

# "Created in the Image of God"

Genesis 1.26-28; Matthew 5.43-48

Rev. Canon Dr. John Senyonyi  
Vice Chancellor, Uganda Christian University

**Introduction:** The present confusion:

- **Kajabago Ka-Rusoke** wrote "*Why there can never be spiritual being without material being*" (The New Vision, Wednesday, August 31, 2016); i.e. "*material determines spiritual being*"! He makes an assumption and proceeds to derive his philosophy from a false assumption!
- What we understand about our unique identity determines our conduct. Even the contemporary definitions of '*gender equality*' or '*gender sameness*' sometimes fail to understand this. Some make Man and Woman synonymous!
- The *Imago Dei* - that Man is like God and represents God. But man is not identical with God, as eastern mysticism avers. "*In the Image of God*" means, as Wayne Grudem says, "*Likeness to God AND Representing God.*" To be 'LIKE' is to show evidence of that likeness, but is NOT to be God.
- Likeness to God does not mean God has physical features. Our physicality does not and should not be taken to show Likeness to God!
- Our understanding of this likeness to God will always be partial. '*We know in part but we know truly.*' We cannot describe this *Image* exhaustively.
- **BOTH Male and Female were created in the Image of God:** Equality of worth BUT not equality of functions or roles. BOTH bear the Image. The *Imago Dei* is not gender related.

In the Bible, the word, "**Man**" (Heb. '*adam*', Genesis 5.1-2) is both a generic term for both Male and Female, and specific to Male.

***<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."***

Therefore, the Image of God is the worth of WHO WE ARE; it is our Core Identity. Remove it and evolution, materialism, pantheism (pan (all)-theism), Allah who sanctions jihads and suicide bombing, etc. would make sense!

## I. Our Likeness to God - the *Imago Dei*!

All creation has a likeness to God. However, some of the Likeness is unique to Man, while in other ways Man has a superior Likeness to God.

1. ***Moral Likeness:*** Human beings have an innate sense of right and wrong, of good and evil. When they sin, they feel guilty and are gripped with fear. God's Image in us is best reflected when we conform to God's moral standards.
2. ***Spiritual Likeness:*** Man has an urge to pray, to reach out to a higher Being, God. When we are in Christ, prayer and praise for God comes naturally.

*Man is religious: wherever he is, he seeks after God (Romans 1.18-23)!*

3. **Mental Likeness:** The ability to reason, to think logically and to learn.
  - a. So we have universities and technical institutes where people spend hours arguing, discussing and reaching out to higher understanding. They talk about complex things. Even children understand and do what we describe to them!
  - b. Man can mentally visualize things in the distant future (Ecclesiastes 3.11). Man is creative - art, music, and literature, the Sciences and technology.
  - c. Man can simultaneously have several emotions! Sad about poor results of a child, happy with your child that has performed well, sing praise to God, listen to songs, drive the vehicle, etc.
4. **Relational Likeness:** The sense of community is superior with Man than with other creatures.
  - a. In Marriage, Man and Woman have equality of importance but difference in functions or roles. This reflects the Trinity relationship - One God, Three Persons.
  - b. We bear the Image of God in our Stewardship of creation. We are God's royal agents to harness creation and take care of it well.
5. **Physical Likeness:** God is spirit. So He is not a God with a physical nose, mouth, teeth, etc. But our physicality also shows off God, for through our physical life we show forth His attributes and glorify Him.  
Our physical bodies give us the platform to see as He sees, to hear as He hears, to speak as He speaks, to weep with those who hurt as He weeps with them, to rejoice with the happy. We bear children in our likeness as He created us in His likeness.

## II. The Dignity of the Image of God in us

1. **Man's Inestimable Worth:** When the Almighty God who made all things visible and invisible, the LORD of earth and heaven, thought to create something in His Image, *He made you and me!* Not the stars in the universe, the lion, the elephant, the whale, etc. He made you and me!
2. **An Image beyond our Physicality:** The Image may be flawed by sin and illness or whatever weakness or disability, but they still bear equal status - **Created in the Image of God.**
  - a. The unborn child, the comatose patient, the mentally retarded, people of every tribe and race are all created in the Image of God. The Image of God does not grow in us; it is our created nature, our created Identity. *Their dignity of personhood is equal to any other person.*
  - b. For that reason, abortion or infanticide or discrimination, and all acts that dishonour the weak and helpless are under God's curse. All injustice is abhorrent to God because it is against someone **Created in the Image of God.** Amen.

## III. The Fall and Redemption of Man

1. **The Fall of Man and Woman:** Sin distorted the Image of God in Man but it was not lost, as God says later, **"for God made Man in His own Image"** (Genesis 9.6). Satan's main purpose in tempting Man to sin was to obliterate the Image of God.

- a. *Loss of moral purity*
- b. *Not to reflect God's holiness*
- c. *To introduce intellectual falsehood and misunderstanding*
- d. *Sin does not glorify God in speech, thought and deeds*
- e. *Sin brought broken relationships*

2. **The Redemption in Christ: Progressive restoration of God's Image in Man**  
(Matthew 5.43-48).

- a. Jesus restores the "***true righteousness and holiness***" in us (Ephesians 4.24), to be *perfect as our Father is perfect!*
- b. Jesus redeems us to live that image. The Holy Spirit makes a holy and righteous life possible. We love as the Father loves. Our standard of God-likeness is not what others do or how they treat us.
- c. We are being renewed after the Image of our Creator (Colossians 3.10). We are progressively changed into His likeness - His image (2 Corinthians 3.18), to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Romans 8.29).
- d. We shall be completely restored at the coming of the Christ (1 Corinthians 15.49), to be like Him (1 John 3.2).