

Response

Rodrigo D. Tano

Alliance Graduate School

I was raised a Methodist as a young man in our province but I have no recollection of elements of Wesleyan theological thought. Neither was I ever exposed to it in my seminary studies. (I may have gone to the wrong schools). Reading Dick Eugenio's paper and preparing to respond to it have afforded me the opportunity to read on Wesleyan theology for the first time, in particular its understanding of the *imago Dei* in relation to salvation and sanctification. Though limited, my readings on the subject and analysis of the paper itself, have been enriching and challenging personally and professionally.

The author of the paper exhibits a high degree of erudition in the general organization of the material and treatment of the subject. The bibliography and the references used show a wide-ranging acquaintance with the topic. There is a great effort on the part of the writer to attain a proper balance among diverse views and nuances of the subject and related topics. It is understandable of course that, being a Wesleyan, he upholds his denomination's view¹ on the subject. However, he goes beyond Wesley's theology and moves past the usual Wesleyan style in treating the subject, as he feels the need to complement the Wesleyan view "by a Christocentric approach..." because, as he states it, "one of the most significant soteriological understandings that has gained enthusiastic approval in recent years... is the humanization of humanity in Christ." Hence, the title of the paper. The author also feels that there is need to correct the "insufficiently Christocentric interpretation of the *imago Dei* which leads to a neglect of some important aspects of sanctification." Along with Dianne Lecrec he believes that this lack of a Christocentric focus in interpreting the *imago* "results in a moralistic understanding of sanctification" and removes the possibility of renewal in the *imago* which is nothing less than "Christlikeness and human-ness."

The author's exposition of the subject is structured around the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation) in relation to the *Imago Dei* as follows: 1) humanity was created in the image of God; 2) the image is marred; 3) the image is restored.

Under the first segment of his elucidation, the writer surveys four views on the interpretation of the *imago Dei* which focus on theological anthropology, namely: 1) the attributal (the *imago* consists of attributes or faculties in man); 2) the teleological/eschatological (pointing to potentialities that are yet to be achieved in the future); 3) the relational/personalist (which views man not as a rational but relational entity); 4) the personal perspective (seeks to

¹ Here, "Wesleyan" refers to the Wesleyan tradition. "Wesleyan" may also refer to The Wesleyan Church, a church within the Wesleyan tradition. The author is responding to Dick Eugenio, who is a member of the Church of the Nazarene, which is another such denomination [Editor].

answer the question “Who is the image of God?”, not “What is the image?”). It is here where the writer answers the question “Who is the image” and introduces the thought that the image is no less than Christ. Since he is a proponent of “Christ is the image” view of the *imago*, he discusses this subject lengthily, defending it vigorously, and in the processes disposing of the other views as inadmissible and without adequate scriptural support, so he thinks. By and large, they are views “from below” according to him.

The second main section of the paper explains why Christ-likeness is the way to renew the *imago Dei*, since Christ is the true image of God. Christ-likeness, or as the paper proposes, humanization, is the way of renewing the *imago Dei* in man. Here Christ-likeness, patterned after Christ’s relation to the Father and the Holy Spirit (in a Trinitarian sense), is affirmed as perfect obedience to the Father and full dependence upon the Holy Spirit both in the life and ministry of the Christian.

This response will consist of three considerations. First, there will be comments on style and the text itself along with some suggestions to improve the use of some expressions, and clarify the use of words in the text. This will be followed by an interaction on the meaning of the *imago* as used in Old Testament and New Testament passages, and secondly, on the terms *humanization* and *human-ness* as used in the paper.

Comments on the Text

First, depending on the educational and theological knowledge of the audience or readers of the material now and in days to come, it is not easy to understand the meaning of some statements in the text (unless it is intended exclusively for an esoteric audience) due to the use of several Latin and German words and phrases (without supplying their meaning in English), along with some theological jargon. The following are examples: *ordo salutis*; Dionysian hyper; *ad Imagenim Dei*; *vestigia Dei*; *similitudo*; telic; perichoretic; God’s *ousia* is *koinonia*; the *morphe* of humanity; Gottlichkeit of God; *proto-anthropos*; *anthropos pro nobis*; *homo creatus*; *imago diabolic*; *Leben Jesu- Forschung* movement; *summorphous* existence; *imago Trinitatis*.

Also, it is not accurate for the author to state that “there are only three texts explicitly connecting humankind as created or made in the *imago Dei*-three in the Old Testament (Gen.1:26-27; 5:1-3; 9:5-6) and two in the New Testament (1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9)...” when in fact there is a total of five cited.

I think there is need to rephrase or clarify some statements in the paper to make them more intelligible and accurate. Christ is presented as “imaging God in his humanity” as God’s *tselem* and *demut*. But “considering the deity of the incarnate Son, God represents himself through himself.” Does this statement intend to blur the personal distinction between the Father

and Son so that the Son cannot represent the Father? And which of the two them is “original” and “copy” (likeness)?

Further down, in two places, “un-Christological” should probably be changed to “non-Christological” in the sentence “It is here that un-Christological approaches to anthropology...” In addition, it may be awkward to use “inhumanity” to describe the believer’s state before being “restored to Christ-likeness”, but we are not prepared to suggest another word. Since “inhuman” means “not worthy or conforming to the needs of human beings,” there should be a more appropriate word used.

Interaction

At this point, I wish to interact with the author over two themes, namely, the meaning of the *imago Dei* and “human-ness” and “humanization” as expounded in the paper.

1. On the meaning of *imago Dei*. In relation to the exposition on the *image of God* in man, there is no exegesis in the paper of the pertinent biblical passages in the Old and New Testaments. The author instead immediately deals with theological formulations developed throughout the history of the Church. While Christ indeed is truly the image of God as set forth in the New Testament, the meaning of the *imago Dei* in Genesis 1:26-28; 5:1-3; 9:1-7 with Psalm 8 as applied to humanity in general should not be overlooked. The thrust of these biblical portions is that human dignity arises from man being created in the image of God and after his likeness. It is agreed that “image” and “likeness” may be used interchangeably, where “image” means representation and “likeness”, resemblance. In ancient cultures, a statue or image of a god “represented that god on earth, just as the image of a king in a land he had conquered.” In Genesis man represents God on earth as vice-gerent to have dominion over creation and manage it for the glory of the Creator. In this connection, it is interesting to note that Douglas John Hall, a relationalist, in a penetrating discussion of this subject, concedes that “the biblical ontology that conceives human being—and all being—in relational terms does not deny the uniqueness of the human creature.” He maintains that “there is no need to reject outright Aristotle’s definition of *anthropos* as ‘rational animal,’ or repudiate those who marvel at human capacities for deciding, determining, planning, judging, changing, and so forth.” Sounding like a structuralist, he adds that a relational view of man requires “that we view all such capacities and endowments according to their functions as attributes enabling us to become what we are intended to be: serving and representative creatures, stewards whose complexity of mental, spiritual, and volitional powers make it possible...to image the holy and suffering love of the Creator” (*Imaging God*, p. 141).

In stressing that the content of the *imago Dei* in man is Christ-likeness, Eugenio critiques Christian writers for “spelling out human dignity by turning to the creation of humanity” in Genesis and Psalm 8. He then argues that “this procedure...is neither realistic nor holistically biblical, for a mere return to Genesis 1:26-27 is insufficient in the theological description of human dignity” (p. 15). This writer holds that though man is both *homo creatus* and *homo peccator* and thus lies in a paradoxical state, humanity in a generic sense bears the primeval dignity and honor as indicated in Psalm 8. Moreover, the

prohibition against murder in Genesis 9:6 is anchored on man's inherent worth and dignity as created in the image of God, not just "because only God has the right to take life away..." (p. 16). Similarly cursing one's fellowmen is forbidden because they are created in God's image (James 3:9). Taking these into account, men in a generic sense are still image-bearers even after the Fall.

2. On Human-ness and Humanization. In the paper, the terms "human-ness" and "humanization" are used to mean differently from the way they are ordinarily employed. Being human or human-ness negatively points to human attributes or "sympathies and frailties of human nature". On the other hand, the word "humanize" expresses a positive idea—either to make more human or promote human dignity and worth. To be humane is to show consideration or compassion to the weak and needy. But as meant to be understood in the paper, human-ness is "to be conformed to the likeness of his Son" (Rom. 8:29), Christ the *protokokos*, the second Adam (1 Cor. 15:45-49). As our pattern, Christ "assumed every aspect of our human existence, redeeming and sanctifying each part, so that we may now live as proper humans before God." Human-ness is to put on Christ-likeness. Humanization then is the process of growing in Christ-likeness. And Christ-likeness is explained as perfect obedience to God the Father and the Holy Spirit, since Christ in his earthly life and ministry was perfectly committed to the Father and the Holy Spirit.

In practical terms Christ-likeness or humanization is "taking off the old self with its practices and putting on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Col. 3:9-10). Or, as the apostle Paul similarly exhorts believers elsewhere, humanization is being "made new in the attitude of your minds;..." and putting on "the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:23-24).

To avoid lapsing into a pietistic understanding of sanctification, there is need to spell out what it means to be Christ-like as renewal of the divine image in the believer. It will not do simply to coldly state that Christ-likeness is walking in perfect obedience to God and the Holy Spirit. The verses surrounding Colossians 3:9-10 and Ephesians 4:23-24 deal with what to overcome (sins of the flesh and negative emotions, unwholesome talk). In Colossians 3:11, putting on the new self should result in putting aside discrimination against others due to racial, cultural and social distinctions. Christ-likeness has social dimensions, in other words. For in the Church, as the new humanity, "there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ in all, and is in all."

Let us then strive to attain that level of humanization in Christ where we truly image God in a world needing redemption and renewal.