

CONFERENCE TIMETABLE

All events take place in the Chapel of the Resurrection, unless otherwise stated.

Monday 7th July

9.30-10.45 & 12.30-14.00 Registration

11.00 – 12.15 **Opening High Mass**

Celebrant: The Bishop of Oswestry, The Rt Revd Paul Thomas

Preacher: The Principal, The Revd Dr George Westhaver

12.30-13.45 Lunch (*Delegates to make own arrangements*)

13.45 Introduction and Opening of the Conference

The Principal

14.00-15.00

(1) Judith Wolfe – Restoring the Image.

This talk presents the Christian worldview as a narrative shaped by creation, redemption, and consummation, and explores the ways this framework informs a distinct understanding of the human person. It examines the human being as created for communion with God, marked by finitude and fallenness, and redeemed by participation in Jesus's sonship. Highlighting internal theological tensions and developments, it seeks to clarify how differing anthropological and ethical approaches within Christianity remain rooted in deep metaphysical commitments, offering a coherent foundation for ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue on moral and existential concerns.

15.00-15.30 Afternoon Tea and Coffee

15.30-16.15

(2) Gary A. Anderson – Does Redemption from Sin Require Making Satisfaction: The Case of King David?

The process of "restoring the image" obviously entails personal contrition and forgiveness in the wake of one's sins. The paradigmatic example of this in the Bible is Psalm 51, the prayer David is said to have spoken in the wake of his confrontation by the prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 12. In this paper, I shall examine the process of contrition, forgiveness, and penance that David undergoes and compare it to the figure of Saul. The ultimate goal will be to show the deep scriptural grounding of the distinction between punishment and satisfaction in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas and how this might deepen our understanding of Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

16.15 – 17.00

(3) Grant MacAskill – The Eikon, the Idolater and the Re-Newing of Worship: Contours and Implications of Paul’s Image Christology.

In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul identifies Jesus—quite specifically—as the image of God, linking his status as the *eikon* to the revealed glory of God. In the chapters that surround this identification, Paul proclaims the significance of Christ’s status as *eikon* for the believer’s participation in the life and goodness of God, setting this in contrast to the non-participation of the unbeliever. In this paper, I will explore the liturgical quality of Paul’s representation of Jesus the Eikon, his “Image Christology,” highlighting that this is closely connected to a key theme in the apostle’s thought: that the One God will repair or re-new their own true worship, not as an act of personal megalomania, but as an act of redemption and blessing for those who have given themselves over to enslavement by their idols. Tracing this theme will allow us to reevaluate and reframe the concept of Adam Christology in Paul. It will also be relevant to our evaluation of the recent approaches to the *imago Dei* that associate the concept with particular human functional capacities, in ways that compromise the status of neurodivergent people as persons.

17.15 – 17.45 Evensong

18.00 -18.45

(4) Chris R. Kugler - Jesus, the First and Final Human Being: Paul’s Christology as Teleological Anthropology.

Though it has rarely been appreciated—or, sometimes it has been appreciated for non-Pauline reasons—Paul the apostle was, in a manner, a ‘supralapsarian’. That is, for him, incarnation and glorification were not contingent upon human sin (or anything else, for that matter). Rather, creation always had incarnation in view, thus making soteriology *qua* salvation from sin a (however important) subplot of the narrative of Christian theology. Moreover, in this regard, Paul expresses a theological, christological, and anthropological teleology: a full human being was not just the *protos* but the *telos* of the story. And this means, *inter alia*, that any teleological vision that does not deliberately anticipate full and genuine humanness is a betrayal of the very heart of the Christian story (a point of particular importance in a time of transhumanist aspirations [or desperations] and the technological artificialisation of reality). Indeed, for Paul, it is not simply that this particular human being, Jesus of Nazareth, happens to be divine; it is that God himself, once and for all and forever, became the first full human being. This is, after all, what he had always wanted: to steward creation in and through—and, in this unique, christological case, *as*—a human being. Thus, in this theological and christological sense, full humanness is the goal of creation. And Paul has fertile ideas for how this goal might be richly anticipated in the present.

19.00-19.30 Pre-Dinner Drinks Saugman Common Room (*for those booked for dinner*).

19.30 Dinner, St Cross Hall (*for those booked*).

7.40 Mattins

8.00-8.30 Low Mass

9.30 – 10.15

(5) Mark Edwards - Divine Corporeality and the Image of God in Patristic Thought.

The incorporeality of God is an axiomatic tenet of many early Christian theologians. In recent years attention had been given to texts which appear to ascribe to God some form of corporeality, sometimes also asserting or implying that this must be taken into account when embodied humans are said to be in the image of God. This paper will take an analytical approach to the question, arguing that we must distinguish at least five relevant conceptions: (a) anthropomorphic corporeality as a property of the divine nature; (b) non-anthropomorphic corporeality as a property of the divine nature; (c) an anthropomorphic form, distinct from his essence, in which God manifests himself; (d) a foreshadowing in the human body of God's incarnation; (e) a corporeal adumbration of the Trinity in gendered or familial relations between embodied humans. It will be argued that the fundamental belief in divine incorporeality remains unshaken, at least in thinkers who are perceived to belong to the catholic tradition.

10.15 – 11.00

(6) Andrew Louth - In the Image and Likeness of God: Differing Greek and Latin Linguistic Preconceptions.

Patristic understanding—both Greek and Latin—is often based on, or makes reference to, the verses on the creation of human kind in Gen. 1: 26–7: ‘And he [God] said, Let us make man to our image and likeness...And God created man to his own image; to the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them’ (quoted in the Douay version, which, as a translation of the Vulgate, gets less in the way of the versions the Fathers would have used than more modern versions based on the Hebrew: the Septuagint [LXX] and Jerome's Vulgate, or earlier Latin versions based on the LXX). The key words here are ‘man’, ‘image’, ‘likeness’, and the preposition ‘to’: in Greek ἄνθρωπος, εἰκών, ὁμοίωσις, κατά; in Latin *homo*, *imago*, *similitudo*, *ad*. However, the corresponding words in the different languages have rather different ranges of meaning. ‘Man’, in the Douay version, was understood to mean ‘human being’, but could also be taken to mean a human male; both ἄνθρωπος and *homo* could designate a human of either sex (there being separate words of a human male: ἄνηρ and *vir*). Εἰκών and *imago* mean much the same: a [primarily visual] image, based on an original [archetype]. ὁμοίωσις and *similitudo* have rather different connotations: ὁμοίωσις, verbal noun, suggesting a process of likening, assimilation, while *similitudo* simply suggests a likeness, without any notion that *similitudo* is based on an original (which is implied in the term *imago*). Finally ‘to’ (KJV and RSV ‘after’; NRSV ‘in’) corresponds to *ad* in Latin, but κατά in Greek; *ad* being a rather colourless word of reference, while κατά conveys the sense

of ‘according to’; also note the way in which Gen. 1:26–7 is evoked in Col. 3: 10, which speaks of ‘putting on the new humanity which is being renewed according to the image (κατ’ εἰκόνα) of the one who created him’ (where the Latin has *secundum* for κατά). This paper will explore the way in which the lexical terms used affect the meaning of ‘being in the image’, whether as defining human origins or the goal of the human life. Perhaps the deepest difference is to be found in the Greek ὁμοίωσις, which recalls to the learned Greek ear a much quoted phrase from Plato’s *Theaetetus*—φυγὴ δὲ ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν (*Theaetetus* 176A): ‘flight [from the world] is to become like [assimilated] to God as much as is possible’—opening up to the Greek philosophical vistas denied to the Latin reader.

11.00-11.30 Morning Tea and Coffee

11.30 – 12.15

(7) Alexis Torrance - The person of Christ as anthropological criterion in Maximus the Confessor.

That Maximus the Confessor’s thought is Christ-centred has long been recognized and explored, not least on the matter of his understanding of the human being and human salvation as deification. But still more can be done to highlight some of the precise and striking ways in which Maximus’ focus on the person of Christ conditions his anthropology, as well as his understanding of human destiny. This paper will briefly examine three less studied and/or contentious passages and themes in Maximus that serve to accentuate the intimate association between anthropology, soteriology, and Christology in his thought. The first is his use of Christology as the final criterion for affirming the body as a constitutive part of the human person both now and in eternity (in a manner, moreover, that challenges straightforward hylomorphic accounts of the human being). The second is the apparent transcending if not destruction of the properties of male and female in his elaboration of the reconciling work of Christ. The third is the significance of his denial of gnostic will in Christ for his doctrine of human salvation. By clarifying the meaning and intention of Maximus’ thought on each of these matters, a fuller picture will emerge of how this pivotal patristic figure approached the mystery of the human being in light of the Word made flesh.

12.15 – 12.30 Panel Discussion

12.30-14.00 Lunch (*Delegates to make own arrangements*)

13.15- 13.45 Book Launch - *The Dove Descending: Knowing and Loving in Spirit and Truth* (James Clarke & Co. Ltd. 2025) (The collection of papers from the 2022 Theological Conference) - The Library and Blackwell Quad.

14.00-14.45

(8) Thomas Joseph White – On Pure Nature.

Theologians in the 20th century debated whether one could consider human nature in a hypothetical state in which there is neither the presence of grace nor the wounds of sin. In this paper, I hope to show that Aquinas definitely considered this perspective to be of value, even though he also taught that human beings and angels were created originally in a state of grace and not in a state of pure nature. The consideration of the nature of the person in distinction from both grace and sin allows us to think more deeply about what is proper to the essence of human nature, but also about God's providential design in which he intended, on Aquinas's count, to create man for grace and beatitude. I argue that this perspective allows for a middle way between an integralism that fails to delineate human nature as distinct from grace and a minimalization of the doctrine of original sin, on the other side, that fails to recognize the real wounds of our nature as it currently exists. I also argue that this theory has important implications for thinking about human identity in the face of modern evolutionary theory and palaeontology.

14.45-15.30

(9) Jennifer Frey - *Imago Dei* in the Moral Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas.

In this paper, I will discuss the Biblical idea that man is made in the "image of God" as the foundation of Aquinas's moral philosophy. To that end, I will trace how the image of God in man characterizes man's nature and his ends, and how this lays the foundation for his account of virtue, and the substantive conception of happiness and beatitude. I will pay particular attention to the role of contemplation in this account, and how the act of contemplation is the most Godlike activity we can engage in. I will close with some thoughts about why contemplation has been sidelined in contemporary moral philosophy and how its importance might be recovered.

15.30-16.00 Afternoon Tea and Coffee

16.00-16.45

(10) John Behr - Completing the Image.

While most theological reflection on the human being as the image of God has been concerned with the original state of the human being as created in the image of God, and questions regard in what the image consists and whether it was lost or distorted by the Fall, this paper will return to some early figures, such as Sts Irenaeus of Lyons and Gregory of Nyssa to consider another perspective: that the being the image of God is something into which the human being must grow, that it is achieved only eschatologically (not lost protologically), as well as the corporate dimension which sees the whole human race, from beginning to end, as the one human being that is the image of God, that is, the body of Christ.

16.45 – 17.30

(11) Simon Oliver - The *Imago Dei* and the Crisis of Human Identity.

In ancient philosophy and Christian theology, the human is understood as a microcosm or 'little world' lying at the heart of the cosmos, encompassing the material and intellectual or spiritual. As Nicholas of Cusa puts it: 'Now, human nature is that [nature] which, though created a little lower than the angels, is elevated above all the [other] works of God; it enfolds intellectual and sensible nature and encloses all things within itself, so that the ancients were right in calling it a microcosm, or a small world.' (*De Docta Ignorantia* III.3.198). Thomas Aquinas wrote of all natures 'flowing into' the human. The story of the de-centring of the human in modernity is long and complex. On the one hand, the human is separated from and elevated above nature in the familiar divisions of subject versus object, culture versus nature, and mind versus body. On the other hand, the prominence of evolutionary theory in forming human self-understanding knits the human *back into* nature. This forms the backdrop to the current crisis and confusion in human self-understanding. The human is likened to a machine in the form of artificial intelligence and the veneration of digital rationality. The human is also understood in terms of freedom expressed as radical self-determination and self-identification. This paper will examine the current crisis of human self-understanding in relation to technology and freedom, and the resources of ancient cosmology and Christian theology which might renew our sense of the deep mystery and dignity of the human person. It will argue that a re-centring of the human through the *imago dei* restores the dignity and value of all creatures.

17.45 – 18.15 Evensong

18.30- 1915

(12) Malcolm Guite - Image and Imagination: some reflections on the creative imagination as an aspect of the *Imago Dei*.

This paper will look at the idea that human creativity, and in particular, the poetic imagination, is an aspect of the Image of God in us. In particular, how the Logos, both beyond and in us, as a God-given light, might be understood not only as the light of reason, and conscience, following Augustine, but also as the light of Imagination, following Coleridge. It will also consider how Christian creative writers like Tolkien and Dorothy Sayers reflected on the *Imago Dei* and human making and shaping. It will conclude with some reflections the *Imago Dei* drawn from my own poetry and poetic practice.

19.15-19.45 Pre-dinner Drinks in the Saugman Common Room (*for those booked for dinner*).

19.45 Dinner, St Cross Hall (*for those booked*).

7.40 Mattins

8.00-8.30 Low Mass

9.30-10.15

(13) Paul Dominiak - 'Scars and marks of mortality': Rethinking Richard Hooker's theological anthropology.

Richard Hooker (1554—1600) may seem like an unpromising partner for any contemporary theological attempt to respond to what it means to be human or made in the image of God. Hooker is often accounted to have a faculty-based theological anthropology that links the image of God to the powers of reason and will. Such an account no longer seems tenable as it faces moral challenges posed by the Anthropocene and postcolonialism, as well as critiques of social exclusion. Hooker's faculty-based theological anthropology would seem to imbibe and transmit a faulty anthropocentrism culpable for environmental devastation. Hooker's apparent privileging of reason begs the question about whose rationality is in view. As a privileged white male voice writing at the genesis of western colonial expansion, Hooker's account seems to be another example of how the western theological canon has marginalised female, queer, global majority heritage, working class and disabled voices. This paper argues three things. First, the story told about Hooker's faculty-based theological anthropology misses the provisional and dynamic social character and political location of his claims. This provisional and dynamic character and location attenuates the abstract importance Hooker seems to give to the faculty of reason. Second, the story is only half the story. Hooker also develops a second theological anthropology based upon desire rather than reason. Desire draws the human creature beyond herself to an eschatological identity in God. Third, in both halves of the actual story, Christ acts as the key who unlocks and unites both halves. As the Word and Wisdom of God, Christ shapes and forms the ways that creaturely forms participate in God. As a wounded redeemer, Christ abducts human desire and enables its ecstatic fulfilment. Without denying the moral problems and limits of the western theological canon of which Hooker is part, nevertheless Hooker's account of the woundedness of Christ's resurrected body contains resources which a contemporary account can constructively draw upon to respond to what it means to be made in the image of God.

10.15- 11.00

(14) David Curry - Partakers of the Divine Nature: Recapitulation and Blessedness in Andrewes and Traherne.

A brief consideration of some of Lancelot Andrewes' Sermons and Thomas Traherne's *The Way To Blessedness* on the restoration of the image through the gathering of all things into fullness in Christ and the place of the virtues in our participation in the work of human redemption.

11.00-11.30 Morning Tea and Coffee

11.30-12.15

(15) Michele Schumacher – Imaging God in Ethical Action or Reinventing the Human: What’s at Stake in Recent Discussions of Gender.

It is in virtue of man’s creation in the image of God (cf. Gen 1:27) that he receives the command to “be fruitful and multiply,” to “fill the earth and subdue it” and to exercise “dominion ... over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (v. 28). The command is a manifestation of man’s divine likeness. Because, in fact, the book of Genesis presents God as “a kind of exemplar of everyone who produces a work,” it is “through his ‘artistic creativity’ [that] man appears more than ever ‘in the image of God’,” as Pope John Paul II notes in his 1999 Letter to Artists. However, it is “above all in shaping the wondrous ‘material’ of his own humanity” that “he accomplishes this task” (no. 1). For “just as man in exercising his dominion over the world shapes it in accordance with his own intelligence and will, so too in performing morally good acts, man strengthens, develops and consolidates within himself his likeness to God” (idem, *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 39).

Herein is evident the distinction between two properly human actions (*actus humanus*, as distinguished from *actus humanis*), namely art and ethics, which are too often blurred in the mind of our contemporaries. For, as Pope Paul VI noted in 1968 in his famous encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, “man’s stupendous progress in the domination and rational organization of the forces of nature” has reached “to the point that he is endeavoring to extend this control over every aspect of his own life—over his body, over his mind and emotions, over his social life, and even over the laws that regulate the transmission of life” (nr. 2).

Of course, Paul VI had in mind the pharmaceutical and technical arts of chemical and mechanical contraceptives that were often preferred to the ethical art of conjugal chastity, which respects “*the Creator’s providential plan*” for “the true good of the human person,” as John Paul II specifies in his *Theology of the Body* (124:6, p. 636). The same reasoning might apply, however, to the more recent attempt to “artistically” alter one’s “gender” or even one’s “sex” to fit one’s own subjective conception or desires. For once sexual intercourse is divorced of its procreative meaning against the prescription of *Humanae Vitae* (no. 11-12), the sexual powers serving procreation might be overshadowed by, or even repressed in favor of, secondary sexual characteristics (facial hair or its absence, breast size, body structure, etc.). Unlike the former, the latter might, after all, be feigned by the human art of surgical intervention and/or hormonal therapy.

Beyond and underlying the distinction between art and ethics is thus the problematic relation between human freedom and human nature and the question of whether nature is a threat to freedom, which must be free to reinvent the former at will, or whether, instead, human freedom is in fact preserved within human nature, qua created. Ultimately, then, we are faced with the

choice between two anthropologies—two visions of the human person and human freedom—and two understandings of man’s relation to the Creator and to divine causality.

12.15-13.45 Lunch (*Delegates to make own arrangements*)

13.45 – 14.15

(16) Pia Matthews - God does not make mistakes: persons with profound disabilities as bearers of the profoundest of hope.

In the Roman Catholic tradition, all human beings have the same origin by being created in the image and likeness of God, and the same destiny through the hope of sharing eternal life with God. All human beings are good, albeit wounded by the effects of the Fall and we are all interdependent and dependant on God. Moreover, all human beings are wanted for their own sakes, loved by God, unique and irreplaceable. Diversity is part of God’s good plan for us. The limitations and inequalities that come with diversity and difference are part of being good as human beings. Persons with profound disabilities are not then abnormalities but rather they are bearers of the truth of being human. Profound disability is deeply human and links not to some restoration of an ideal humanity but to the mystery of redemption.

14.15-14.45

(17) Joshua Hordern - Restoring the image, scoring the body: on trauma, loyalty and the Church of England.

In light of the doctrine of humankind’s creation and restoration in the image and likeness of God, this paper attends to the conference’s hope for the transforming of lives and communities. Confessing to the Father that ‘we have wounded your love and marred your image in us’, the paper considers current research on both ministry associated trauma and the public legitimacy of the Church of England. Alongside the ordinarily demanding aspects of their work, the clergy’s vocation to public representation of Christ – one way of making visible the Christ who, as the image of God, made visible the invisible God – exposes the church and its ministers to trauma in specific ways, some associated with the establishment of the Church of England. At the same time, the gospel’s call for loyalty to God revealed in Christ has a particular complexity in such a public and traumatised context, in which the God-representations which order the church’s desires may have a specifically political quality. The body of Christ keeps the score as these vocations are lived out before a watching world which in turn scores the body, judging its witness. The activity of the Spirit in lovingly restoring the image of the Triune God by transforming the whole church’s modes of relatedness in the communities and lives amidst which the body of Christ lives, should be that for which we long and pray.

14.45-15.15

(18) Joanna Collicutt - Sin and human psychology.

In the 20th century insights from psychiatry led to a re-framing of human issues that had previously been seen primarily as moral or spiritual weaknesses in terms of symptoms of mental health conditions. In a similar way, the 21st century has seen the application of insights from evolutionary biology and the psychology and cognitive science of religion to aspects of human life that might previously have been considered sins, reframing them in naturalistic terms as the outcome of evolutionary processes. The concept of sin may need to be re-articulated in the light of these paradigms, for example as an emergent property. This has informed some recent readings of the New Testament, which will be considered in this presentation.

15.15 – 15.30 Panel Discussion.

15.30-16.00 Afternoon Tea and Coffee

16.00-16.45

(19) Andrew Davison - ‘We as His creatures must not be without limits or boundaries’: The Christian Vision of Human Finitude.

Human beings stand in an unusual relationship to finitude. Aristotle recognised that ‘the soul [as intellect] is, in a way, all things’. Alone among the animals, as far as we can tell, we consciously aspire to immortality. On the other hand, we are born and die, and our capacities, although frequently remarkable, are limited. The archetypal sin was to aspire to be ‘as God’ and much human unhappiness stems from unease about our limitations. The Christian tradition offers a robust defence of the finitude of creaturely things, human beings among them. This is reflected in the title of this paper, which comes from Karl Barth. Turning to Thomas Aquinas, Christian theology offers a connection between finitude and perfection that may seem largely incomprehensible today. Even in the life of the world to come, although it is without end, even in the beatific vision, the blessed know and enjoy the infinite God in a characteristically finite way. This paper considers human finitude, and how it is perfected, rather than abolished, by grace.

17.00-18.00 Choral Evensong

Preacher: The Revd Dr Aidan Nichols OP

18.15 – 18.45 – **Closing Drinks Reception** – Blackwell Quad, *sponsored by the Prayer Book Society.*