

## Response

San Young Lee

Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary

Thank you, Dr. Eugenio, for presenting dominant views or perspectives in understanding the image of God. There are, starting with attributal/qualitative interpretation, teleological view, eschatological view, relational view, and Christocentric approach to imago dei that, apart from Christ, the very image of God, one cannot know what being created in the image of God entails. It is helpful to see that in relation to soteriology, how Christ's humanization of humans that are corrupted and became inhuman is closely related to how humans should live as created in the image of God, the life that human Christ lived out, which is that being human is to be in relationship with God, totally obedient to God and totally dependent upon the Spirit. In our Wesleyan language, being in relationship with God is to be in absolute obedience to God and absolute dependence upon the Spirit, which is what sanctification is all about, isn't it? Dr. Eugenio's paper is very important in the sense that it deepens our understanding of what it means to be human, what being created in the image of God entails, and the significance of Christ as our brother and our savior who is created in the likeness of humanity for our redemption, or to "humanize humanity".

However, as Dr. Eugenio admitted, his presentation this time on the image of God, that focuses on the vertical relationship of human Christ with God and the Spirit, is incomplete in the sense that it did not cover how the horizontal relationship of human Christ with the other human beings and the rest of the creatures would look like. I cannot help but wonder how Christ, being the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God, but took the form of servant and obeyed God even unto death, would be like when the human Christ, as the imago dei, is in relationship with the other human beings and the rest of the creatures in Dr. Eugenio's paper. Would Christ have treated women as second citizens as sinful men do? Would Christ, the imago dei, have treated people of different skin color, culture and custom as subhuman, as sinful humans did and do?

Although Dr. Eugenio did not mention anything about Augustine, Ambrose or the Apostle Paul, to name a few, when he discussed about attributal/qualitative interpretations of the imago dei, and how they made man as the sole gender of being and reflecting the image of God, it has been a sad reality that women are treated as second citizens, lower beings than men in the church from very early on. To quote from Augustine from his treatise on the trinity, "The woman together with the man is the image of God, so that the whole substance is one image. But when she is assigned as a helpmate, which pertains to her alone, she is not the image of God; however, in what pertains to man alone, is the image of God just as fully and completely as he is joined with the woman into one." What Augustine is saying is that woman alone is not the image of

God, only when she is joined with man, together with him, can she be the image of God, but alone, she is not the image of God, whereas man is the image of God regardless whether he is alone or joined with woman. If woman alone is not the image of God, then, alone she is not a human being?! 1 Cor 11:7, "For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man". From this bible verse it could be controversial arguing that Apostle Paul is also saying that woman is not the image of God. No one could argue that "woman being "the reflection of man" is one step removed from being the image of God, whereas there is no ambiguity regards to-man being "the image and reflection of God" According to St. Paul, at least, that was how it has been interpreted in the church (Andy Little, "Feminist Perspectives and Genesis 1:26-28). The idea that women are given second-class status, if not considered subhuman, are not the image of God, becomes clearer if we quote from St. Ambrose, a Bishop of Milan, "Remember that God took the rib out of Adam's body, not a part of his soul, to make her. She was not made in the image of God, like man." Ambrose is saying that woman does not have a soul since she was made out of the Adam's rib, not of his soul, therefore, not the image of God. Hence making man as the sole image of God and placing man equal to the status of God, while assigning woman to second-class status, woman is less than the complete being as the image and reflection of God. What is more, placing woman right above the animal, not so higher from animal status, in the chain of being, unlike men, women are closer, if not belonging, to the animal and carnal.

This attitude toward women has been the dominant attitude throughout church history until today. Women alone are not complete, somehow insufficient to be leaders in the church. Regardless how competent they are as preachers and no matter how strong their callings are into the ministry, they struggle to find pulpit ministry, mostly serving as assistants, or in the capacity of children ministry, the secondary place in the eyes of people. In this context, I would like to ask Dr. Eugenio and the participants whether women are created in the image of God, whether women are also bearers of God's image. I would like to challenge you as educators and pastors of the church to correct the wrong. Perhaps we should start examining our attitude first, whether we are still in that discriminatory, sinful, un-holy, un-sanctified attitude toward women.

In addition, if we understand the image of God from an attributal and qualitative view, like Augustine, this can cause further serious problems. For one, when the image of God is understood as a matter of elements, enumerating qualities and characteristics, it can be very dangerous as the list of elements is embedded in one's own cultural bias and prejudices, as Dr. Eugenio pointed out. In coming up with universal characteristics of human nature, a philosophical version of *imago Dei*, David Hume and other philosophers, heroes of the Enlightenment, concluded that people of color are inherently inferior to caucasians. In David Hume's own words in his essay "Of national characters", he said, "I am apt to suspect the negroes and all the other species of men to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences." This idea was

further developed by Edward Long saying that “though Negroes have the look of humans but they are not. They are lower in the chain of being, a link between humans and ape.” Turning Negroes into subhuman, these Philosophers, including John Locke, laid the philosophical ground for slavery and racism , providing justification for turning humans into commodities even in the church among Christians.

With these things said, I appreciate Dr. Eugenio for presenting Christocentric approach to imago dei, how Christ assumed human likeness to humanize these sinful humans, you and I, who discriminate other fellow human beings, the bearers of image of God, based on their gender, color, race and class.

Thanks be to God!