

## **THE IMAGE OF GOD ACCORDING TO THOMAS AQUINAS**

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**Abstract:** *In God's likeness and image, the man was made. But the likeness of God seemed to diminish once man committed sin. Man, nevertheless, continues to bear God's likeness and image. One of the key leaders in church history, Thomas Aquinas, tries to clarify what this likeness and image of God signify. The Bible offers a perspective on this aspect of God's likeness and image. The Seventh-Day Adventist doctrines offer an explanation for it that is consistent with the biblical perspective. In the end, it was discovered that while Adventist teachings are in line with the Bible and hold that the image of God can be found in a broader view, namely in the physical, mental, and spiritual, as opposed to Thomas Aquinas's argument that it can only be found in human intellect and understanding.*

**Keywords:** *image, likeness, Thomas Aquinas*

**Abstrak:** Manusia diciptakan menurut gambar dan rupa Allah. Tetapi setelah jatuh ke dalam dosa, maka gambar dan rupa Allah kelihatannya pudar. Tetapi manusia masih memantulkan gambar dan rupa Allah. Thomas Aquinas yang adalah salah satu tokoh di dalam sejarah gereja berusaha menjelaskan mengenai gambar dan rupa Allah ini. Alkitab memberikan padangan terkait dengan gambar dan rupa Allah ini. Sejalan dengan pandangan alkitab, ajaran Advent hari ketujuh memberikan penjelasan mengenai hal ini. Pada akhirnya didapati bahwa ketika Thomas Aquinas menyatakan bahwa gambar Allah hanya dapat ditemukan dalam intelektual manusia dan pengertian, ajaran Advent selaras dengan alkitab menyatakan bahwa gambar Allah dapat ditemukan dalam perspektif yang lebih luas ialah dalam fisik, mental, dan spiritual.

**Kata kunci:** gambar, rupa, Thomas Aquinas

### **Introduction**

According to the bible in Genesis 1:26 says: "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. Several scholars have tried to define the meaning of the image of God. This title became an issue that appears in world scholars. However, many scholars have tried to give their opinion and arguments and one of them was Thomas Aquinas. According to Seeberg (1977), He was placed on a level with Paul and Augustine, receiving the title doctor Angelicus, and Gilby (2006) says that Aquinas acknowledged as one of the leading theologians of his times.

Brauer (1971) gives us the information that Thomas Aquinas was born in Roccasecca, located between Rome and Naples in 1225. At age five, Aquinas entered the not distant Benedictine abbey of Montecassino where he began his education. Later on, Aquinas transferred to the University of Naples where he came into contact with a new group called the Order of Preachers or Dominicans. Afterwards, Aquinas went on to study in Cologne with Albert the Great. Aristotelian philosophy was something that Aquinas was predisposed to. He sought to employ

rational argumentation in defense of Christian theology. He espoused the metaphysical teachings of Aristotle, which were a change from the Augustinian tradition of the middle ages. According to Genesis 1:26, the human being was created by God in His own image and likeness, however, this statement invokes a question, what is really the meaning of "created in God's image" mainly in the view of Thomas Aquinas? Is there any resemblance to the teaching of Aquinas with the common concept of the "image of God" in the SDA teaching itself? What are the differences and similarity that exist? What are the common values? The purpose of this study is to know the meaning of God's image from Thomas Aquinas perspective and to compare with the Seventh day Adventist beliefs which is suitable with our doctrine or not. Besides, the ministers can be able to explain to the church members about the meaning of the image of God with the correct perception because in some churches tend to make wrong interpretation about what the image of God is.

## **Method**

This study will involve literary and theological while several sources will be taken from the internet. In its literary analysis, an explanation will be offered concerning Thomas Aquinas views of the Image of God. Then, a biblical evaluation on its teaching will be made to understand fully the concept of the image of God in the writings of Thomas Aquinas.

## **Result and Discussion**

Jonson (1988) says that it has been claimed that one's conception of the image of God in man determines the fate of every theology and therefore the concept of the image of God holds a crucial role in the overview of the scholars, especially Thomas Aquinas. In his discussion of the image of God in man, Aquinas (1963) raises 9 essential topics to define his position regarding the matter. A brief introduction and analysis will be presented to reflect his main point:

1. Is there an image of God in a man?

According to Aquinas, "there is in man a likeness to God, not, indeed, a perfect likeness, but imperfect. And scripture signifies the same thing when it says that man was made to God's likeness; for the preposition to signify a certain approach, as of something at a distance."

2. Is there an image of God in non-rational creatures?

In harmony with Augustine, Aquinas agrees with him that those intellectual creatures alone are made into God-image.

3. Is God's image found more in angels than in men?

In the same situation as the assumption of the person that men are equal with the angels. Why do they give the assumption like this? Because among men and angels were created by God and He had given the power among them. Thomas Aquinas replied that "From this point

of view, the image of God is more perfect in the angels than in man because their intellectual nature is more perfect." Man is perfect when they were created but the angels are more perfect than the human being as the image of God.

4. Is God's image found in every man?

The central issue in this section is whether the image of God can be found in every man or not since everyone has been corrupted by sin and therefore loses the image of God. Aquinas replies that the image of God itself could be considered at three stages.

The first stage is man's natural aptitude for understanding and loving God, an aptitude that consists in the very nature of the mind which is common to all men. The next stage is where a man is actually or dispositively knowing and loving God, but still imperfectly, and here we have the image by the conformity of grace. The third stage is where a man knows and loves God perfectly, and this is the image by the likeness of glory. Thus, in the text of the Psalm, the light of thy countenance O Lord is sealed upon us, the Gloss distinguishes a threefold image, namely, the image of creation, of re-creation, and of likeness. The first stage of the image then is found in all men, the second only in the just, and the third only in the blessed.

5. Does God's image in man refer to God's essence, or to all the divine persons, or to one of them?

Being in God's image in the sense of imitating the divine nature does not exclude being in God's image in the sense of representing the three persons; indeed, one follows on the other. Thus, we must say that God's image is in man with reference to both the divine nature and the Trinity of persons; for, after all, that is what God is, one nature in three persons.

6. Is God's image found only in man's mind?

According to his views, Thomas Aquinas emphasized that "Thus God's likeness in the manner of an image is to be found in man as regards his mind, but as regards his other parts only in the manner of a trace."

7. Is God's image realized in man by his (mental) capacities, attitudes, or activities?

From its mental capacities, attitudes, or activities God's image can be realized in man. Aquinas used Augustine words that the moment a rational soul began to use its reason and intellect for beholding God, then from the moment, it began to be it had in its God's image.

8. Is God's image with reference to all objects or not?

The mind brings itself to bear upon an object in two ways; directly and immediately, or indirectly and through something else, as when someone sees a man's reflection in a mirror and is thereby said to direct his attention on the man himself. And that is why Augustine can say that perceive a trinity, not yet God indeed, but already an image of God. But it is an image, not because the mind is bearing directly on itself, but because through this act it can

proceed further to bear on God, as is clear from the text of Augustine quoted in support above.

9. What is the difference between "image" and likeness"?

Thomas Aquinas located the image in the human ability to think and reason, to use language and art, far surpassing the abilities of any animals. He assumed that the image of God including our bravely mind and our perspective. However, human has totally different with the animals because mind and reason. James (1978) added that Aquinas asserts that man is the image of God because he, of all the creatures, possesses intelligence and understanding. He accepted what the Augustine says that wherever you have an image, you have a likeness, but wherever you find likeness you do not necessarily find image. Therefore, there are different between likeness and image according to Thomas Aquinas.

Aquinas also looked the image and likeness as two separate concepts. The image itself is rationality. Man was created with this ability, with this image of God. After the man was created God gave him an extra gift, a *donum superadditum*, the likeness, understood as original righteousness. So, likeness can be distinguished from image in two ways. First, as preliminary to it, and covering a wider class of things, and in this way, likeness is looked for in terms of which we look for image. Secondly, likeness can be thought of as signifying the exactness and perfection of image.

However, Thomas Aquinas had tried to explain the relationship between image and likeness, and he concluded that likeness cannot be separated from the image. The two words stick on together, but every word has a different meaning. Likeness gives the perfection of the image.

### **Biblical Evaluation of the Image of God**

Thomas Aquinas emphasized between the image and likeness as the two things that cannot be separated. However, image could find only in human being. On the other hand, likeness could find in the other creations that have no reason or thinking. Next, what the bible says about the Image of God and what is the relation between Image and likeness?

#### **Image of God**

In Genesis 1:26, God's image is translated as *Imago Dei*. In these verses, the author uses plural pronouns three times: us once and our twice. Before one can thoroughly understand the contentions made by theologians about the *Imago Dei*, two Hebrew words from Genesis 1:26-27 must be understood. According to Christianity (2022), the words are *tselem*, translated in the passage as *image* and *demut*, translated in the passage as *likeness*. James (1978), *demut* can also denote *copy* but it is weaker and more abstract, tempering.

#### **The Seventh-day Adventist Views about the Image of God**

The concept of God's image in the Seventh-day Adventist perspectives clearly seen to explain that Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character. That image was most evident in terms of his spiritual nature. He became a living soul, or rather living being, endowed with a free will, a self-conscious personality (Nichol, 1976). The Seventh-day Adventist beliefs have 2 positions how to interpret about the image of God. Firstly, God is a spiritual being. For instance, in Hebrew 1:7, 14 indicated that God is the spiritual being. Therefore, he surely must endowed and transmit values such as mental and spiritual gifts to enable them to sustain and commune in a loving relationship with Him. Secondly, God has a physically form. In the bible, some people have seen parts of Jesus's body. For instance, in Exodus 33:20-23 that God shown His back to Moses.

The Seventh-day Adventist Believe (2005) states that Since man was created in the moral image of God, he was given the opportunity to demonstrate his love and loyalty to his Creator. Like God, he had the power of choice—the freedom to think and act according to moral imperatives. Human being has been endowed the ability or God' to worship and serve Him. In the Christianity thoughts of God's image shown in our human appearance, our perspective or mind and our physicals. All of these as a part of the image of God and reflecting of the God's image.

## **Conclusion**

Thomas' doctrine of God's image, like all of his theology, was an effort to interpret the tradition of the Church Fathers faithfully and yet critically, and it is therefore a useful index of his theological method in this respect. It also illustrates his method in an even more basic way, for the doctrine of *imago Dei* belongs simultaneously to natural theology and to revelation (Al-Bitar, 2003). If compare and evaluate the argument between Aquinas and the Seventh day Adventist believe we could find that Aquinas argument for the image of God slightly different from our argument. For instance, Cairus (2008) says that Aquinas told that the image of God can be found only in the human intellectual and understanding. On the other hand, SDA beliefs of the Image of God can be found in a broader sense. Physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual faculties are closely related to the dignity of a person, an essential aspect of being an image of God.

Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position under God. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in

penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment (Seventh-day Adventist Believe, 2005).

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### **Rererence**

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