* who abhors His Maker and is "wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil."¹²⁰ God hates him in His eternal decree of reprobation, in time and in his everlasting punishment (Rom. 9:13). Always Jehovah witnesses in the sinner's conscience that he is guilty and condemned and that he stands exposed to the wrath of God. Fallen man's enemy, the Almighty Triune God, is His Creator, Governor, and Judge, the One before whom he always stands naked and guilty. As Hoekema said, even *fallen* man is "inescapably related to God."

(VI) The Image of God in its Theological Relationships

Having established the confessional view and answered the objections to it, it only remains to relate the image of God to those Scriptural and theological ideas with which it is most intimately connected. We shall start with sovereign, particular grace. This was the motivation for this article's position, as it was for Luther, Bayne, Herman Hoeksema, Homer Hoeksema and others.¹²¹ The image of God is a completely ethical category and not in any sense ontological; it consists of spiritual graces not of human faculties.¹²² This fits perfectly with the spiritual/ethical view of the fall held by orthodox Protestants. Adam, the federal head of the whole human race, was created after God's image. At the fall, he lost God's image completely and partook of the image of the devil, totally and in all his faculties.¹²³ All his descendants were begotten in this state (cf. Gen. 5:1-3). Only in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus are the elect recreated in the divine image; unbelievers are not in the image of God in any sense. The reprobate will forever bear the *imago diaboli*, even in Hell. There is no mitigating or

¹¹⁹Hoekema, *God's Image*, p. 4.

¹²⁰*Heidelberg Catechism* Q 8.

¹²¹Luther, *Op. cit.*, pp. 60-61; Bayne, *Op. cit.*, p. 361; Herman Hoeksema, *Op. cit.*, p. 207; Homer Hoeksema, *Op. cit.*, pp. 433-434. Our view also seeks to be explicitly Scriptural (cf. Perkins, *Op. cit.*, pp. 150-151) not philosophical.

¹²²Cf. *Canons* III/IV:16; III/IV:R:2-3.

¹²³It is interesting that man, the image of God, fell when Satan tempted him to eat the forbidden fruit in order to be "*like God* knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5; literal reading).

limiting factor of the image of God in a broader sense. Just as there is no common grace for all men, so there is no image of God in all men. This means that the divine image of pre-fall Adam is equivalent to Adam's *original righteousness*. The image of the devil which replaced the image of God at the fall is equivalent to *total depravity*. The image of God recreated in regeneration is equivalent to the *new man* (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). Thus while the traditional view of the effects of the fall on the *imago dei* says that the image of God was lost in its narrow sense but retained, though weakened, in its broader sense, the confessional view highlights *the greatness of the fall*. All these wondrous gifts were lost and mankind was plunged into the depths of misery and woe through God's curse.

Instead of a gift common to all, the recreation of the image of God in man is only wrought in the elect. This must be sovereign as the work is a spiritual *creation* (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) and the creator is the *Triune God*, as in the case of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve (cf. "us" and "our" in Gen. 1:26). The gift of the divine image, merited by Christ at the cross, is according to God's foreknowledge (or eternal love) of the believer and His decree of election (Rom. 8:29). The effectual call (v. 30) serves the child of God's progressive imaging of the Son (v. 29) which is perfectly realized in our glorification in the new heaven and the new earth. Then the sons of God (v. 21) will be conformed to the image of their elder brother, the firstborn, even Christ (v. 29), a far more glorious image than that given at the creation of Adam (Gen. 1:26-27).¹²⁴ Here again we see the inseparable connection between sonship and the *imago dei*.¹²⁵

The divine image is given in regeneration (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).¹²⁶ But the *imago dei* is not a once-for-all gift; it is also progressive and it implies a calling. Those created in God's image (Eph. 4:24), Paul goes on to say, must be imitators of God, as dear children (5:1). The image of God is a gift which implies a command: "You are created after God's image. Therefore image Him." Those who are God's image must and do image Him. Thus "image" is both a noun and

¹²⁴ The third of the three parts of Philip Hughes, *The True Image: The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ*, deals with Christ as the image of God as does Herman Ridderbos, though more briefly, in his *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard De Witt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, repr. 1992), pp. 68-78.

¹²⁵ The children of darkness, who partake of their father's image, have none of these blessings but oppose the children of light at every point. However, the antithesis is first of all within the believer between the old man and new man (Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9-10) involving the struggle to walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh (Eph. 4:25ff.; Col. 3:5-9, 12ff.).

¹²⁶ Cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, p. 601 (3.3.9).

a verb. Sanctification is viewed as increasingly imaging Christ (II Cor. 3:18), the image of God (4:4). This mighty work is wrought by the Spirit of the Lord (3:17-18) through the preaching of the gospel (vv. 6, 8). The lives of God's image-bearers are not static but dynamic involving more and more conformity to Christ.

The believer grows in knowledge, holiness and righteousness, the three elements in the divine image identified for us by Scripture. He increasingly knows the true and living, Triune God with that deep, satisfying knowledge of love (*knowledge*). He more and more consecrates himself to the Lord and separates himself from evil (*holiness*), walking in conformity to the law of God from the heart (*righteousness*). These spiritual gifts may be summarized in *the* gift: love. Anthony Hoekema is right; "love is central in the image of God."¹²⁷ Traditionally the Reformed faith has also emphasized spiritual freedom in connection with the image of God.¹²⁸ Those who possess knowledge, righteousness and holiness have a godly will which desires to do the good, whether perfect but fallible before the fall, opposed by the old (and dethroned) nature in the regenerate, or perfect and infallible in the intermediate state or in the new world.

In the three virtues given by the inspired apostle (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10), we can easily see the threefold office of the believer. The knowledge of God is necessary for the believer as *prophet*.¹²⁹ "Holiness to the Lord" is the motto of a *priest* who has access to God and knows that all he is and has belongs to Him. Righteousness is the vital qualification of a *king* who rules in the fear and the name of the Lord and judges according to His Word.

All of this sheds light on the covenant of God with Adam before the fall and, hence, with the covenant of grace. Since Adam possessed these spiritual qualities and occupied the threefold office, he was undoubtedly in fellowship with God before the fall. Jehovah delighted in and communed with His imagebearers, Adam and Eve. It was His custom to walk with them in the cool of the day (Gen. 3:8). This view of the covenant as fellowship, even fellowship reflecting the inter-Trinitarian relations in the Godhead, is supported by the allusion to the Trinity in Genesis 1:26. The Father created man through the Son and by the

¹²⁷Hoekema also writes, "If it is true that Christ perfectly images God, then the heart of the image of God must be love. For no man ever loved as Christ loved." Rightly, he appeals to Eph. 5:1-2 (*God's Image*, p. 22 and n. 17).

¹²⁸E.g., Heppe, *Op. cit.*, pp. 238-250; Luther, *Op. cit.*, p. 65; Herman Hoeksema, *Op. cit.*, pp. 211-213.

¹²⁹This is the way the image of God ought to be used to combat the "Christian" anti-intellectualism of many in our day, rather than Gordon Clark's use of the *imago* in this respect.

Spirit that man might commune with the Triune God in love.¹³⁰ As Herman Hoeksema puts it,

Man was made after the image of God, in spiritual perfection, in true knowledge of God, righteousness and holiness ... *therefore*, he stood in covenant-relation of friendship to his Creator, His friend-servant, to love Him with all his heart and mind and soul and strength.¹³¹

Furthermore, two of the creation ordinances directly support this covenantal view of Adam's life. First, the Sabbath (2:1-3) speaks of our joyous rest and repose in the living God. Second, bisexual monogamous marriage (vv. 21-25), the earthly symbol of the union between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:22-33), speaks of the intimacy of fellowship with Jehovah. The I-Thou relationship, between God and His children and between His covenant children mutually, results from man's being in the image of God. This is a far more concrete and rich view of man as the *imago dei* than the abstract discussions of man's "personality" and "transcendence" over lesser creatures presented by many modern authors.

This view of God's covenant with Adam as fellowship (made possible by God's creating Adam in the *imago dei*) involves a criticism of the conception of the covenant of works as held by many. Since man was *created* in the image of God there never was a time before the fall, no matter how brief, when he was not in a covenant relationship with God. The covenant of works scheme, on the other hand, presents the covenant as being set up a short time after the creation of Adam and Eve by means of the command to them to eat of all the trees of the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16-17).

Covenant fellowship with God, who is spirit (John 4:24), is primarily enjoyed by man in his soul rather than in his body. Also knowledge, righteousness and holiness are qualities of the soul. After all, what is a knowledgeable body? Nevertheless the Reformed faith has rightly noted that *man*, and not merely

¹³⁰Fellowship is the true *vestigium Trinitatis* in man over against Augustine's identification of the vestige of the Trinity in the *imago dei* in man's memory, intellect and will (cf. David J. Engelsma, *Trinity and Covenant*, unpublished Masters thesis for Calvin Theological Seminary, 1994, pp. 94-96).

¹³¹Herman Hoeksema, *The Christian and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Sunday School of First PRC, 1940), p. 9; italics mine. Similarly, Bavinck writes, "God created man according to his own image in true knowledge, righteousness and holiness *so that* he would know Him rightly, love Him and live eternally with Him in his fellowship" (*Psychology*, p. 82; italics Bavinck's).

man's spirit, was created after the image of God.¹³² How is this to be understood? Cocceius sees the body as the vessel or implement of man's soul.¹³³ Similarly, according to Turretin, the "image shone in the body not so much formally as consequently and effectively."¹³⁴ Bavinck writes along the same lines:

The body is not a prison, but ... our earthly dwelling (2 Cor. 5:1), our organ or instrument of service, our apparatus (1 Cor. 12:18-26; 2 Cor. 4:7; 1 Thess. 4:4), and the "members" of the body are the weapons with which we fight in the cause of righteousness or unrighteousness (Rom. 6:13).¹³⁵

The Reformed faith is clearly in accord with the Bible's teaching. The saint's body, as well as his soul and spirit, is an object of the divine work of sanctification (1 Thess. 5:23). The Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 6:19). Therefore, he must glorify God in his body and in his spirit (v. 20). The apostle Paul, after his doctrinal exposition of the faith in Romans 1-11, opens his practical section (chapters 12-16) with these words,

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your *bodies* a living sacrifice, holy [*holiness*], acceptable unto God [*righteousness* is necessary here], which is your reasonable service [*knowledge* is involved here] (12:1).

Whereas prior to his conversion, the believer used his body and its members in the service of sin, imaging the devil, now the believer must reflect the glory of his Father in heaven (cf. Rom. 6:12-13, 19; 7:5). Thus while the contents of the *imago dei* are qualities of the regenerate man's spirit, man images God in both body and soul. Not only will we be spiritually pure at death or Jesus' return, but on the last day our bodies will bear the perfect image of Christ's glorious body (1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:21).

The element of righteousness in the *imago dei*, with its related idea of kingship, is at the heart of the idea of the godly man's dominion over the created order mentioned with the very first reference to man's creation in the divine

¹³²E.g., Bavinck, *In the Beginning*, pp. 186-195, esp. 191-192.

¹³³Heppe, *Op. cit.*, p. 232.

¹³⁴Turretin, *Op. cit.*, p. 465.

¹³⁵Bavinck writes later, "It is always the same soul that peers through the eyes, thinks through the brain, grasps with the hands and walks with the feet" (*In the Beginning*, p. 192).

image (Gen. 1:26f.). The Cocceian strain in Reformed theology expressed it perfectly: the image of God and dominion are related to one another in that the latter is the *consequence* of the former.¹³⁶ The Triune God (v. 26) appointed man as His king over the created world to rule it for Him according to His righteous law thus consecrating it to the Most High.¹³⁷ This Adam did in caring for the garden (work; 2:15),¹³⁸ naming the animals (lordship over the brute creation; v. 19) and loving and ruling his wife (vv. 20-25) in fulfillment of his headship over her (I Cor. 11:7). He walked with God (Gen. 3:8) and kept His law, loving God and his neighbour. He also obeyed the prohibition not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:16-17).

Through the body, man was able to fellowship with his wife also in the way of sexual intercourse, in obedience to the dominion mandate to “be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth” (v. 28). Only in the way of bearing children would Adam and Eve fulfill their calling to “subdue” the earth and “have dominion” over the creatures of land, sea and air (vv. 26, 28) for, though they were placed in Eden, their horizons were to be cosmic, no less than the entire earth.

Does the creation mandate (also called the dominion mandate or the cultural mandate) remain in force today? Christian Reconstructionist, Ken Gentry answers in the affirmative: “the Cultural Mandate ... remains in effect after the entry of sin.”¹³⁹ He provides two arguments for his position. First, subsequent revelation teaches that man developed culture. Second, “the Creation Mandate is specifically repeated in Scripture.” He cites Genesis 9:1ff., Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2:5-8 and notes other biblical allusions.¹⁴⁰ In this Gentry is undoubtedly correct—man *has* developed culturally and God *does* command man to rule the earth—but the lines must be drawn somewhat differently from his presentation. First of all we must be antithetical. Unbelievers rule over the creation in the service of Satan and sin. This is not true biblical dominion for not only does God command man to subdue the world but man must do this *for God’s sake*. Like the ungodly, God’s friends, created in His own image, also rule over the

¹³⁶Heppe, *Op. cit.*, pp. 237-238. Christian Reconstructionist, Ken Gentry also has the relationship right: “*Because man is the image of God*, he has the capacity and responsibility for dominion” (*Op. cit.*, p. 179; italics mine). Gentry, however, wrongly declares that “even fallen man is in the image of God, although it is a fragmented and corrupted image” (p. 179 n. 8).

¹³⁷Man’s dominion was not and never will be absolute; it is always under God and derivative.

¹³⁸Blocher sees in the command to keep (Hebrew, *shamar*) the garden the Biblical basis for private property (*Op. cit.*, pp. 120-121), more clearly enunciated in the eighth commandment.

¹³⁹Gentry, *Op. cit.*, p. 180.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 180-182.

creation, but their motivation, standard and goal (in so far as it is according to their new natures) is godly. They alone properly exercise dominion. Though both groups do many of the same things formally, their purposes and masters are radically opposed to each other. The believer images God in exercising dominion over the creation for God's sake but the reprobate, who is in the image of the devil, reflects his father in all his cultural activities. The question is not, What did the man do, build, cultivate, etc.? Rather the question is, Did he do it to glorify the Lord of heaven and earth in the service of His kingdom? or, Did he do it to serve himself and sin? God's image-bearers effect godly dominion; Satan's image-bearers effect ungodly dominion. Thus while redeemed man is at the apex of the created order, fallen man is its nadir (ethically speaking).

Not only do we have to distinguish between the *agents* who exercise the dominion (only the godly can obey the command to rule the creation for God's sake) but we must also consider the *extent* to which this godly dominion will be realized in this world prior to Christ's return. Christian Reconstructionism holds that Christians will progressively dominate the world (civil government and law, economics, industry, property, education, etc.) before Christ's second coming, but is this biblical?¹⁴¹ Christ is the "Son of man" crowned "with glory and honor" possessing "dominion over the works of [God's] hands" including "the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air and the fish of the sea" in Psalm 8, as Hebrews 2:5ff. teaches. Christ's sons (vv. 10, 13) and brethren (v. 11), the church (v. 12), possess and rule all things in Him. *Now, spiritually*, God "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). We have this dominion principally and definitively and we exercise it to the extent we are able in the here-and-now of this world. But we do not and will not govern all or most or much of the creation for Christ's sake prior to the end of the age.¹⁴² Gentry should have read Hebrews 2:5 more closely, for the dominion given to the believer in Christ is that of "*the world to come*, whereof we speak." Christian Reconstructionism's progressive dominion in this world's history is a myth. The church is always a remnant consisting mainly of the foolish, weak and base with few of the wise, noble and mighty in her membership (I Cor. 1:26-28) so that God alone might be seen to be her strength and thus receive the glory (vv. 27-31). According to the apostolic teaching in Romans 8:20-25, the

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 182.

¹⁴²Speaking of the extent of the dominion now exercised by fallen man, Luther writes, "We retain the name and the word 'dominion' as a bare title, but the substance itself has been almost entirely lost" (*Op. cit.*, p. 67).

creation shall only be liberated at the manifestation of the sons of God, that is, in the next world. Fernhout expresses it in earthy terms:

The whole creation groans, is frustrated, because it can't reach fulfillment. It can't live up to its God-ordained intentions because the ones who are supposed to be subjecting it are bungling in ungodliness, mincing around with false gods.¹⁴³

Fernhout proceeds to give a concrete example in terms of Canada:

Canada, a creature, is frustrated when those subjecting it, led by governments federal and provincial and corporations multi-national, go grasping after her resources (such as oil), purely in terms of cold, fleshly cash rather than seeing them as creatures to be used to reveal and give glory to [God]. And this creation longs to see the sons of God—you and me! For the sons of God will know how to bring the creation to its fulfillment. Because they are motivated by the Spirit, they will know how to subject the creation in such a way that there is righteousness, life and restful peace.¹⁴⁴

This remains “a vision of hope” (vv. 24-25) for the full realization of our adoption, including the resurrection of the body, waits for the last day (v. 23), but even now the adoption papers “are already signed.”¹⁴⁵ Our dominion presently is primarily definitive and spiritual (cf. I Cor. 3:21-23). Only at the last day will we enter into it fully. Yet now we must govern that which we have in such a way as to image God until the day Christ returns to renew the world so that “the earth shall be filled with the *knowledge* of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14). In the mean time we live hopefully and energetically looking “for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth *righteousness*” (II Peter 3:13) when the new Jerusalem “shall be *holiness* unto the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 14:21). Thus instead of the Greek goal of a perfect soul in a perfect body, God’s goal or purpose (*telos*) is His glory in Jesus Christ through the new humanity in His image ruling over the universe to His praise. These are the lines along which the image of God in man can be developed in support of a truly Reformed worldview.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³Fernhout, Op. cit., p. 24.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 24-25.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁴⁶Implications for ecology also may profitably be drawn from this too.

One point remains to be made. The image of God in man is not something solely, or even primarily, individual; it is corporate. Here we need to go back to the Bible's first reference to the divine image. The whole of God's people, Adam and Eve, were said to be "man" created in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27). The complete impress of the divine image could not be borne merely by an individual; it required the whole elect race.¹⁴⁷ Bavinck expresses it well:

The image of God can only be displayed in all its dimensions and characteristic features in a humanity whose members exist both successively one after the other and contemporaneously side by side ... Only humanity in its entirety—as one complete organism, summed up under a single head, spread out over the whole earth, as prophet proclaiming the truth of God, as priest dedicating itself to God, as ruler controlling the earth and the whole of creation—only it is the fully finished image, the most telling and striking likeness to God.¹⁴⁸

Herein the richness of the fellowship within the Trinity is reflected and the wonder of the covenant of grace. This concept is similar to the catholicity of the church which catholicity God uses to reflect His own multifaceted grace and glory. The new humanity of all nations, tongues and cultures, male and female, black and white unites in reflecting the brilliant light of the Triune God.

We are now in a position to present a full definition of the image of God in man. The image of God in man is *that creaturely likeness and reflection of the Triune God in the souls, bodies and lives of His believing children consisting in knowledge, righteousness and holiness enabling covenant fellowship with Him and His people and righteous dominion over the creation*. Regarding the *imago dei* in the history of salvation, the Bible teaches that man was created in the image of God which he lost completely at the fall, with the elect alone being restored to it at a higher level in regeneration through Christ, the express image of the Father. This is the truly Reformed view.

¹⁴⁷Cf. Kuyper, *Op. cit.*, p. 240. Henry R. Van Til writes that for Kuyper, "Civilization, enlightenment, development and advancement cannot be ascribed to Satan but proceed from God, so that we may speak of a continuous development of the human race by which it *collectively exhibits the image of God*" (Van Til, *Op. cit.*, p. 120; italics mine). Here again we see the error of placing the *imago dei* in unregenerate man and hence in the human race *head for head*.

¹⁴⁸Bavinck, *In the Beginning*, p. 213. For further development of this concept of the *imago dei* as the whole of the new humanity, see pp. 212-214, 224-225.