



***Imago Dei* – 12th Comenius Conference**

In a time when 3D printers can reproduce damaged bone-structures and when genetic modification and gender transformation allow for altering the given human body, it is time to reflect on the theological question what it means to be human. Are we just biological beings, not substantially different from other living beings? Or are we created in the image of God, having a special value and dignity over all creatures? Is Christian anthropological thinking outdated in our days of enormous technological and societal change? Or does it counterbalance human self-indulgence, having a pressing urgency and relevance? The 2022 Comenius conference in the beautiful city of Pápa, Hungary (April 20–23) discusses the issue under the notion of *Imago Dei*.

The testimony of Gen 1:27: “God created man in his own image” has a variety of theological meanings and implications. The special place of humankind in creation is often recognized in the ability of (abstract) thinking, speaking, creativity. This raises *philosophical* and *ethical* questions. Can rationality define humans and set them apart from other creatures? What does it mean for the appreciation of mentally handicapped people? Can such an understanding of human superiority be maintained in face of contemporary developments towards the post-human (cyberanthropology), genetic manipulation, and animal philosophy?

Christian anthropology

Many *systematic theological* issues are involved. Gen 1:27b (“male and female he created them”) implies that humankind is created for communion. To be human means to be a personal being in a communion of love. How does such an anthropology relate to the Christian understanding of the Trinity, a fundamentally relational notion? Is creation primarily receptive of divine grace or also responsible for Imitation of Christ? What are the consequences regarding globalization, national identity, gender, environment, consumerism?

This involves *practical-theological* issues as well. Humankind is not only created *by* the Word of God but also *for* the Word of God. To be able to respond to God entails accountability. The command “Be fruitful and multiply, ... and have dominion...” (Gen 1:28) does not mean that humankind is the ruler of the world, only the representation of God’s rule on earth. How can we communicate the rule of God, or the responsibility and accountability of humankind concerning the creation toward the Creator and the people of modern ages? Or, from a different angle, what are the implications of Christian anthropology for the sub-disciplines of practical theology, such as diaconal studies, pastoral care, homiletics, religious education etc.?

Sin and the Fall

The notion of *Imago Dei* has a larger *biblical* context, raising numerous questions. How, for instance, does it relate to the Fall? How could this happen, when Adam and Eve were supposed to be like God? How should we understand sin; and how does this relate to the likeness of God? Do we need a theory of creation to understand this matter, or is the atonement fundamental for our understanding of the *Imago Dei*?

Not only Old Testament, but also New Testament *exegetical* questions are involved. Is a spiritual interpretation of *Imago Dei* supported by Jesus's definition of God ("God is spirit", John 4:24)? How is Christ the image of God as a perfect reflection of the glory of God? What does Paul teach about the new creation and new nature in connection with the image of God? In what way does our Christology influence our understanding of humanity?

Thinking about Christian anthropology obviously has a long *history*. Perhaps doing theology *is* thinking about the relation between God and humanity, and important developments in the history of Christianity are connected to anthropological considerations. Both in its own right, and in order to understand the otherness of our own times, historical questions are called for. For instance: Why did the patristic fathers distinguish between the *image* and the *likeness* of God? Why has this distinction disappeared in Catholicism and Protestantism, and is the motive for the distinction compensated for by other solutions? In what sense was the Reformation connected to the awakening self-awareness of the modern subject? How were anthropological notions historically connected to ideas about (nationalistic) superiority?

Theological discourse

The Comenius conference aims at discussing theological issues concerning contemporary challenges. As an international conference, it profits from different historical and cultural backgrounds of the participants. Selected contributions will be published in the *Beihefte zur Ökumenischen Rundschau*, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Leipzig.

Program

Wednesday 20 April 2022		
15:30-17:45	Registration	
18:00	Dinner – Vitafit Restaurant	
19:15	Opening Main hall (3 rd floor)	Prof. Dr. Henk de Roest President, Comenius Committee and Prof. Dr. Tamás Németh Dean, Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary
First keynote lecture		Chairperson Prof. Dr. Wojciech Szczerba
19:30-20:15	“You Would Long for the Work of Your Hands”: Job as the Example of the Suffering <i>Imago Dei</i> Main hall (3 rd floor)	Dr. Ibolya Balla (Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary, Hungary)
20:15-20:30	Discussion Main hall (3 rd floor)	
20:45	Drinks – Cellar, PRTA	

Thursday 21 April 2022

08:10-08:30	Morning service Main hall (3 rd floor)	Dr. Jaap Doedens
Second keynote lecture		Chairperson Prof. Dr. Előd Hodossy-Takács
08:30-09:15	Image of God in Non-human creation? Main hall (3 rd floor)	Prof. Dr. Gorazd Andrejč (Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Groningen, The Netherlands)
09:15-09:30	Discussion Main hall (3 rd floor)	
First session, parallel lectures: Biblical context, Anthropology, Definition of Identity (1. and 2. group)		Chairpersons Prof. Dr. Gorazd Andrejč (1. group) Dr. Jan Roskovec (2. group)
09:35-10:05	1. group Presence and Relationship in Biblical Theology Main hall (3 rd floor)	Prof. Dr. Előd Hodossy-Takács (Debrecen Reformed Theological University, Hungary)
10:05-10:35	1. group Man as <i>Imago Dei</i> and a Dwelling Place of God's Spirit in Philo and Paul Main hall (3 rd floor)	Prof. Dr. Marcin Kowalski (John Paul II Catholic University, Lublin, Poland)
10:35-10:55	1. group discussion Main hall (3 rd floor)	
09:35-10:05	2. group To be " <i>kata sarka</i> " or not to be? Ground floor hall	Dr. György Kustár (Reformed Theological Academy of Sárospatak, Hungary)
10:05-10:35	2. group "Male and Female" as Limits: The Witness of the Book of Tobit Ground floor hall	Dr. Francis Macatangay (University of St. Thomas, School of Theology, Houston, USA)
10:35-10:55	2. group discussion Ground floor hall	
10:55-11:30	Coffee Break	
Second session, parallel lectures: Biblical context (1. group); Anthropology, Definition of Identity (2. group)		Chairperson Prof. Dr. Marcin Kowalski (1. group) Prof. Dr. Piotr Lorek (2. group)
11:30-12:00	1. group Metamorphosis Through Mirroring: Optical Metaphors in Paul's Description of the New Humanity Ground floor hall	Dr. Jan Roskovec (Charles University, Protestant Theological Faculty, Prague, Czech Republic)

12.00-12.30	1. group <i>Logos as Imago Dei</i> in John's Prologue: The Meaning of Logos in John's Prologue (A Narrative Critical Study) Ground floor hall	Drs. Mirjam Piplica Divić (John Paul II Catholic University, Lublin, Poland)
12.30-12.55	1. group discussion Ground floor hall	
11:30-12:00	2. group The Beast as an <i>Imago Diaboli</i> : εἰκών and θηρίον in the Book of Revelation Main hall (3 rd floor)	Dr. József Nagy (Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary, Hungary)
12:00-12:30	2. group In His Own Likeness, After His Image: Self-Propagating Parodies of Life Main hall (3 rd floor)	Dr. Jaap Doedens (Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary, Hungary)
12:30-12:55	2. group discussion Main hall (3 rd floor)	
12.55-14.20	Lunch – Vitafit Restaurant	
Third session, parallel lectures: Biblical context and ethical aspects (1. group, German); Ethical aspects, Human freedom, Human dignity (2. group, English)		Chairpersons Prof. Dr. Jenő Kiss (1. group, German) Dr. Francis Macatangay (2. group, English)
14.20-14.50	1. group <i>Homo homini lupus</i> : Die pejorative Animalisierung des Menschen im Alten Testament Ground floor hall	Dr. Áron Németh (Debrecen Reformed Theological University, Hungary)
14.50-15.20	1. group εἰκών bei Paulus Ground floor hall	Prof. Dr. Viktor Kókai (Debrecen Reformed Theological University, Hungary; J. Selye University, Faculty of Reformed Theology, Komarno, Slovakia)
15.20-15.50	1. group Ist der Mensch ein Triebwesen? Ground floor hall	Prof. Dr. Bernhard Kaiser (J. Selye University, Faculty of Reformed Theology, Komarno, Slovakia)
15.50-16.15	1. group discussion Ground floor hall	
14.20-14.50	2. group The volitional dimension of <i>Imago Dei</i> : Man's absolute freedom in Zen philosophy (D. T. Suzuki) and Evangelical theology (D. Bonhoeffer) Main hall (3 rd floor)	Prof. Dr. Piotr Lorek (Evangelical School of Theology, Wrocław, Poland)
14:50-15:20	2. group <i>Imago Dei</i> as a symbol of human dignity Main hall (3 rd floor)	Prof. Dr. Wojciech Szczerba (Evangelical School of Theology, Wrocław, Poland)

15:20-15:50	2. group God's Image and Extreme Dehumanization: Orthodox Understandings of the Human Person in View of Radical Evil and Suffering Main hall (3 rd floor)	Dr. Katya Tolstaya (Vrije Universiteit, Faculty of Religion and Theology, Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
15:50-16:15	2. group discussion Main hall (3 rd floor)	
16:30-18:00	Extended coffee break and organ concert in Pannonia Reformata Museum and Café	
18:30	Banquet – Villa Classica Hotel and Restaurant	

Friday 22 April 2022		
08:00-08:20	Morning service Main hall (3 rd floor)	Drs. Jos Colijn
Fourth session, parallel lectures: Anthropology, Anthropomorphism, Identity (1. group, German); Biblical context, Sin and Identity (2. group, English)		Chairpersons Prof. Dr. Viktor Kókai (1. group, German) Dr. Jaap Doedens (2. group, English)
08:25-08:55	1. group Unabbildbares Abbild Ground floor hall	Prof. Dr. Jenő Kiss (Protestant Theological Institute, Cluj-Napoca, Romania)
08:55-09:25	1. group Gottebenbildlichkeit und Frauen im Dienst Gottes Ground floor hall	Prof. Dr. Sarolta Püsök (Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania)
09:25-09:50	1. group discussion Ground floor hall	
08:25-08:55	2. group Sin and Perfection in the Book of Wisdom Main hall (3 rd floor)	Dr. Marcin Zieliński (John Paul II Catholic University, Lublin, Poland)
08:55-09:25	2. group Truly Human: The Only Ambivalent Nature Among All Natures Main hall (3 rd floor)	Mgr. Ivanka Dovhoruk (Charles University, Protestant Theological Faculty, Prague, Czech Republic)
09:25-09:50	2. group discussion Main hall (3 rd floor)	
09:50-10:20	Coffee break	
Fifth session, parallel lectures: Systematic theological aspects of <i>Imago Dei</i> (1. group); Statehood, Identity formation, Faith and communication (2. group)		Chairpersons Dr. Marcin Zieliński (1. group) Dr. Theo Pleizier (2. group)
10:20-10:50	1. group Understanding <i>Imago Dei</i> in Northern Europe During the Conversion Era: Saint Boniface	Prof. Dr. Gert van Klinken (Protestant Theological

	Main hall (3 rd floor)	University, Groningen, The Netherlands)
10:50-11:20	1. group Karl Barth's Doctrine of <i>Imago Dei</i> in the Context of Covenant Main hall (3 rd floor)	Drs. Gyopárka Jakab-Köves (Károli Gáspár Reformed University, Budapest; Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary, Hungary)
11:20-11:50	1. group Human Work as an Important Dimension of the Likeness of God Main hall (3 rd floor)	Dr. Zoltán Balikó (Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary, Hungary)
11:50-12:20	1. group discussion Main hall (3 rd floor)	
10:20-10:50	2. group "When I was baptized, Christ in Me Became a Croat": <i>Imago Dei</i> as a National Program Ground floor hall	Dr. Zoran Grozdanov (University Center for Protestant Theology Matthias Flacius Illyricus, University of Zagreb, Croatia)
10:50-11:20	2. group <i>Imago Dei</i> : How Can Humanity Exist in Faith in God and Embrace Science? Ground floor hall	Rev. Attila Balla (Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary, Hungary)
11:20-11:50	2. group <i>Imago Dei</i> in Preaching: Theological Warrant for More Active Involvement of the Listeners Ground floor hall	Dr. Enoh Šeba (University Center for Protestant Theology Matthias Flacius Illyricus, University of Zagreb, Croatia)
11:50-12:20	2. group discussion Ground floor hall	
12:20-13:45	Lunch – Vitafit Restaurant	
14:00-21:00	Excursion to Tihany, dinner at Lucullus Restaurant (Noszlop) on the way back to Pápa	

Saturday 23 April 2022		
09:00-09:20	Morning service Main hall (3 rd floor)	Dr. Ibolya Balla
Sixth session: Pastoral care		Chairperson Dr. Katya Tolstaya
09:30-10:00	Self-image in the Mirror of Christian Anthropology and the Approach of Pastoral Care Main hall (3 rd floor)	Drs. Márta Lucski (Pápa Reformed Theological Seminary, Hungary)
10:00-10:30	Restoring the Image of God? A Theological Perspective on Pastoral Care Main hall (3 rd floor)	Dr. Theo Pleizier (Protestant Theological University, Groningen, The Netherlands)
10:30-12:00	Evaluation and Planning Session Main hall (3 rd floor)	
12:30	Lunch – Vitafit Restaurant	