

THE IMAGE OF GOD IN REFORMED ORTHODOXY. SOUNDINGS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL KEY CONCEPT

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ABSTRACT. One of the less well-researched areas in the recent renaissance of the study of Reformed orthodoxy is anthropology. In this contribution, we investigate a core topic of Reformed orthodox theological anthropology, viz. its treatment of the human being as created in the image of God. First, we analyze the locus of the *imago Dei* in the Leiden *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* (1625). Second, we highlight some shifts of emphasis in Reformed orthodox treatments of this topic in response to the budding Cartesianism. In particular, the close proximity of the unfallen human being and God was carefully delineated as a result of Descartes's positing of a univocal correspondence between God and man; and the Cartesian suggestion that original righteousness functioned as a barrier for certain natural impulses, was rejected. Third, we show how, in response to the denial of this connection, the image of God was explicitly related to the concept of natural law. Tying in with similar findings on other *loci*, we conclude that Reformed orthodox thought on the *imago Dei* exhibits a variegated pattern of extensions, qualifications, and adjustments of earlier accounts within a clearly discernable overall continuity.

KEY WORDS: Reformed orthodoxy, Cartesianism, theological anthropology, *imago Dei*, natural law.

Introduction

The recent wave of renewed scholarly interest in Reformed scholasticism is characterized by a sustained wish to listen carefully to Reformed orthodox voices and to chart them in all their complexity and subtlety within the cultural context of early modernity. By avoiding or postponing critical theological judgements, usually voiced from some later perspective, scholars have been able to unearth a much richer, more detailed, and diversified account

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of both Reformed scholasticism and Reformed orthodoxy.¹ The groundbreaking studies of Richard Muller continue to be a landmark here (see esp. Muller 2003). Stereotypes that used to govern our perception of Reformed orthodoxy, for example as deviating from the much more ‘purely Reformed’ theology of John Calvin, have been skillfully dismantled (see e.g. Muller 2012a). Meanwhile, as Muller himself indicates in his contribution to this issue (Muller 2016), a lot of historical work has still to be done in this area.

In this contribution we will continue the exploration of continuities and discontinuities in post-Reformation Reformed theology by focusing on the notion of the image of God (*imago Dei*) as it is usually unpacked in theological anthropology, or the *locus de homine*. Reformed orthodox theological anthropology is not among the areas that have been studied most closely in the recent renaissance of scholarly interest. Clearly, the doctrines of God, revelation and soteriology have taken pride of place here. While the studies we do have on Reformed orthodox anthropology (such as Williams 1948: 66-93; Strohm 1996: 423-446; Goudriaan 2006: 233-286; Van Asselt et al. 2010; Sytsma 2013) focus on a number of different subthemes and in some cases also include an investigation of the content and meaning of the *imago Dei*, a comprehensive analysis of the theme in Reformed orthodoxy is as yet lacking. At the same time, the *imago Dei* is usually considered a key concept in both classical and contemporary theological anthropology (cf. for the contemporary discussion e.g. Cortez 2010: 14-40). How significant it is in Reformed thought can be gleaned from the fact that it figures in the very title of the chapter on anthropology in the Leyden *Synopsis Theologiae Purioris* (1625) ‘About Man Created in the Image of God’ (*De homine ad imaginem Dei creato*; Te Velde et al. 2015: 314-315). Therefore, there is ample reason for a further exploration of the Reformed orthodox treatment of the *imago Dei*. What we provide here is no more than a modest attempt to chart some of the trajectories of doctrinal reflection on the topic within the history of Reformed orthodoxy.

After having explored the discussion of the *imago Dei* in the famous *Synopsis Theologiae Purioris*, a compendium of Reformed dogmatics written by four theology professors at the University of Leiden, we trace some shifts of emphasis in later Reformed orthodox treatments of the topic. In particular, we examine how Reformed orthodox thinkers articulated and elaborated their views on the *imago* in response to the budding Cartesianism in the later part of the 17th century. We also show how, in response to the denial of this connection, the image of God was explicitly related to the concept of natural law.

1 These two are not identical. Reformed scholasticism first of all denotes a method that can be found already in the time of the Reformation (e.g. in Ursinus, Zanchi, et al.); Reformed orthodoxy denotes the post-Reformation period from ca. 1565-1725 and includes non-scholastic voices and sources next to scholastic ones. In this paper we will focus on Reformed orthodoxy as a period.

We realize that in this way we only explore a small sample of the debates on the image of God that were going on at the time—also, for example, with Remonstrants and Socinians (see Marckius 1690: 248-251; De Moor 1765: 33-35, 38-39, 41-46; Vtringa 1762: 156, 159; cf. Goudriaan 2011). We selected our case studies in such a way, however, that they include various time frames as well as various disciplines—theology, philosophy, and legal studies. Despite the limited character of our inquiry, our findings suffice to show that Reformed orthodox thought on the *imago Dei* exhibits a variegated pattern of extensions, qualifications, and adjustments of earlier accounts within a clearly discernable overall continuity.

The Image of God in the Leiden *Synopsis*

The *Synopsis purioris theologiae* consists of 52 disputations; disputations 1-23 have recently been republished as the opening volume of a new edition, which for the first time adds an English translation to the Latin text (Te Velde et al. 2015). As the title suggests, the *Synopsis* surveys the full range of Christian doctrine (for its historical backgrounds, see Van den Belt & Sinnema 2012). Published six years after the closure of the Synod of Dordt (1619), the *Synopsis* reflects the newly established orthodoxy by expounding Reformed doctrine and delineating it over against Remonstrants, Socinians, Roman Catholics, Libertines, and occasionally also Lutherans. The disputation *De homine ad imagem Dei creato* is the thirteenth one in line; it is preceded by a disputation on the good and bad angels (12) and followed by disputations on the fall of Adam (14) and original sin (15). In fact, discourse on the image of God is continued in these subsequent disputations since here it becomes clear what remains of the divine image after the Fall. Disputation 13 consists of 54 ‘theses’—short paragraphs that make a distinct point within the overall argument. This format reflects the preceding oral disputation as it was held by one of the professors with his students of theology, who had to defend or oppose these theses. The disputation on the human being as created in the image of God had been presided by one of the four authors of the *Synopsis*, Antonius Thysius (1565-1640), who most probably also drafted—or in any case endorsed—its theses.

The *Synopsis*’s disputation on the image of God opens with underscoring the unique dignity of the human being: ‘Man is clearly the high point and goal of nature’s lower order, yet he also belongs to a higher order, he is the ‘sum’ of everything (*compendium totius*) and the bond that links earthly and heavenly things’ (13.2). The idea of the human being as a microcosmos (uniting the material and spiritual parts of created reality in itself), which is alluded to here, was a classical trope that had made its way in Christian theology early on and had also been adopted by, for example, John Calvin (Te Velde et al. 2015, 315; Calvin 1560: I 5, 3). The dignity of the human being

also shows forth from the fact that humans were the last creatures to be made by God. It is concluded from this sequence that God first made all other things for the sake of mankind, ‘things that make his condition a good and happy one’ in order to finally create man (13.6). In this way, ‘there would be a progression from less to more perfected things’ (13.6). The ‘superior dignity’ (*summa dignitas*) of humankind is particularly clear, however, from the fact that God created humans in his own image, for this shows that the human being is ‘a rather close copy’ of God (13.8).

What exactly does this *imago Dei* consist in? The *Synopsis* is unambiguous here: the entire human being ‘in both soul and body’ is created in the image and according to the likeness of God. Thus, the embodied character of our human existence is part of the image of God (13.10-13). To be sure, the earthly material out of which we were created ‘is a reminder of our weakness and humbler nature’ (13.12; humbler, presumably, as compared to the incorporeal angels). It was formed by God to be ‘fit for a human soul’, however (13.13). It is this soul that takes pride of place in the *Synopsis*’s exposition of the *imago Dei*. The soul is a proper substance, not an accident or quality (13.15). Its nature very closely approximates the divine essence, and it is made similar to the divine properties (13.18, with reference to Acts 17:28, 29). Thus, like God the soul is ‘immune to death’ (13.27), and it has many ‘godlike functions’ (13.28):

For its clever genius is awe-inspiring, as is its swift thinking, its ease of perception, its sharp discernment, its discourse and reasoning about all things, its recollection of past events, its consideration of current events, its ability to foresee future events, and especially its ability to turn towards itself and reflect upon itself, and its self-awareness (13.28).

As to the location or ‘seat’ (*sedes*) of the soul—a theme to which we will return later in this contribution—the *Synopsis* after some deliberation opts for the heart (13.21-22). The *Synopsis* dwells on the various faculties of the soul, such as its ability to discern between true and false, fair and unfair, just and unjust, its intellect or mind, and its will. After in this way having explored the various parts of the image of God, the author then proposes the following definition: ‘By this expression we mean the goodness (*bonitas*) of man, his uprightness (*rectitudo*) and perfection (or ideal state), his surpassing excellence (*excellencia et excessus*) over all other living creatures, and his closer approximation to God’ (13.37).

This surpassing excellence over all other creatures is connected with man’s divine calling to have dominion over all living things and the whole earth (13.41). Indeed, Moses seems to situate the image of God here (in Genesis 1:26-28) in this particular function—an observation which is shared by many biblical theologians today. But this function cannot be isolated from the

gift of the soul that is able to reason, and from a body that is able to put this dominion into practice; nor can this be done without wisdom, holiness and justice, or without being united with God. Interestingly, the *Synopsis* in this way includes in its purview all three ‘models’ that dominate contemporary systematic-theological reflection on the image of God, weaving together the structural, functional, and relational model into an integrated whole (cf. on these models e.g. Van der Kooi and Van den Brink 2017: §7.4). Its discussion of the *imago Dei* is closed with a final highlighting of the ‘pre-eminent status’ of the created human being (13.54).

Interestingly, the *Synopsis* does not make an exegetical distinction between the ‘image’ and ‘likeness’ of God. Like Calvin (Calvin 1560: 1 15, 3), the authors reject this distinction, arguing that from an exegetical point of view both concepts just explain and reinforce each other. This is interesting, since this distinction, which was introduced already by Irenaeus and Tertullian (Te Velde 2015: 329) and adopted by medieval theologians like Peter Lombard and Bernard of Clairvaux, had been used to bolster a much more important dogmatic distinction, viz. between the immutable substance of the image of God on the one hand and its original endowments (or the ‘likeness’ of God), which could be lost, on the other hand. While the substance of God’s image is to be found in the personal nature of man as a being consisting of body and soul and characterized by knowledge and will, its endowments or supernatural gifts comprise man’s perfect knowledge of God, wisdom and holiness—or in one word: his original righteousness. Indeed, we find this latter distinction in quite some early (e.g. Bucanus, Ursinus, Polanus) and later (e.g. Leydecker, Van Mastricht, Maresius, Heidanus, Walaeus) orthodox Reformed writers (cf. Heppe 1978: loc. XI, 15).

The authors of the *Synopsis*, however, whilst not denying this distinction did not push it either. Why they were reticent in this respect becomes clear in their disputation on original sin (15). If one distinguishes between the essential substance and the accidental endowments of the image of God, it is most obvious to connect (original) sin with the loss of its accidental part and to hold that its essential part was left intact. Indeed, this is how original sin was conceived of in parts of medieval scholastic (especially thomistic) theology. Also, it is this view that became mainstream in the wake of the council of Trente (Vandervelde 1975: 41-42). Reformed orthodoxy, however, considered the effects of human sin to be much more serious. In the *Synopsis* it is even argued that sin had ‘obliterated’ the image of God, replacing it with the image of Adam that was now being reproduced from generation to generation (15.6). Yet, on further consideration it does not seem as simple as that. For when, for example, also man’s immortal soul belonged to the image of God, as had been claimed by Thysius in disputation 13 (13.39), this would mean that after the fall into sin and the obliteration of the *imago Dei* man was

bereft of this soul, henceforth having only a body. That would be an absurd conclusion, however. In order to avoid such conclusions, the *Synopsis* argues that sin is not a substance but ‘something that inheres in human beings as an accident in the subject’ (15.23). Therefore, it does not change the human being into some other essence. ‘Even Adam, after the fall into sin, kept the same essence of his own nature that he had previously had, and he remained the same man’ (15.23). Original sin did not, as the gnesio-lutheran theologian Matthias Flacius (1520-1575) had it, turn into the ‘formal substance’ of the fallen human being.

This is not to say, however, that sin only destroyed the supernatural gifts with which God had adorned human nature, leaving human nature virtually unaffected. Here, it becomes clear that Reformed orthodoxy does not just copy medieval scholasticism, but gave it its own twist in light of the biblical and Augustinian *ressourcement* brought about by the magisterial Reformation.

And so those who locate original sin only in the absence of original righteousness do not express the force of this sin meaningfully enough. For our nature not only is destitute of what is good, but it also is so prolific in all things evil that it cannot be idle. And so along with Scripture we recognize two parts to this corruption [of sin]: the failure and loss of the good, and a depraved tendency to evil (15.25).

As a result, our relationship with God is broken, our body is no longer completely governed by our soul so that the original harmony between these two is disrupted, and even the very properties of the soul are seriously distorted. Even in man’s corrupt state, however, he retains his natural faculties, along with what is called the ‘physical substance’ (17.8) of the soul (meaning its ontological substrate). Thus, though seriously damaged, the image of God in the human being is not entirely wiped out. For example, though our free choice is no longer drawn towards the good but towards evil, it is still free in that our will chooses evil ‘willingly, and of its own accord’ (17.19). By the editors of the *Synopsis* this is taken to mean that it belongs to the human being’s ‘perennial properties to have a will that acts (...) by deliberate choices of alternative options’ (Te Velde et al. 2015: 15; cf. Van Asselt et al. 2010 and, for the opposite view, Helm 2011).

Let us draw up the balance of the *Synopsis*’s discourse on the human being as created in the image of God. To begin with, the ontological, intellectual, and moral perfections of the first human beings are exalted to such an extent that one wonders how it is possible that such perfectly equipped god-like creatures as Adam and Eve could fall into sin. What attraction could evil possibly have on such godly—and god-like—persons? However, the perfection in which the first humans were created serves as a warrant that their transgression cannot be ascribed to any other cause than their own will. It is not their creator that is to be blamed. For, second, in the disputation, ‘on the Fall

of Adam', the full responsibility for the primordial sin is laid on the shoulders of the perfect first couple. Although both God's permission (14.25) and the devil's instigation (14.27) are recognized, 'the internal cause of the fall is the free will of both our parents' (14.30). It is wrong to think that the sin of Adam and Eve was minor and excusable. 'For the less burdensome and easier it was to observe God's commandment, so much the more without excuse was each of our parents before God on account of that transgression, and guilty of temporal and eternal death' (14.37). Thus, their original perfections which the *Synopsis* had so exuberantly displayed made their transgression and disobedience all the more serious.

Reformed Christianity is not well-known for a particularly high appreciation of the human being. In the popular image it even has a more negative view of the human nature and capacities than any other Christian tradition. Indeed, although it is not easy to define what is typical for Reformed theology vis-à-vis other Christian theological traditions (for a recent attempt see Van den Brink and Smits 2015), Reformed theology definitely displays a strong awareness of the human frailty and misery as a result of sin. Though we continue to be distinct from other species and special in God's eyes, sin deprives us of all spiritual understanding (Calvin 1960: II. 2, 19). There is a clear continuity between, for example, Calvin and the authors of the *Synopsis* here. At the same time, as we have seen Reformed theologians in the era of Protestant orthodoxy, once again just like Calvin (cf. e.g. Van der Kooi 2005: §2.3.1), ascribed a very high ontological, intellectual, and moral status to the created human being. It is almost impossible to see any continuity between the blissful state in which we were created and our deplorable present state. Arguably, however, it was precisely their belief in the fateful consequences of human sin which inspired the authors of the *Synopsis* to uphold a high view of the *imago Dei*: the more perfectly the human being was equipped by God, the more wicked and despicable became his sin. And, in turn, the more wicked his sin, the more glorious and praiseworthy God's grace.

The Image of God and the Debate on Cartesianism

We now turn to a few debates in which the *imago Dei* played a role several decades after the publication of the *Synopsis*. The first debate is related to the philosophy of René Descartes. In a wide-ranging critique of Cartesian theology that Petrus van Mastricht (1630-1706) published in 1677, creation in the 'image and likeness of God' appeared as one of the controversial themes, even though it was dealt with only briefly (Van Mastricht 1677: 475-477; cf. Goudriaan 2006: 264, and on Mastricht's life and theology, Neele 2009). Three points of Cartesian thought can be mentioned here in particular. In the first place, Van Mastricht targeted the Cartesian notion that the 'idea of God' in the human mind was an expression of the image of God. Secondly,

he criticized the idea that ‘original justice’ blocked certain natural affects and made sure ‘that, given such or such motions of animal spirits, these affects do not arise in the pineal gland’. In Descartes, the term ‘animal spirits’ referred to what he called ‘a certain very fine air or wind’, something entirely physical, within the human nerves, that transmitted sensations (Cottingham 1993: 13–15). Finally, it was characteristic for Descartes’s theory of the image of God that this image was to be found especially in the human will—and this view as well is countered by Van Mastricht.

(1) The first point goes back to Descartes’s third meditation. Here we find one of the passages in which Descartes unambiguously referred to Genesis 1:26–27 (Carraud 1990: 14):

And indeed it is no surprise that God, in creating me, should have placed this idea in me to be, as it were, the mark of the craftsman stamped on his work—not that the mark need be anything distinct from the work itself. But the mere fact that God created me is a very strong basis for believing that I am somehow made in his image and likeness, and that I perceive that likeness, which includes the idea of God, by the same faculty which enables me to perceive myself (Descartes 1996: vol. 7; trans. Cottingham 1996: 35).

At this stage in his book, Van Mastricht’s objection to the claim that the ‘idea of God’ is part of the image and likeness of God was merely that it was a novelty. If Descartes’s claim were true, previous centuries of Christian thought including the Bible itself would have missed a significant insight, which would imply their imperfection (Van Mastricht 1677: 476, cf. 209). In another chapter, Van Mastricht discussed the *idea Dei* more extensively, and specifically its Cartesian definition as an ‘image’. Here he cited Thomas Aquinas’s view that ‘God’s essence cannot be seen by any created likeness’ (Van Mastricht 1677: 204; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1, q. 12, art. 2) and he agreed with Francisco Suárez, who denied ‘that there can be any entity that bears a proper and natural likeness and image of God, because such an image or likeness cannot be conceived except by a univocal agreement in that form concerning which the essence of the likeness or image is ascribed’ (*Disputationes metaphysicae* 30.11.31, Suárez 1861: 151; Van Mastricht 1677: 204). The crucial problem, then, with Descartes’s notion of an ‘idea of God’, given his definition of ‘ideas’ as ‘as it were the images of things’ (*Meditationes de prima philosophia* 3; Cottingham 1996: 25), was that it seemed to assume a univocal correspondence between the uncreated God on the one hand and created intellects on the other. In opposition to this univocity, it was Van Mastricht’s intention to uphold that God infinitely transcends all epistemological images and likenesses that created beings may have. He wrote:

The human being is said to be the image of God, not however a univocal image by which he represents God in all, or even the most important, perfections such as infinity, omnipotence, immutability, simplicity, etc. But [he is], if not an equivocal, then at least an analogical image (if it is permitted to use Aristotelian terms in the face of Cartesians), insofar as he comes near to the most perfect God in more, and more superior, perfections than any other creature under the moon (Van Mastricht 1677: 210).

Here Van Mastricht joined a broad Reformed orthodox preference for analogy (cf. Muller 2012b). While other creatures are a ‘vestige’ (*vestigium*) of God, humans alone have been created with a rational soul adorned with gifts of righteousness and wisdom by which they come closer to God, thus bearing His image. Still, this close proximity of the unfallen human being and God was now carefully qualified as a non-univocal correspondence between God and man.

(2) The second Cartesian view that Van Mastricht criticized with respect to the image of God concerned ‘the most important part of the divine image’: original justice (Van Mastricht 1677: 476). At this point he responded not primarily to Descartes himself but to Christoph Wittich (1625-1687), a professor of theology at Leiden University and a prominent Cartesian. Wittich taught that original righteousness had the function of blocking certain affects from arising after certain motions of spirits had been sparked. Van Mastricht quoted what Wittich had written in his *Theologia pacifica*:

There is indeed now a battle between reason and the affects that arises from the fact that the pineal gland can be pushed from one side by the soul, from the other side by animal spirits, and that these two impulses are frequently opposed; but in the first human being this battle could not occur, because original justice could prevent that given these or those motions of spirits such affects be stirred up (Wittich 1671: 43, also quoted in Van Mastricht 1677: 476).

As Wittich himself indicated, the general theory outlined in this quotation was taken from Descartes’s treatise *Les passions de l’âme*, 1, § 47 (1996, vol. 11: 365). The theological proviso that Wittich added did not convince Van Mastricht. If the opposition between soul and animal spirits described by Wittich was the natural situation for human beings, then it also applied to Adam before the Fall, unless he had a different nature. The function of original justice, Van Mastricht argued, was ‘not to obstruct the natural but bring it to completion’ (*neque etiam justitiae erat originalis naturalia impedire, sed perficere*) (Van Mastricht 1677: 476). According to Van Mastricht, this Cartesian position was essentially the same as the view defended by Roman Catholics who taught that original righteousness prevented the *deeds* of concupiscence but not the provenance of concupiscence as such. From their perspective, the ‘battle between flesh and spirit was not truly and in the proper sense a sin’

since humans consisted of flesh and spirit and these, as a matter of fact, have opposed inclinations (Van Mastricht 1677: 460). Defending the goodness of both Creator and creation, Van Mastricht denied that original righteousness operated in contravention against created nature. For him, a crucial question was whether the stirrings of animal spirits are sinful or not. If they are not sinful, perfection seemed attainable for humans; but if they are sinful while being natural, how could Cartesians deny that God is the author of sin (Van Mastricht 1677: 462)? Van Mastricht operates in line with the Leiden *Synopsis* here, according to which the state of integrity involved no need whatsoever to constrain affects, inclinations, or bodily members, since these were all ‘holy (*sancta*)’ and ‘well-ordered’ (13.38). It is the result of human sin that they became directed towards evil.

(3) In the *Meditationes de prima philosophia* Descartes linked the image and likeness of God specifically to the human will (cf. Carraud 1990: 14):

It is only the will, or freedom of choice, which I experience within me to be so great that the idea of any greater faculty is beyond my grasp; so much so that it is above all [*praecipue*] in virtue of the will that I understand myself to bear in some way the image and likeness of God. For although God’s will is incomparably greater than mine... nevertheless it does not seem any greater than mine when considered as will in the essential and strict sense (Meditation 4; trans. Cottingham 1996: 40).

This passage is connected with the Cartesian theme of an infinite human will, which Van Mastricht discussed as well, once again mainly in response to Christoph Wittich (1677: 451-457). While Van Mastricht did not focus here on the will as a main *locus* of the image of God, he again criticized what he saw as an unwarranted elevation of human powers that failed to recognize the perfection and infinity of God. Wittich had asserted, in true Cartesian fashion, that the greatest resemblance (*similitudo*) between humans and God was found in the human will, since it was ‘in its own way infinite (*suo sensu infinita*)’ and the range of its possible objects equalled that of the divine will (Van Mastricht 1677: 451, quoting Wittich 1671: 94-95, and Descartes, *Principia philosophiae* I, § 35; 1996a: 18). In claims like these, Van Mastricht saw a manifestly deficient recognition of God’s transcendence. The Cartesian argument, he wrote, seemed to lead to the conclusion that the human will was, in fact, even greater than the divine will, since the latter did not count sin among its possible objects.

Not all Cartesian theologians went as far as Wittich did. Frans Burman (1671: 382-389), for example, a professor at Utrecht, did not privilege the human will in his reflections on the image of God. The Leiden professor Abraham Heidanus likewise gave a wide-ranging explanation of what the image of God consists in (1686: 331-346). He stated, in an obvious allusion to

Descartes's fourth meditation, that 'we find above all [*praecipue*] in the will a certain image and likeness of God', but the allusion does not imply much. Heidanus backed up the Cartesian comparison between the divine and the human free will by quoting Bernard of Clairvaux who stated that 'freedom from necessity pertains equally and indifferently to God and the entire creature, both good and evil; it is as intact in the creature, in its way, as it is in the Creator, but in a more powerful way' (1686: 338; for a comparison between Bernard and Descartes, see Marion 1993). Yet Heidanus avoided the predicate 'infinite' for the human will. Moreover, he stated explicitly that the divine will is 'incomparably greater, both with respect to the joined knowledge and power in Him... and with respect to the object, because it extends to more [objects]'. Heidanus modified the Cartesian position profoundly by limiting the point of agreement between the divine and the human will to a lack of external coercion (*a nulla Vi externa Nos ad id* [namely, to deny or affirm whatever is proposed by the intellect] *determinari sentiamus*; 1686: 338).

Natural Law and the State of Integrity

We now move on to a slightly later stage in the history of Protestant Orthodoxy. In the early eighteenth century, the Rostock professor Zacharias Grapius (1671-1713), a Lutheran theologian who was well informed about Reformed theology, published a series of treatises on theological controversies. In one of these books, *Theologia recens controversa continuata*, he devoted a chapter to disputed questions on the image of God. One of the chapters concerned the question 'Whether natural law had a place in the state of integrity?' (Grapius 1714: 132-134). As Grapius explained, the question was provoked by a treatise published in 1684 by a Dutch jurist, Willem van der Muelen, namely *Dissertationes de origine juris naturalis et societatis civilis*.

Van der Muelen (1659-1739) was in his day a well-known Utrecht patrician and legal scholar. In an analysis of his political ideas, E. H. Kossmann described him as 'an orthodox Gomarist thinker and an Orangist who was no longer familiar with traditional Calvinistic political theory', adopting, in an eclectic manner, ideas from John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Baruch Spinoza, Hugo Grotius, and Samuel Pufendorf (Kossmann 2000: 95-109, there 108). In his 1684 dissertation on the origin of natural law, Van der Muelen argued that natural law, being the 'dictate of right reason', involved a 'distinction between lawful and unlawful, good and evil' (1684: 5). In the state of integrity, nothing was unlawful, and therefore, argued Van der Muelen, there was no natural law either. Humans in the state of integrity had no knowledge of good, since they could not have knowledge of evil—good and evil being known from their opposite. Since in the state of integrity the contrast between good and evil was unknown, there was no natural law either (1684: 5). In the state of integrity humans lived in accordance with that which has later been

called the natural law ‘from a pure natural impulse’ (1684: 16). Accordingly, the creation of man in the image of God did not consist in ‘a knowledge of good or evil, or in the distinction between just and unjust’, but rather ‘in this perfect disposition of the soul by which he always wanted whatever pleased to God his Creator and corresponded to the integrity of his nature’ (1684: 58).

Grapius narrated that Van der Muelen’s theory provoked academic responses from Simon Henricus Musaeus, a legal scholar at Kiel, and from Valentin Alberti, a theology professor at Leipzig (Grapius 1714: 132). Van der Muelen defended his views against their criticisms. Grapius himself joined the fray in 1715, rejecting Van der Muelen’s view for several reasons. Since natural law is ‘the eternal and immutable truth of God (Romans 1:25)’, it must have been valid in paradise as well. Likewise, since natural law has been written on the human heart (Romans 2:5), it must have existed before the Fall already. Natural law, moreover, is usually considered a remnant of the image of God and accordingly it must have belonged to the first humans as well, since they were created in God’s image (1715: 133). For Grapius, then, the inherent integrity of created human nature was inconceivable without the implied norm of natural law.

While Van der Muelen received a critical response from the side of German Lutheran scholars, in Dutch Reformed theology his views seem to have attracted little attention. Van der Muelen is not mentioned in the bibliographies of eighteenth-century discussions of the image of God in Martinus Vitringa (1762: 153-159) and Bernhardinus de Moor (1765: 20-52). The Reformed jurist Ulrik Huber (1636-1694), however, paid attention to the question, referring to the Reformed theologian Herman Witsius for a brief refutation of the view ‘that there has not been in the proper sense a law before the Fall’ (Witsius 1685: 17). Without mentioning Van der Muelen by name, Huber refuted in his *Digressiones Justinianae* the author of the dissertation *De origine juris naturalis* (Huber 1696: 413). Van der Muelen had argued that where vice is absent there is no use for laws either since their function is to suppress vice. Huber retorted that in the state of integrity there was, still, a ‘law’ not to eat from the tree of good and evil, which would be impossible if Van der Muelen were right. Huber also denied Van der Muelen’s claim that Adam had no knowledge of good or evil but acted well simply by impulse and inclination. Before transgressions were actually committed, Huber argued, human conscience prescribed ‘what was to be done but also what was not to be done’, which is in fact the natural law. Punishment was not unknown in Paradise, both explicitly in the form of the divine threat and implicitly from ‘the understanding and consequence of the divine command’. According to Huber, righteous rational deliberations on what should be done or avoided are part of the image of God. In support of this view Huber referred to a

number of authoritative texts: Paul wrote about a human being that ‘has been created in the likeness to God... in righteousness and holiness of truth’ (Ephesians 3:24) or ‘in knowledge, according to the image of his Creator’ (Colossians 3:10). Cicero, too, after having ‘discussed a lot about the excellence and divinity of reason, finally concludes: *there is, therefore, a likeness of the human being with God*’ (Huber 1696: 413; cf. Huber 1708: 5-6). For Huber, then, the image of God, being inherently characterized by righteousness *and the knowledge thereof*, could not be conceived without a natural law. Here, Huber explicitly defended the view that was implicit within Reformed orthodoxy as a whole (cf. Van Drunen 2010: 161-162).

Conclusion

In this contribution, we briefly explored a core topic of Reformed orthodox theological anthropology, viz. its treatment of the human being as created in the image of God. First, we analyzed the locus of the *imago Dei* in the Leiden *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* (1625) in order to find a general picture. Second, we highlighted some special accents in later Reformed orthodox treatments of this topic in response to the budding Cartesianism. In particular, the human being’s close proximity to God that is implied by the *imago* was carefully distinguished from a univocal correspondence between God and man as it was upheld by Descartes; also, the Cartesian suggestion that original justice blocked certain natural impulses in order to let the opposed impulses of the soul prevail, was rejected (along with earlier medieval and Roman Catholic accounts to the effect that sin did not radically distort these natural impulses). Third, in response to the denial of this connection in the eclectic philosophical milieu of late Orthodoxy, the image of God was explicitly related to the concept of natural law. These later debates reveal, as major theological concerns, the intention to avoid a univocal interpretation of the image of God and to define the state of integrity as a morally good one that included human knowledge of the natural law. Despite the limited selection of voices we could make heard, it seems safe to conclude that, just as has been established with regard to other loci (cf. Muller 2003), Reformed orthodox thought on the *imago Dei* exhibits a variegated pattern of extensions, elaborations, and qualifications of earlier accounts within a clearly discernable overall continuity.

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