



Ibolya Balla | Jaap Doedens (Eds.)

Imago Dei

The 12th Comenius Conference



Imago Dei

Beihefte zur Ökumenischen Rundschau Nr. 141

Ibolya Balla | Jaap Doedens (Eds.)

Imago Dei

The 12th Comenius Conference



EVANGELISCHE VERLAGSANSTALT
Leipzig

Bibliographische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der
Deutschen Nationalbibliographie; detaillierte bibliographische Daten
sind im Internet über <http://dnb.dnb.de> abrufbar.

© 2024 by Evangelische Verlagsanstalt GmbH · Leipzig
Printed in Germany

This work, including all of its parts, is protected by copyright. Any use beyond the strict limits of copyright law without the permission of the publishing house is strictly prohibited and punishable by law. This applies in particular to reproductions, translations, microfilming, and storage or processing of the entire content or parts thereof in electronic systems.

This book is printed on ageing resistant paper.

Cover: Kai-Michael Gustmann, Leipzig
Cover image: Creation of Adam, Michelangelo, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons
Typesetting: Steffi Glauche, Leipzig
Printing and Binding: BELTZ Grafische Betriebe GmbH, Bad Langensalza
ISBN 978-3-374-07602-4 // eISBN (PDF) 978-3-374-07603-1
www.eva-leipzig.de

Table of Contents

Introduction

The Kaleidoscope of *Imago Dei* An Introduction 9

OLD TESTAMENT

“You Would Long for the Work of Your Hands”
Job as the Example of the Suffering *Imago Dei* 15
Ibolya Balla

Homo homini lupus
Die pejorative Animalisierung des Menschen im Alten Testament . . . 31
Áron Németh

DEUTEROCANONICAL LITERATURE

Sin and Virtue
Consequences of the Fundamental Choice
between Death and Wisdom in the Book of Wisdom 51
Marcin Zieliński

“Male and Female” as Limits
Genesis, the Book of Tobit, and God’s Creative Intentions 66
Francis M. Macatangay

NEW TESTAMENT

Logos as Imago Dei in John's Prologue
The Meaning of Logos in John's Prologue
(A Narrative Critical Study) 85
Mirjam Piplica

Paul's Disabled Body
To be "*kata sarka*" or not to be? 98
György Kustár

The Beast as an *Imago Diaboli*
εἰκών and θηρίον in the Book of Revelation. 116
József Nagy

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Karl Barth's Interpretation of *Imago Dei* and Its Connection
to the Covenant. 135
Gyopárka Köves

Human Work as an Important Dimension of the Likeness of God. . . 151
Zoltán Balikó

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Imago Dei in Preaching
Theological Warrant for More Active Involvement
of the Listeners. 165
Enoh Šeba

Restoring the Image of God?
A Theological Perspective on Pastoral Care. 179
Theo Pleizier

PHILOSOPHY, CULTURE, AND SCIENCE

Ist der Mensch ein Triebwesen? 197

Bernhard Kaiser

In His Own Likeness, After His Image
Self-Propagating Parodies of Life. 210

Jaap Doedens

List of Contributors 221

The Kaleidoscope of *Imago Dei* An Introduction

Throughout the ages, human beings have been reflecting, talking, writing, philosophizing about what exactly makes them human. What is our task as humans, what is conscience, what goals should we set for ourselves, why do we suffer, in what do we differ from the animal world, with which we share our bodily existence? In an attempt to answer this kind of questions, the Judaeo-Christian tradition consistently referred to the conviction that humans are created in the image of God. This stance apparently provides a reassuringly brief answer. Yet, upon a closer look into this belief, it gives people a direction to look, but not all the answers. As a result of the secularization of what can be called rather loosely “western civilization,” some would have expected that the whole concept formulated in this term *imago Dei* by the Judaeo-Christian tradition would become soon superfluous and obsolete. However, the opposite appears to be true in our age. The direction pointed to by this tradition not only has proved not to be outdated, but has actually gained in relevance.

The studies in this volume approach many of these questions beginning from the notion of humans as being created in the image of God. They provide insights from multifaceted fields of interests within human society. The texts presented here originate from the 12th Comenius Conference, held in Pápa, Hungary, 20–23 April 2022 at the Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary.

From a neo-Darwinian viewpoint, suffering, and specifically human suffering, is merely a built-in characteristic of nature. However, human experience usually does not concur with such an interpretation. A biblical-anthropological approach starting from humans created in the image of God does not allow for easy answers to the question of human suffering, but at least can search for answers in a deeper and more honest way. After all, if humans have intrinsic value in the eyes of God, how can this same

God allow so much suffering? *Ibolya Balla* deals with these questions by comparing the view on humans in Psalm 8 and in the Old Testament Book of Job. Another pressing question, if one accepts the *imago Dei* concept, is what to think about the way in which humans can dehumanize others. This question is treated by *Áron Németh* by analysing how the Old Testament displays the way in which humans do not accept the image of God in each other. Human sin, thus, appears to contradict the human existence as *imago Dei*. This is why *Marcin Zieliński* concentrates on how sin and perfection are presented and contrasted in the Book of Wisdom. It turns out that even if the *imago Dei* is not lost in humans, it is in dire need of restoration. When saying that humans are created in the image of God, this also implies certain limits. Being created in the image of God means that humans are no gods. *Francis Macatangay* approaches this human limitedness by studying how the Book of Tobit depicts the concept of male and female as limits imposed by God for life to flourish. When dealing with the restoration of the image of God in humans, the person of Christ Jesus is paramount within the New Testament. *Mirjam Piplica* provides a narrative-critical study about how the prologue of the Gospel of John depicts Christ as the Logos for its implied and real readers, in order to make them understand that Christ is both human and divine. Viewed from the image of Christ, the question can be iterated how humans have to view themselves and others in the light of still being affected by the brokenness of creation. It is this question that is addressed by *György Kustár*. When reflecting further on creation's fractured nature, *József Nagy* calls attention to the fact that the New Testament also has the notion of the *imago Diaboli*, as described in the Book of Revelation. *Gyopárka Köves* concentrates on how Karl Barth viewed the role of humans as created in the image of God viewed through the biblical and systematic-theological concept of God's covenant with people. When addressing humans' createdness, the question naturally arises as to what the task of people is. The question of work as an important dimension of the likeness of God is being dealt with by *Zoltán Balikó*. The concept of *imago Dei*, of course, has also implications for how Christian homiletics ought to reflect on how people should be addressed in sermons. *Enoh Šeba* demonstrates how this concept can give a more active role to listeners within communication. Moreover, it can hardly be otherwise that the restoration of the image of God will play an important part in pastoral care. *Theo Pleizier* reflects on whether or not the idea of "restoring the image of God" is a useful concept within pastoral care practices. Modern psychology raised the question as to what extent humans are only driven by their instincts and impulses. *Bernhard Kaiser* addresses

this view on humans within the light of biblical anthropology. *Jaap Doedens* deals with this theme through the lens of Iain McGilchrist's view on how within western civilization a left-brain hemisphere dominated approach of reality has been deforming the way in which humans see themselves and their culture.

Ibolya Balla
Jaap Doedens

OLD TESTAMENT

“You Would Long for the Work of your Hands” Job as the Example of the Suffering *Imago Dei*

Ibolya Balla

*Introduction*¹

The Book of Job is most often viewed as dealing with the question of theodicy or more specifically why the righteous suffer, where is the righteousness of God in the face of the suffering of the righteous. The book is also known as having a fair amount of vivid descriptions of Job’s suffering. In other words, interpreters most often treat the questions of both why Job suffers, and how he suffers. This second aspect is very helpful in formulating questions regarding the topic of *imago Dei* in the Book of Job, for the work offers important insight into the attitude of the Creator towards his creatures, into what it means to be human. The book draws our attention to many important tenets regarding God’s traits considering his relationship with humans. This relationship, or rather stance on God’s part towards humans – represented here by the righteous and suffering Job – is described in the book by various concepts and motifs which express Job’s understanding of the Creator, creation and humans’ role in it. It is especially interesting how Job receives and in some cases inverts some of the most important traditions about creation in general, and human’s place in it. There are especially relevant passages in this respect which, taken in the context of the book, can shed light on the above questions. Some of these passages will be highlighted in this paper.

Especially through the speech cycles the book challenges some of the traditional Israelite beliefs. One of them is the teaching about act and consequence, according to which every act has its consequences and on the day of retribution the righteous will be saved from judgment while

¹ The English text of the biblical passages is taken from the NRSV.

the wicked will be punished by God.² This teaching is important for the wisdom writers but can also be traced back to the work of the Deuteronomists.³ In wisdom the sentiment appears even among the godly that God is not able to carry out retribution or does not care about the faithful; he does not end the suffering sometimes caused by the wicked.⁴ In Psalms and wisdom literature the authors declare that the acts of the humans are hidden before God (Ps 10:4–7). Moreover, in certain cases God seems not only indifferent but even hostile towards the faithful. It is especially the Book of Job that formulates the questions: what is the reason of the contradiction between belief in and traditions about God’s nature and his righteousness and reality; why is it possible that the god fearing righteous suffer, while the godless prosper and seemingly get away with their wickedness.⁵ In the speech cycles Job’s friends argue in long dialogues using well known traditions about the fear of God, the fate of the godly and the godless, but do not want to hear Job’s argument. They want Job to admit his guilt because – as they argue – that is the condition of his salvation (cf. Job 4:7–8). They even claim that Job is still able and permitted to contend because God did not punish him enough or at least not in proportion to his sins (35:15–16). Job is disappointed with them.⁶ Even though the friends’ observation – that “those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same” (Job 4:8) – can be true generally and in certain cases, the arguments based on them are not always correct; they are not helpful or useful in Job’s very specific situation of extreme suffering.

Another important belief that the book challenges is what it means to be human, how is human the image of God. In order to understand it we have to look at the Old Testament background of Job’s teaching on creation and the role of humans in the order of creation. The most relevant body of literature is contained in the Priestly Document – more narrowly the

² John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, Minneapolis 2004, 505.

³ Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, Oxford 1972, 316–319 examines both biblical wisdom literature and Deuteronomy in terms of how these works account for suffering, the former in the case of the individual, the latter in the case of the community.

⁴ This concept is found in some of the prophetic works as well, see e.g. Mal 2:17; 3:15 in the context of 3:13–21. Both wisdom and prophetic literature affirm that God knows what happens in creation and Israel and there will be retribution.

⁵ See Job 21:7–34 but also Ps 34:16–23; 73:3–12; Prov 23:18; 24:14; Qooh 7:15; 8:11–13.

⁶ According to Job 6:14–30 he has no helper.

priestly creation account –, Deutero-Isaiah and a few psalms, and Job. Texts treating the question of creation of the world and man can be categorized as those that are theologically didactic and those that are hymnic. The former mainly presents theological tenets in order to give instruction on things which were not known or not known exactly, the latter have no didactic content. Their purpose is mainly to glorify the Creator and creation. In consequence, the style of these statements is different: the latter is enthusiastic and joyful, the former is restrained. Those which sing praises outnumber the others and can prevent us from over-estimating the didactic element. Direct theological statements about the creation in the form of extensive texts occur mainly in the two creation accounts, the first of which is contained in the Priestly Document (Gen 1:1–2:4a).⁷ The texts in Deutero-Isaiah are mainly polemic against the Babylonian belief concerning worshipping the host of heaven (esp. 40:12–31), but can be understood in the context of deliverance from the exile. In many of the relevant psalms the psalmist also praises God both as Creator and saviour.⁸ It is noteworthy that the doctrine of creation is relatively late in Israel which means that older, already existing beliefs about creation were formulated as statements and connected with the traditions about God as saviour fairly late.⁹ In wisdom thought creation is a central topic, “an absolute basis for faith, and was referred to for its own sake altogether and not in the light of other factors of the faith” (see Job 38–41; Prov 3:19–20; 8:22–29).¹⁰

⁷ The other account is found in the so-called Jahwist source (Gen 2:4b–25); see Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology, 1. The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions*, Edinburgh 1962, 139–140.

⁸ See, however Psalm 8 later.

⁹ Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1., 136–138: The soteriological understanding characterizes both Deutero-Isaiah and the relevant psalms. According to von Rad, the purpose of Ps 89 is to celebrate God's act of grace concerning the covenant with David, the establishment of the Messianic kingdom, connected with the topic of creation (see also Ps 74:12–17 where salvation and creation are also intertwined); cf. also Claus Westermann, *Az Ószövetség teológiájának vázlatja*, Budapest 1993, 83–84.

¹⁰ Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1., 139.

The Most Important Elements of the Creation of Humans According to the Relevant Passages that Could Have Informed Job

First of all, God created man to have a relationship to him, a creature that corresponds to him, to whom he can speak, and who listens to him. Creation is an event that takes place between God and humans. Man is created so that something can happen between Creator and creature.¹¹ “The relationship to God is not something which is added to human existence; humans are created in such a way that their very existence is intended to be their relationship to God,” and the dignity of all humans to which all are entitled are based on this.¹² The “image,” and “likeness,” or “something like” (Gen 1:26) together affirm that God has endowed humans with dignity, and exalted them above all other creatures. Ps 8:6 supplements the concept with the expression “little lower.”¹³

Human beings are created for a definite purpose or goal. In addition, there is a hierarchy of order established between humans and animals, in their relationship humans are entrusted with dominion over animals. This is a function committed to man, a status as lord in the world (cf. Ps 8:7). This rule, however, has its limits: man signifies God’s rule on Earth, he is responsible for his actions. Dominion over the animals does not mean their exploitation by humans. The relationship between them is to be understood in a positive sense.¹⁴ Gen 1:28 further adds to our understanding, since it has God addressing man and woman. Up until now the formula which introduces God’s words in Genesis 1 is “and God said,” or “saying.” But 1:28 has “and God said to them.” This difference implies that the “two can be addressed with the blessing because God has created them as his counterpart with whom he can speak.”¹⁵ The fact that creation is good – which includes its beauty – already entails its glorification and praise. This praise is contained in some of the psalms (cf. Psalm 148) and in this praise humans have a special role.¹⁶ For the Israelites creation never be-

¹¹ This is true concerning both creation accounts, the difference is that Genesis 2 expresses it in story form and not in conceptual terms; cf. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11. A Commentary*, Minneapolis 1984, 157.

¹² Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 158; Westermann, *Az Ószövetség teológiájának vázlatja*, 94–95.

¹³ Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1., 144–145.

¹⁴ Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 158–159; Walter Brueggemann – William H. Bellinger, Jr., *Psalms*, Cambridge 2014, 59–60.

¹⁵ Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 160.

¹⁶ Westermann, *Az Ószövetség teológiájának vázlatja*, 90.

comes nature that can be viewed independently of the Creator, the praise of the Creator and creation as his work is praised together (Psalm 104).¹⁷ Finally, being the image of God is also connected with the protection of human life according to Gen 9:6, “Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person’s blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind.” In summary, the environment in which man and woman will live is his and her dominion. God made humans in his own image, placed them in a unique position vis-à-vis himself; all creation is very good, but humans are created with a special dignity.¹⁸

Job as the Suffering Imago Dei Especially from the Viewpoint of the Similarities of Psalm 8 and Job

The most relevant passages for comparison are Ps 8:5 and Job 7:17–18. Their similarity is often noted but there are parallels between Psalm 8 and the Book of Job which has not been pointed out, as will be detailed below.¹⁹ The Psalm has distinct hymnic elements to praise God as Creator by praising the glory of God (vv. 2–3), man as the crown of creation (vv. 4–9), and at the same time by contrasting the majesty of God with the insignificance of man.²⁰ The body of the psalm which praises God’s majesty and glory in creation starts in verse 4, which depicts the psalmist as looking up to the sky with awe and seeing all the luminaries created by God.²¹ The word “your heavens” with its singular 2nd person suffix emphasizes that the heavens are of God’s, in it there can be no other God (cf. Ps 20:7; 115:16; 144:5; Lam 3:66). The psalmist also stresses that God created them by using the expression “the work of your fingers” (v. 4).²² In this regard the psalm is closer to the priestly creation account than to Isa 40:18.21–26 which also emphasizes the createdness of the luminaries.²³ According to

¹⁷ Westermann, *Az Ószövetség teológiájának vázlatja*, 91–92.

¹⁸ Dominic Robinson, *Understanding the “Imago Dei.” The Thought of Barth, von Balthasar and Moltmann*, Farnham 2011, 7.

¹⁹ We cannot treat in detail the question of relationship between the priestly creation account and Psalm 8.

²⁰ See also Brueggemann – Bellinger, *Psalms*, 58.

²¹ Kustár Zoltán, *A Zsoltárok könyve válogatott fejezeteinek magyarázata (Zsolt 2, 8, 22, 30, 79)*. (Egyetemi jegyzet), Debrecen 2016, 31;

²² See Nancy deClaissé-Walford – Rolf A. Jacobson – Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, Grand Rapids 2014, 122–123.

²³ Kustár Zoltán, *Zsoltárok könyve*, 31.

v. 5 the psalmist makes a statement on the basis of what he sees, and does so in poetic questions. He realizes the insignificance of humans: “what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?” What are human beings compared with these splendid creatures as the luminaries, but especially compared with God their Creator? The question itself is the answer which employs a term appropriate to emphasizing the smallness and transient nature of humans. The word *שׂוֹנֵאִים* signifying “human being” is from the stem *שׂנא* which means “to be sick/weak,” or “to be incurable” (cf. 2 Sam 12:15). The term demonstrates that humans are weak, their life is fleeting, and as such they are mortal (cf. Deut 32:26; Isa 13:12; 24:6; 33:8, Ps 9:21; 90:3; 103:15; Job 10:4–5). In parallel with *שׂוֹנֵאִים* stands *בְּרֵאשִׁית אָדָם*, translated variously as “son of man,” “human being” or “mortal.” The word *אָדָם* is related to *אֲדָמָה* (“ground,” “land”) and reflects that God formed man from the dust of the ground (Gen 2:7, cf. also Ps 144:3; Job 7:17).²⁴ As Allen notes, “[t]he psalmist is amazed that the majestic God of creation thinks of him in such a way as to do things for him, to meet his needs.”²⁵

According to Ps 8:6–7 God has endowed humans with special dignity, responsibility and tasks. This is expressed with various terms: “you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet.” The interpretation of the term *לְפָנֵי יְהוָה* in the expression “little lower than God” is a matter of debate. Some consider it to refer to “God,” and the God-given role of dominion to be exercised by humans within creation,²⁶ while others understand it as a reference to the heavenly beings in the heavenly court of God (cf. Ps 29:1).²⁷ The Septuagint understands it this way and renders “angels.” This would indicate that human beings’ task is to praise and serve God just as much it is the task of the members of the heavenly court. What the word “little” means is not detailed, since the emphasis is on the similarity to heavenly beings, not on the difference. Perhaps it refers to mortality, or the abode of humans on earth.²⁸ Humans are crowned with glory and hon-

²⁴ Kustár Zoltán, *Zsoltárok könyve*, 31–32; Brueggemann – Bellinger, *Psalms*, 59.

²⁵ Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms, I. (1–41)*, Grand Rapids 2011, 295.

²⁶ See among others Brueggemann – Bellinger, *Psalms*, 59; Ross, *Commentary*, 288, 296; Peter C. Craigie – Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 1–50*, Grand Rapids 2004, 108.

²⁷ Cf. Kustár Zoltán, *Zsoltárok könyve*, 32; deClaissé-Walford – Jacobson – LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 122, 124–125.

²⁸ Kustár Zoltán, *Zsoltárok könyve*, 32.

our which can be the epithets of God (Isa 32:5; Ps 29:1; 90:16; 145:5), the heavenly king (Ps 96:6; 104:1; 145:12), or the earthly king (Ps 21:6; 45:4). The rulership God endows humans with, is in accordance with Gen 1:27. God has given dominion to humans and put all things under their feet. However, it is noted that all these things are the works of God's hands. This shows that humans are stewards of creation, their rule is stewardship which – as noted above – comes with responsibility and limits. This is again in harmony with the two creation accounts in Genesis 1–2. Ps 8:4–9 also implies that human beings' dignity and value comes not from anything they have done for themselves, “but rather something that God has done for them. Our worth comes to us from outside of ourselves (*extra nos*). That which God confers upon us is the key to our status, not that which comes from inside of us.”²⁹ The frame of the psalm in v. 2 and 10 shows that the entire creation, humans included, praise God, his majestic name.³⁰

Ps 8:5

מִה־אֲנוֹשׁ כִּי־תִזְכְּרֵנוּ וּבְנ־אָדָם כִּי תִפְקְדֵנוּ:

what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? (= v. 4 in NRSV)

Job 7:17–18

מִה־אֲנוֹשׁ כִּי תִגְדְּלֵנוּ וְכִי־תִשִׁית אֱלֹהֵי לְבָבִי:
וְתִפְקְדֵנוּ לְבַקְרִים לְרַגְעִים תִּבְחַנֵּנוּ:

What are human beings, that you make so much of them, that you set your mind on them, visit them every morning, test them every moment?

Job 7:17–18 not only alludes to this psalm, especially its fifth verse, but there is also a verbal correspondence between them. The term פקד (“to have concern for,” “to care for,” “to visit” etc.) of Ps 8:5 appears in Job 7:18; Job expands the thought of Ps 8:5 on humans in two verses. He employs the stem אנוש a number of times: with the meaning “mortal wound” (34:6), as a reference to simply man or as a demonstrative pronoun (5:17), people (28:4) or human being, mortal (4:17; 7:1.17; 9:2; 10:4.5; 13:9; 14:19; 15:14; 25:4.6; 28:13; 32:8; 33:12.26; 36:25). In most cases the

²⁹ DeClaisé-Walford – Jacobson – LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 124.

³⁰ Kustár Zoltán *Zsoltárok könyve*, 32; Ross, *Commentary*, 296–297.