Created in the Image of God: Both Human and Non-Human Animals?

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ABSTRACT
In this article, I examine the possibility of widening the concept of imago Dei so as to include (other) animals next to humans by interacting with the theologians David Clough, David Fergusson and Celia Deane-Drummond. In light of the challenges of creaturely existence in the Anthropocene, I conclude that the traditional idea that only humans are created in the image and likeness of God should be maintained. Such a position does not need to be diminishing to other animals, can take seriously scientific insights on evolution and classic theological arguments, and is especially relevant given the era of the Anthropocene.

KEYWORDS
Imago Dei; non-human animals; Anthropocene; evolution; Joshua Moritz; David Clough; David Fergusson; Celia Deane-Drummond

The way humans have thought about their identity in relation to that of other living beings has gone through various cultural and historical processes. Over the past decades new scientific insights have emerged in fields like evolutionary biology and zoology, which made us aware that a great many of living beings has preceded us for millions of years, that there are close biological connections between the human species and other species (with fuzzy evolutionary boundaries) and that various non-human animals have complex cognitive and emotional skills that we did not always properly recognize before. Further, now—according to many scientists—we have come to live in the Anthropocene, we have become even more aware of the multiple ways in which we both positively and negatively influence other living beings with whom we share the earth and live in diverse and complex interrelationships. One may think, for example, of the human-induced extinction of species, as we are now on the brink of experiencing a sixth mass extinction in the history of our planet.1 As a result, many Christian theologians reflecting on these issues feel prompted to explore new pathways in theological anthropology that are less “anthropocentric” and more inclusive towards non-human life. After all, our construals bear ethical relevance, since, simply put, what we think has implications for how we act.

At the center of these debates figures the question what it means to be created in the image of God as indicated in Genesis 1:26-27. More particularly: who exactly can we say that have been created in the image of God? Only humans, as seems to be suggested by the biblical text and has always been assumed by the theological tradition?2 Or the sea creatures, birds, cattle and wild animals as well, as some have recently argued with
ecological concerns in mind? It is this fairly recent discussion that is taken up in this article, on the basis of a comparative study of the diverging positions of three theologians from different ecclesial strands: David Clough, David Fergusson and Celia Deane-Drummond. These authors are particularly valuable discussion partners, because while each of them has written substantially about the place of animals in Christian theology, they reflect on the concept of *imago Dei* in relation to animals from different perspectives and come to different conclusions. Moreover, each of them seriously engages with contemporary science (especially the fields of evolutionary biology and zoology). I will assess their positions in light of the challenges of creaturely existence in the Anthropocene, and argue more strongly than any of these authors does that the traditional idea that only humans are created in the image and likeness of God should be maintained.

All three authors acknowledge how complex it is to speak about human identity and to determine what exactly constitutes a human person in relation to other creaturely beings. On the one hand, there is a biological and theological commonality between humans and other animals, on the other hand humans seem to possess clearly distinct features and to take center stage in the unfolding relationship of God with his creatures according to the biblical narrative. How should we strike the balance between these two strands of thought? Clough, Fergusson and Deane-Drummond strongly agree that the (positive) relationship between humans and other animals enriches creaturely existence. Non-human animals matter to God, and should matter to us as well, both in our theology and in our personal lives. Moreover, as humans we are not the only creatures to whom God relates. Still, they differ on whether such considerations compel us to broaden the classic notion of human creation in the image of God so as to include non-humans. Is this a legitimate and perhaps even necessary move to make?

But First: What About Extinct Hominins Like Neanderthals?

Before the discussion on the possibility of widening the concept of *imago Dei* so as to include other animals next to humans can be properly taken up, however, it is necessary to be clear on the *human species* itself. After all, a question that immediately poses itself when one has as a starting point that at least humans are created in the image of God, is when—from within an evolutionary framework—it becomes reasonable to speak of such human creatures as having been created in the image of God. Are only modern humans (that is, *Homo sapiens*) created in the image of God, or did other, contemporary hominins like Neanderthals—who were in many ways very similar—also bear the divine image?

Before zooming in more closely on Clough, Fergusson and Deane-Drummond, I will therefore first briefly lay out my thoughts on this issue, by means of a short exposition on Deane-Drummond and Joshua Moritz, as they seem to take opposite positions. Clough’s focus appears to be solely on non-human animals like sheep and sperm whales (no specific attention is devoted to hominins), while Fergusson—though giving some attention to humans’ evolutionary ties with other hominins—restricts himself to the more general remark that “[w]e may be alone as the last hominin group standing, but our deep affinities with other species together with our ancestral and genetic links to extinct evolutionary relatives place us firmly within the natural world (…)”. In any
case, Fergusson does not explicitly answer the question whether only *Homo sapiens* were bearers of the divine image.

As we will see further below, Deane-Drummond opts for an exclusive account of humans as being created (both) in the image and likeness of God. Yet, she takes the idea that non-human animals as well reflect God’s nature very seriously. She does this —drawing on Aquinas—by suggesting that other animals share in the likeness of God, in contrast to the image (although she adds that a weak form of image bearing in some non-human animals should not be ruled out). Interestingly, she explicitly raises the question of whether it is possible that some earlier hominids like Neanderthals already received the *imago Dei* because of their level of (symbolic) intelligence and religious practices (thus linking the *imago Dei* to certain creaturely characteristics). She surmises that perhaps this was indeed the case, while it remains highly speculative to determine when exactly divine image bearing must have started in the course of evolutionary history.

Joshua Moritz, however, while amply acknowledging and disclosing humans’ profound mental and cultural continuity with former “humanoid” creatures like Neanderthals and other creatures, nevertheless firmly restricts the *imago Dei* to humans (denoting *Homo sapiens*). He takes this stance not on the basis of any alleged “unique” human capacity or trait that would set human beings apart from their close relatives, as such traits are non-existent, but on the basis of an elaborate exegetical and theological notion of God’s gracious and sovereign election of (these) human beings from among the other creatures. God specially elected them for the sake of carrying out God’s benevolent promises and interceding before God for the sake of creation. As he states: “(…) it is not human uniqueness that makes *homo sapiens* the image of God, but rather it is the image of God [understood as election] that makes humans unique.” Moreover, as the biblical texts on the image of God do not refer to any required capacities or conditions, “(…) the image of God cannot be either defined or extended on the basis of particular traits or characteristics.” There is thus, according to Moritz, no base at all to employ what he calls the “comparative approach to theological anthropology.” However, Moritz does concede that particular

neurobiological capacities for mirroring and mental simulation—if and when such capacities are clearly shown to exist within humans—can be viewed as key substantive pre-conditions that are required for any beings who would be called and elected to fulfill the vocation of the *imago Dei*.

Importantly, these “requirements for election as the *imago Dei* [are] not sufficient in and of themselves to establish their possessor as the *imago Dei*. It is God’s election alone that establishes human beings as God’s living reflections and imitators (…)”.

What Deane-Drummond and Moritz have in common is that they see no space for non-human animals (like dolphins, to give a random example) to share in God’s image. In this respect, Moritz seems to be too quick in suggesting that Deane-Drummond broadens the *imago Dei* to include both hominids and non-human animals. Deane-Drummond makes a careful distinction between humans as created in both the image and likeness of God and non-human animals as being created only in the likeness of God (although, as mentioned, she adds that a weak form of image bearing in some non-human animals should not be ruled out). Although Deane-Drummond thus
indeed broadens the concept of *imago Dei*, as Moritz rightfully mentions, these nuances may not be overlooked. Where Deane-Drummond and Moritz differ is that Deane-Drummond perceives potential room for hominids (and thus hominins) in the image of God, due to their levels of (symbolic) intelligence and religious practices, whereas Moritz argues that such a “comparative approach” is scientifically and exegetically invalid and grounds the *imago Dei* exclusively in God’s election of *Homo sapiens*.

As will become clear in this article’s concluding remarks, my final position is that the *imago Dei* should be restricted to humans. However, I follow Deane-Drummond in her open attitude towards the possibility of extinct hominins—like Neanderthals—already being created in the divine image. It seems very reasonable to suggest that they—on the basis of their close proximities to *Homo sapiens*—stood in similar relationships to God, and were possibly even called and/or elected for specific purposes (although for some reason only *Homo sapiens* was “kept in place” while the others became extinct). Still, I support Moritz’s strong insistence that the *imago Dei* does not ultimately reside in some kind of quality or set of qualities (the “comparative approach” being seriously flawed) but is first of all grounded in God’s call or election—while at the same time some qualities seem to be required preconditions for election. As we will see, Moritz’s position and the final perspective adopted in this article are very similar. This perspective spells out the *imago Dei* in terms of a special human vocation in creation and a corresponding human accountability to God as “image giver.” The notion of “election” seems most appropriate in this respect.

After these preparatory explorations, we will now turn our close attention to Clough, Fergusson and Deane-Drummond before arriving at the conclusion to the question whether the *imago Dei* should be broadened to include non-human animals.

**Common Animality: David Clough**

David Clough traces the dominant notions of human uniqueness and human dignity back to Genesis 1:26-28. Here, it seems, we are given a distinct identity: as humans, we are created in the image of God. Therefore, so the traditional argument goes, there is a boundary between us and the rest of creation. Clough states that the content of the divine image is exegetically “radically underdetermined.” He refers to the biblical scholar Gordon Wenham, who surveys different interpretations and considers the concept too vague to be useful. After indicating, in this way, a basic uncertainty about the meaning of the *imago Dei*, Clough evaluates existing viewpoints in their structural, functional and relational forms. He rejects structural interpretations of the *imago Dei*, since there is no significant human capacity that is not—in some form—shared by other species. Still, Clough admits: “There is no difficulty in acknowledging a particular mode of imaging God that is unique to the particular assemblage of capacities that are characteristic of humans: only humans can serve God in human-specific ways.” Elsewhere, he states: “Clearly, Genesis here and in the verses that follow envisages a distinctive identity for humans among God’s creatures, but it is given in God’s command, not left for humans to discover by deduction on the basis of zoological observation.” If we got the impression that our creation in the image of God separates us from the other animals, we are wrong. We must rather think in terms of particularity:
Our task and responsibility before God is no doubt particular to the place we find ourselves within God’s creation, but the Bible repeatedly affirms that all creation participates in the praise of God and each living thing has a part in God’s purposes. (...) The vocation given by God to humans denotes particularity rather than separation from other species.18

Thus, for Clough the image of God in humans points to the way we serve God as the species we are. At the same time, there are ways in which other animals may serve God as well: in manners particular to them, they also share in God’s purposes and have their own specific vocations.19 Does this mean that they share in the image of God? In the “Creation” part of On Animals, Clough is not ready to give a definite answer, because “the primary account of the image of God is Christological.” He comments: “A judgement about the significance of the imago Dei for the relationship between human and other creatures must (...) await the discussion of the doctrine of the incarnation (...).”20 Clough comes back to the topic in the “Reconciliation” part. In a Christological context, he says, the significance of the identification of humans as bearers of the imago Dei must be reconsidered. It is no longer humans who are the prime “image bearers”; only in and through Christ—the true image of God—can we fully image God. And our image bearing is only “fully realized in our resurrection (1 Cor. 15:49) and for now a process rather than a static reality (Col. 3:10; 2 Cor. 3:18).”21

Jesus Christ is the true image of God, therefore, the unique revelation of the unseen God. If this is the case, our understanding of the imago Dei in Genesis 1 must be revised. For it is not the humanness of Christ as such that images God; otherwise God would be equally well revealed in any other human being. Christ reveals God uniquely because Christ uniquely is God incarnate. It is the unique event of divinity taking up creatureliness that results in the unique imaging of God.22

In order to properly understand Clough’s assertions about the participation of other than human animals in the imago Dei, we first need to handle his view on the incarnation. In Clough’s theological perspective the incarnation of Christ was necessary for the reconciliation of sinful creatures with God. According to Clough, sin is not something “uniquely human.” Although there are differences in sinful behavior and the capacity for sin, he believes that there is “no clear biblical or theological case for considering all non-human creatures free from the possibility of sinful actions.”23 He links the incarnation to the redemption of sin, exploring the possibility that “God’s single incarnation in a particular creature could be of significance to all creatures.”24 This brings him to his main proposal that the incarnation of Christ into a human body does not denote any theological distinction between human creatures and other creatures. He writes:

Accounts of the doctrine of the incarnation that claim that it is of only human significance, or which attempt to use it as a boundary marker between human and non-human creatures not only fail to account for the place of the other creatures before God, but also come to be seen as a strangely blinkered underestimate of the scope and grandeur of God’s creative and redemptive purposes. Not merely the being of one species of creature, but the being of every kind of creature is transformed by the event of incarnation. The doctrine of the incarnation does not therefore establish a theological boundary between humans and other animals; instead, it is best understood as God stepping over the boundary between creator and creation and taking on creatureliness. The theological commonality established between human and non-human creatures in relation to the doctrine of creation (...) is therefore
confirmed and strengthened by recognizing the commonality of all animal creatures before God under the heading of incarnation.\textsuperscript{25}

In short, it is not the case that God somehow favors humans, at the expense of other animal creatures, by his choice to incarnate in our kind of species. Clough offers two basic arguments. The first is that the incarnation of Christ is an event with universal significance, because in Christ all things were created (Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16), through Christ God reconciled to himself all things (Col. 1:20) and all things in heaven and earth will be gathered up in Christ (Eph. 1:10). In the second argument, Clough proposes that just like the particular period of time, geographical location and male gender of Jesus’ life are of no relevance to the scope of salvation, the specific creature into which Christ incarnated also does not connote any limitations.\textsuperscript{26}

This perspective opens up new possibilities, as we will see, because “the key distinction is that between Christ and all other creatures, rather than particular groups of creatures that image God in different ways.”\textsuperscript{27} After having emphasized the primary division between Christ and other creatures, Clough explains how different non-human creatures may be “partial images of God,” in their own specific ways. For support he refers to Aquinas, who, like Augustine, holds that there is a trace of the trinity to be found in all creatures. In the Bible, Clough then recognizes a variety of “specific images”:

Isaiah 31, for example, records that the Lord will fight on mount Zion as a lion growls over its prey and is not daunted by a band of shepherds called out against it (v. 4). It is hard to escape the conclusion that there is a sense in which the lion is an image of God in this case. Jesus’ cry to Jerusalem that he longed to gather her children like a hen gathers her brood is a similar case (Mt. 23:37 II Lk. 13:34) and John the Baptist’s identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29) is only one of many New Testament instances in which lambs seem to function as images of Christ in some sense. Augustine rejects the idea that the Spirit becomes incarnate as a dove at the baptism of Jesus, but it seems hard to escape the idea that the dove is at least an image of the Spirit at this point.\textsuperscript{28}

One can wonder why it is so important to Clough to broaden the notion of \textit{imago Dei}, so as to include other animals. Clearly, it fits his general viewpoint that there is a basic commonality between all God’s creatures, as well as his aversion to “theological anthropocentrism.” By widening the concept of \textit{imago Dei}, Clough wants to remove any suggestion that humans are somehow “godlike” in comparison to other animals; this belief could lead us to the false assumption that God is only—or centrally—concerned with us in both creation and redemption. We are then “stuck in bad patterns of theology and worse patterns of ethics in relation to the rest of creation.” By revising the image of God, Clough wants to do theological and moral justice to other animals.\textsuperscript{29}

\textbf{Evaluation}

It is theologically sound that Clough tries to understand the \textit{imago Dei} through the person of Jesus Christ—the true image of God through whom we are restored and renewed. In his treatment of the \textit{imago Dei}, Clough tries to argue from the totality of the biblical testimony. First he deals with Old Testament assumptions about the distinct identities of humans and other animals; and secondly, on the basis of the New Testament, he shows how we can come to revise the demarcation lines and to think more inclusively. At the same time, as I see it, the image of God is still posited in creation, with the
formation of humankind. Therefore the incarnation of Christ does not radically “change” our creaturely position before God—already in the beginning there was the fundamental difference between Creator and creation. Besides, with the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, we say that Christ is from all eternity. Therefore, it is somewhat unclear why Christ’s earthly appearance would now let the image of God unambiguously apply to all creatures. At the same time, as Clough seems to propose, it might be legitimate to say that Christ’s centrality as the true image of God has the power to distract our attention away from a too narrow focus on (human) image bearing.

As to Clough’s concerns, it can be very well conceived that a well-understood identity of human creatures, made in the imago Dei, can actually help us to understand our ethical duties towards the rest of creation—instead of resulting in (theological) anthropocentrism. I will elaborate this point below.

The result of Clough’s line of thought seems to me a somewhat generalized understanding of the meaning of the imago Dei. After he developed his main point that the primary division is between Christ and creatures and not between different sorts of creatures, he allows himself to speak about non-human creatures as “partial images of God.” The biblical examples he mentions are, however, more naturally understood as metaphorical expressions that disclose something about the character of God—not as pointing to animals that image God according to the biblical understanding of creation in God’s image. It is typical for a metaphor or simile to generate new meanings from the unexpected combination of two “unrelated” elements in a sentence. For example in Isaiah 31:4 acts of both the lion and God are being recounted. Thereby the attention is drawn to God’s undauntedness—as only one of the things we dare to say about God. It is not the lion about whom an “existential” statement is made. Clearly, this metaphor (or simile) functions as it should, as it puts both God and the lion in a new light—they mutually highlight each other. This does not allow us, however, to subsequently speak about the lion as an image of God. Of course the lion reflects something of God in this instance, but we cannot equate this with “imaging God” in the particular meaning (s) of the Genesis text. Furthermore, the language in Genesis 1:26-27 is not (merely) metaphorical: the image of God seems to be a concrete “given” in the life of humans, even though the rather veiled words do not disclose to us a meaning that is immediately grasped. Thus, it seems that Clough’s wish to value non-human animals—however admirable this wish may be—leads him to make concessions on exegetical soundness. Let us, therefore, examine a second view, which takes its starting point in another theological angle, namely the imago Dei as approached from the biblical wisdom literature.

**A Human Life-Story: David Fergusson**

Like Clough, David Fergusson notices that references to the image of God in the Hebrew Bible only occur in the opening chapters of Genesis. Despite its influence in Christianity, the biblical meaning of the notion of the image of God is essentially “opaque.” But he makes “a virtue out of necessity,” opting for what he calls a “diffused” reading of the imago Dei. The structural, functional and relational approaches fall short in certain respects, so he argues. What we need, is a more comprehensive perspective that takes into account the multi-faceted life of humans, as it is narrated throughout Scripture. It is in their entire existence that they are images of God. From the Psalms and the
wisdom literature, we learn that human life is very much “embodied”: we are introduced to “society, households, work, the provision of food and shelter, the care of children, and the political order.” It is in all these concrete human circumstances that “human existence is determined in the image of God.” So we should not think of one single feature—that comes down to a reduction. The references in Genesis to the image of God are a prelude to the story of God’s people as his covenant partners, whom are “the object of divine address and encounter in a wide variety of ways.” The notion of the image of God seems to suggest, in line with ancient near eastern traditions, that the human being is God’s counterpart in creation. Humans are set in the world to hear God’s Word, to respond to it, and to represent God’s dominion on the earth.

By his approach, Fergusson wants to draw attention to other parts of the Hebrew Bible, as from the scarce references in Genesis we do not get the impression that the image of God was “the core concept of a developed anthropology” and, so adds Fergusson, “nor should it be.” Already in The Cosmos and the Creator Fergusson had stated that “the opening three chapters of the Bible have exercised an undue influence on the Church’s theological traditions at the expense of other themes within the canon.” In the eyes of Fergusson, his approach offers two advantages. Firstly it rescues the Genesis text from an “overdetermination of meaning” and secondly it creates space for the incorporation of the eschatological connotations of the phrase in the New Testament. There we learn that Christ is the true image (eikôn) of God and that “our destiny is to receive that image as we are raised to new life.” So, like Clough, Fergusson incorporates an eschatological understanding of the imago Dei. The image of God in the New Testament is an eschatological gift, not something bestowed originally. According to Fergusson, we may acknowledge that the notion is used differently in the Old and New Testament and must not exhaust ourselves trying to bring them into (full) agreement.

In his thinking about the imago Dei, Fergusson is inspired by and draws on the theological anthropology of David H. Kelsey. From Kelsey he picks up that God also ordained “the quotidian” aspects of human life. Humans should not only be viewed in light of their need for redemption—at least, we must not forget the many-sided contexts of human life as these are pictured in for example the (biblical) wisdom literature. Fergusson states: “Our imaging of God in everyday existence is not confined to some religious province of life but is expressed in a multitude of human practices, institutions, and forms of life.”

What does all this mean for the question of whether non-human animals participate in the imago Dei? Despite our commonality as humans and (other) animals, Fergusson maintains that being created in God’s image is something uniquely human. There is special biblical attention for the human-divine relationship and the unfolding story of human existence. It is this human existence which finds expression in the image of God. Humans received unique responsibilities in serving—rather than “dominating”—the creaturely order. This stewardship is acted out in the diverse contexts of everyday life. Nowadays, in “an ecological age conscious of overpopulation, climate change, species extinction, depletion of natural resources, and environmental degradation,” it is especially important “to ensure that our way of life does not diminish the natural creation or prevent other creatures from sharing the planet with us.”
Although human life on earth is to be lived in the company of our fellow creatures who are related to God as well, they are not so much part of the *imago Dei*; rather, they “take their appointed place” within this central story. By granting non-human creatures their God-given place next to us, we can avoid “any sense that a theological account of the human as created in the image and likeness of God must lead to the denigration of non-human creatures.”

Fergusson sees no necessity of expanding the notion of *imago Dei* in order to understand our ethical duties towards non-humans. We do not discredit them by restricting the “image of God” to ourselves in our theological language. It is not that we come to see ourselves as superior; in fact, in some respects our complex narrative and particularity even “makes us much worse.” Further, within the human life-story, through processes of evolution, the novel phenomena of religion and theology arose. God stands in a relationship to other creatures as well, we are certainly not alone in the cosmos, but we must acknowledge that

[t]he divine–human relationship is one that has to be narrated; this is a feature of the contextual and embodied nature of our existence. The knowledge of God and of ourselves unfolds in storied form, particularly in the narratives of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. This story is not one which insists upon human superiority to other creatures; it includes a call to responsibility, stewardship, and concern for those with whom we share the earth and a common animal existence.

Fergusson endorses an evolutionary account of human origins. There is a biological continuity with other species; to keep looking for features that distinguish us from the animal world is no feasible way forward. “What evolutionary history reinforces (...) is the extent to which our particularity is embodied and embedded in a wider narrative about creaturely existence.”

Yet, this awareness of our creaturely existence does not mean that we have to include non-human creatures into the image of God. If we stick to a structural explanation of the *imago Dei*, we actually create a false dilemma, neither horn of which is attractive:

Either we continue to seek out a vital human ingredient that isolates our species from others or else we extend the *imago Dei* to include other creatures, perhaps along a graduated spectrum of capacities. But neither of these options is immediately appealing. The quest for a single or aggregate set of distinguishing features seems doomed to face an array of counter-examples from zoology. (...) Meanwhile, attempts to spread the *imago Dei* through a more capacious inclusion of higher primates and other species will also suffer from the problem of fuzzy boundaries. Such a move is likely to lead to an evacuation of any useful meaning or function for the concept beyond some notion of participation in a divine order which could in principle be extended to all creatures, as well as straining the meaning of the biblical text.

To sum up, Fergusson restricts the *imago Dei* to humans; because of their particularity—not their superiority—they are part of a divine-human story which unfolds in evolutionary history. Other creatures occupy their own particular place within this central story, as our co-inhabitants of the earth, whom deserve our moral attention.

**Evaluation**

Fergusson’s novel interpretation of the *imago Dei* has the advantage of overcoming the more narrow focus of other explanations: the *imago Dei* is not exclusively connected
to some (mental) attribute, to relationality or to having dominion. It includes all that, but is essentially more. Indeed, in Genesis the biblical words surrounding our creation seem to address us in our totality as human persons. They appear to denote a fundamental way in which our coming to existence is deeply related to God’s being and purpose for us. It is true that we are not offered any concrete, unambiguous suggestion as to the precise meaning of being created in God’s image and that the notion does not surface again until in the New Testament, where it is portrayed in a different (Christological) light. In a sense, therefore, Fergusson’s presentation of our imaging of God in everyday life is very appealing. It incorporates structural, functional and relational elements from the classical approaches. It frees us from exegetical scrutiny and offers us some theological space. Thus, it might do justice to the before mentioned indeterminacy—we do not know precisely what bearing God’s image means, but we must hold on to the notion of creation in God’s image as a divine mystery that permeates our complete existence and ultimately comes to fulfillment in Christ.

Yet, it is debatable whether we may draw such far-reaching conclusions from these basic exegetical challenges and uncertainty. One can wonder what remains from any specificity of the “image of God” when it is scattered over our whole existence. Does this generalized approach—the image of God as equated with community life—not lead to a superficial reading? In the end, it seems that Fergusson does not really need the notion of imago Dei to highlight the theological value of quotidian life and to take into account the added value of the wisdom literature. He would do better to disconnect his “agenda” here from the particular notion of imago Dei—nothing is lost.

One of Fergusson’s concerns about widening the notion of imago Dei to include (other) animals, is that it will lead to an “evacuation of any useful meaning or function for the concept beyond some notion of participation in a divine order.” It seems, however, that Fergusson himself is moving in this direction with his generalized understanding of the concept. Therefore the cogency of his argument is somewhat difficult to comprehend. After all, when the image of God is “determined” in our everyday activities and not confined to religious spheres, why then cannot the animals—in their animal doings—be considered to belong to the imago Dei in their own ways, not even in a derived sense?48

Let us, therefore, examine a third view, that considers animals to be at least in the likeness of God and perhaps even—in a weak form—in the image of God, thereby offering more space than Fergusson does to the idea of non-human image bearers.

Graced Nature: Celia Deane-Drummond49

Celia Deane-Drummond, like Clough and Fergusson, points out that there are ongoing textual debates over the precise meaning of image-bearing.50 She touches on the classical approaches: structural,51 functional and relational. Like Clough and Fergusson, she argues that restricting the image of God to one of these categories will not do. Deane-Drummond opts for an approach of the imago Dei that “views the becoming and being of the human through being and act, rather than simply in either ontological or functional or relational terms.”52 What she searches for, is an “expansive version of image bearing.”53 Image bearing is about a performance in which all facets and life tenets of humankind are implicated. Moreover, it is “a performance caught up in a
shared drama with other species and orientated toward God’s purposes for history.” Here we see striking parallels with Fergusson’s account of image bearing as related to the multi-faceted life of humans, as it figures in the wisdom literature and other parts of Scripture.

Deane-Drummond’s account of the imago Dei centers around human distinctiveness, but is also based on the interrelationships between humans and animals. In evolutionary history we needed other species to become who we are, and not in the sense of them being “necessary ingredients” for the goal of human becoming. Forming communities consisting of both intraspecies and interspecies relationships is constitutive for our human identity.

According to Deane-Drummond, our present existence in the Anthropocene makes us particularly aware of the necessity of reflection on our attitude towards life on earth. In our times it is crucially important that humans do not picture themselves as being placed on a pedestal above the other creatures, so that they can dominate and exploit them—something the Genesis-words about “dominion” can negatively engender. However, “in practice dominance cannot be denied and has been endorsed by contemporary science.” Concretely, in the Anthropocene Homo sapiens has permeated “into virtually every aspect of the earth’s systems.” To minimize and prevent ecological disasters, it therefore really matters how theologians and others tell the creaturely story. Deane-Drummond proposes that “ancient theological wisdoms may give us some clues that help us construct alternative narratives and face the particular responsibilities that we have as human agents.”

In her account of the imago Dei, Deane-Drummond engages profoundly with the theology of Thomas Aquinas. Drawing on Aquinas, she subsequently brings her own insights into discussion with contemporary lines of thinking from the disciplines of evolutionary biology and zoology. She distinguishes three stages in Aquinas’s view on image bearing:

- The first stage is a natural aptitude for understanding or loving God as an activity of mind.
- The second stage is where there is a settled habit of mind that shows love and knowledge of God, but this is still imperfect, and conformity is by the grace of God working in humans.
- The third stage of image bearing is one where knowledge and love of God are perfect, but the image shows forth the glory of God. The first stage is found in all people, the second stage is found in the just, and the third only in the blessed.

In Aquinas’s view, as expressed and interpreted by Deane-Drummond, humans in the most basic sense (i.e. the first stage of image bearing) bear the image of God because of “their capacity for discernment and intelligence”—a capacity not shared by animals. Animals only “share some likeness to God in that they exist and that they are alive.” This sharing of likeness to God applies “in a general sense (…) to the whole of the created order reflecting the Trinity.” In humans, however, there is a “greater cognitive capacity for abstract thought and contemplation of the highest good (…) compared with other animals.” As is being captured in the three subsequent stages of image bearing, humans can as well progress in reflecting the divine image. Deane-Drummond stresses that “there is far more to image-bearing in Aquinas than simple reasoning powers [the first stage, EvU]; hence, while it builds on those powers, its goal and orientation are
primarily about perfecting the human abilities to know and love God. The nature of humans can be depicted as “graced nature” (a term coined by Deane-Drummond, not lent from Aquinas); it is capable of knowing and loving God in a grace-filled way.

Aquinas’s account of image bearing informs and inspires the way Deane-Drummond seeks to combine structural, functional and relational aspects, as she remarks about Aquinas:

(... it is the ability of humans to imitate God in the process of loving and willing that marks out divine image-bearing; hence, Aquinas seems to have a view of image-bearing that includes human agency and action as well as ontology.

In line with Aquinas, Deane-Drummond pictures Christ as the ultimate exemplar of image bearing; through the work of the Holy Spirit we are transformed into the image of the Son. “The orientation of humans as made in the image of God is (...) directed toward imago Christi, becoming like Jesus Christ.” Thus, like Clough and Fergusson, she as well adopts an eschatological view on the imago Dei.

Informed by what we know from evolution, Deane-Drummond proposes that the image of God in humans is linked to the evolutionary development in them of higher reasoning skills and a capacity for religion, however that may have happened. In this sense there is a connection between nature and grace: “we can conceive of humans as having evolved in such a way so as to make the specific graceful action of God possible.” At the same time, we must take heed: “If we link higher reasoning and capacity for religion with image-bearing, then precisely when that divine image-bearing happened in the course of evolutionary history remains at best highly speculative.” On the ground of certain research studies, it is nevertheless possible to consider that some earlier hominids like Neanderthals already received the imago Dei, because of their level of (symbolic) intelligence and religious practices.

Are there reasons for speaking about non-human animals as participating in the imago Dei, in Deane-Drummond’s perspective? We already saw that Aquinas spoke about other animals as being in the likeness of God, whereas humans are both in the likeness and the image of God. Humans have a rational mind and a capacity for religion, and therefore can actively receive God’s grace, whereas animals are not as advanced, and only resemble God in that they exist and are alive. With regard to Aquinas’s account, Deane-Drummond critically asks:

(... is this distinction between image and likeness sufficient, given that it seems to create too big a gap between humans, which he [Aquinas] believed (incorrectly) were the only “reasonable” creatures, and all other creaturely kinds? Or does the renewed insight into the comparative intelligence of (...) primates other than humans, suggest that primates at least share in some facets of the divine image?

In answering this question, it appears that the forms of rationality that we have discovered in other animals are not enough to really be able to speak of them as creations in the imago Dei. In the end, as becomes visible in the second and third stages of Aquinas, the image of God in humankind is not confined to the rational capacities as they operate in the human mind, which would then function as a sort of yardstick measuring animals’s participation in the imago Dei. What really counts, according to Deane-Drummond, is that “image bearing is received or possibly imprinted as a gift of God’s grace.”
gift of grace is the capacity to know and love God. According to Deane-Drummond, the capacity for receiving God’s love and knowledge is most probably more perfect in humans than in other animals, even alloprimates. Still, she admits, it is not at all sure how God’s grace precisely works in humans in comparison to other animals. In any case, the line between humans as creatures both in the image and likeness of God and non-human animals as creatures in the likeness of God is not sharply drawn: “(...) with the emphasis put on the action of God and the capacity to receive God’s grace, the possibility of at least a weak form of image bearing existing in some other animal kinds is not ruled out.”

In her earlier work (2009), Deane-Drummond gives more room to the idea of animals sharing in the image of God. She suggested that the possession of some animals of a form of moral agency should perhaps lead to the conclusion that they share in the image of God. The same counted for their (possible) religious capacities. However, in her contemporary work Deane-Drummond has become more reluctant and prefers to view animals as only sharing in the likeness of God, although the possibility of a weak form of image bearing, as we have seen, is not completely ruled out.

Importantly, there are a few disadvantages when we choose to speak about other animals as creatures in the image of God. This option is sometimes advanced—think for example of Clough—as a way of theologically appreciating other animals and avoiding notions of human superiority in God’s concern for creatures. What Deane-Drummond is concerned of, however, is that eventually they would fall short of our human standards, when we draw them into our human, moral world. It can be diminishing to other animals when we compare their skills with those of our own, without taking into account that the skills of other animals are suitable to their own particular environments. Deane-Drummond indicates that “(...) the special place of other creatures in their relationship with God both within their own worlds and in communion with human subjects may become compromised, as greater attention is paid to those creatures that are most like us.” Even when we say that non-human animals only weakly bear the image of God, which make look like a gentle solution, there are problems:

(... using the language of *imago Dei* may itself have anthropocentric overtones in that it might not allow the particular form of what reflecting divinity means in other creaturely kinds to be sufficiently recognized. (...) if other animals are to be thought of as only weakly bearing the image of God, it still seems to put other animals on the same hierarchical scale as humans, and they are then found wanting.

For these reasons Deane-Drummond believes that the better option is to speak of other animals as being in the likeness of God. By no means this should be seen as a degradation of the animal. She says: “(...) likeness language allows for a greater variety for these kinds, so other animals bear the likeness of God in their own way.” Thus, by referring to “likeness” we can sufficiently appreciate and value them as creatures who reflect God in their own ways and who have their own particular relationships to god. According to Deane-Drummond, animals are “to be respected in their own right for the particular skills that they bring.” They are not to be seen as “reduced humans.” Deane-Drummond promotes a vision of the *imago Dei* wherein humans are recognized as exclusive image bearers, but where there is an ethical component in what this entails:
(...) image-bearing is consequent on a gift of higher reasoning and religious powers that have evolved in humans, but these capacities are present as a means to express an active relationship with God according to the pattern of humble service set forth in Christ. Human responsibility is therefore not simply individualistic, but a shared task to make room for the creatures who share our creaturely home.  

**Evaluation**

As we saw, Deane-Drummond opts for an exclusive account of humans as being created in the image of God. Yet, she takes the idea that non-human animals as well reflect God’s nature very seriously. While she holds that non-human animals are only in the likeness of God, she makes explicit in what ways she could be “wrong” and keeps the other option open. Thereby she reflects on the ethical connotations of the image of God in light of the role of humans in the Anthropocene. In this way, she retrieves the classical notion in order to put it to good use in the contemporary public sphere.

In a most helpful way, Deane-Drummond manages to make room for animals in our theological understanding of the seminal biblical words “in our image, according to our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). She does this by viewing non-human animals as being in the likeness of God. What is somewhat lacking, however, is a critical exegetical reflection on the distinction between “image” and “likeness”; Deane-Drummond merely draws on Aquinas for the use and interpretation of these terms. However, most probably—according to biblical scholars—there is no profound conceptual difference between the concepts of image and likeness; they somehow nuance each other.  

Clough’s arguments in favor of broadening the concept of *imago Dei* turn out to be motivated by the concern that restricting the image of God to humans does not do justice to God’s care for other creatures in both creation and redemption and unduly preserves notions of human superiority. In response to these concerns, Fergusson rightly argues that we do not need to broaden the concept in order to appreciate non-human...
life; there are other theological resources available to support an affirmative view of animals in theology and to criticize any tendency to place humans on a pedestal above the other creatures. If we hold on to the traditional approach that humans are the only ones created in God’s image, this certainly does not demand us to think that God is not concerned for non-humans in his redemptive purposes. Deane-Drummond argues that there is no reasonable way of denying the fact of human dominance in the Anthropocene, so that all depends on how we seek to understand what it means to be human in the present “Age of Humans.” Indeed, this points us in the right direction for solving the issue. The notion of imago Dei can alert us to our specific human responsibilities, which include providing room for the flourishing of non-human animals.

Thus, it appears possible to subscribe to unique human image bearing, without the anthropocentric and exploitive overtones that might have accompanied the notion for much of the past. There is a compelling argument to go this way now that we have come to live in the Anthropocene, for more than ever we can morally and spiritually benefit from precisely this exclusive human “identity marker” and calling (or “election,” following Joshua Moritz). It forces us to take position in front of the contemporary ecological challenges that we are facing in the Anthropocene, like major losses of biodiversity, and makes us reflect on the way we should respond to these from within our faith communities and theological traditions. It can even be a moral danger to deny the centrality of humans in the creaturely world, in view of the earth-changing powers that we have gained (and that we should use in responsible manners). In any case, the notion of imago Dei implies that we are ever accountable to a higher, divine power (i.e. YHWH) and should know our place as humans.

One can wonder why we are in need of such a title as “image of God,” especially us humans. My answer would be that humans have come to understand themselves as part of a continuing history. Humans actively make sense of themselves from within the framework of creaturely life, due to the evolutionarily developed range of their consciousness. Although non-human animals can experience the positive or negative consequences of our human conceptualizations of the imago-words in Genesis, they cannot cognitively apply such a concept to themselves and subsequently spiritually benefit from this in their self-understanding. Furthermore, we cannot inform them of our (renewed) biblical insights, if we chose to follow Clough. We must admit that non-human animals may have their own relationships to God, hidden from our observations, but most probably do not reflect on their own identity and place in the world like we do. As humans we search for meaning, we need to make sense of our own lives—and a notion like imago Dei is particularly helpful in this case.

Already in the biblical stories, we see that God addresses humankind, and seeks a relationship with humans. In turn, humans respond to God’s call, and even dare to question God occasionally. In this sense, it can be said that humans are in structural, relational and functional ways God’s counterpart in creation, although the imago Dei does not ultimately reside in some kind of quality but is grounded in God’s call. We see this excellently reflected in the story of Genesis 18, where the father of many nations discusses with YHWH about the destruction of the city of Sodom: “(...) Abraham remained standing before the Lord. Then Abraham came near and said, ‘Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? (…)’ (vs. 22-23)” Accordingly, the imago Dei is best understood as the cornerstone of a developing story of humans as particular creatures of
God, who above all are called to live responsible lives in harmony with their fellow creatures, and who—like no “other animals”—have to navigate ethical tensions in how to act appropriately in this creaturely world.

On the basis of my evaluations and discussion of the respective positions of Clough, Fergusson and Deane-Drummond, I conclude that only humans are created in the image and likeness of God. As we have seen, such a moderate position does not need to be diminishing to other animals, can take seriously both scientific insights on the evolutionary development of the human species and classic theological arguments, and, on top of that, is especially relevant given the era of the Anthropocene that we have entered.

Notes

1. See e.g. Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2014).

2. Joshua Moritz e.g. illustratively indicates in a Glossary-index that “[w]ithin Jewish and Christian theology, [the imago Dei is] a term that applies uniquely to humans and denotes the relation between God and humanity.” See Joshua Moritz, *Science and Religion: Beyond Warfare and Toward Understanding* (Winona MN: Anselm Academic, 2016), 294 (and see also p. 198).

3. See for various proposals to broaden the concept of imago Dei e.g. David S. Cunningham, “The Way of All Flesh. Re-Thinking the imago Dei,” in *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and other Animals*, eds. Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough (London: SCM Press, 2009), 100–117; Celia Deane-Drummond, “Are Animals Moral? Taking Soundings Through Vice, Virtue, Conscience and Imago Dei,” in *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals*, eds. Celia Deane-Drummond and David L. Clough (London: SCM Press, 2009), 190–210; Gregory R. Peterson, “The Evolution of Consciousness and the Theology of Nature,” *Zygon* 34 (1999), 283–306; Gregory R. Peterson, “Uniqueness, the Image of God, and the Problem of Method: Engaging Van Huyssteen,” *Zygon* 43 (2008), 473; Oliver Putz, “Moral Apes, Human Uniqueness, and the Image of God,” *Zygon* 44 (2009), 613–624, Kathryn Tanner, “Human Nature,” in *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1–57; David L. Clough, *On Animals: Volume 1, Systematic Theology* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012), 64–67, 100–102; Charles Camosy, “Other Animals as Persons? A Roman Catholic Inquiry,” in *Animals as Religious Subjects: Transdisciplinary Perspectives*, eds. Celia Deane-Drummond, Rebecca Artinian-Kaiser, and David L. Clough (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 259–277. See for various proposals to restrict the imago Dei to humans (though non-human animals, in diverse ways, are explicitly theologically valued and the biological commonalities between humans and non-humans are recognized) e.g. Gijsbert van den Brink, “Are We Still Special? Evolution and Human Dignity,” *NZSTh* 53 (2011), 318–332; Celia Deane-Drummond, “God’s Image and Likeness in Humans and Other Animals: Performative Soul-Making and Graced Nature,” *Zygon* 47 (2012), 934–948; David Fergusson, “Are We Alone? And Does It Matter?,” *Theology Today* 72 (2015), 194–205; Joshua M. Moritz, “Does Jesus Save the Neanderthals? Theological Perspectives on the Evolutionary Origins and Boundaries of Human Nature,” *Dialog* 54 (2015), 51–60.

4. David Clough is a professor of theological ethics, standing in the Methodist tradition. David Fergusson is a professor of divinity belonging to the Reformed theological tradition. Celia Deane-Drummond is a biologist and a Roman Catholic professor of theology.

5. See Fergusson, “Are We Alone?” 199.

6. See e.g. Moritz, *Science and Religion*, 203–205; Joshua Moritz, “Evolutionary Biology and Theological Anthropology,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, eds. Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro (London and New York: Routledge, 2016),
49–56; Joshua Moritz, “Evolution, the End of Human Uniqueness, and the Election of the Imago Dei,” Theology and Science 9 (2011), 307–339.
7. Moritz, “Does Jesus Save the Neanderthals?” 57. See e.g. also Moritz, Science and Religion, 205.
8. Moritz, “Evolution,” 318.
9. Moritz, “Evolution,” 318–319. See e.g. also Joshua Moritz, “Human Uniqueness, the Other Hominids, and ‘Anthropocentrism of the Gaps’ in the Religion and Science Dialogue,” Zygon 47 (2012), 90–92.
10. Joshua Moritz, “Made as Mirrors: Biblical and Neuroscientific Reflections on Imaging God,” Ex Auditu 32 (2016), 96.
11. Moritz, “Made as Mirrors,” 96.
12. See e.g. Moritz, “Does Jesus Save the Neanderthals?” 55–56; Moritz, “Evolution,” 317–318.
13. David L. Clough, On Animals: Volume 1, Systematic Theology (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012), 64–65.
14. Clough, On Animals (Vol.1), 64–65; Gordon J. Wenham, Genesis 1-15. Word Biblical Commentary 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 29–32.
15. Clough, On Animals (Vol.1), 64–65. There are three predominant interpretations of the imago Dei, brought forward in scholarly circles. The structural (or substantial) interpretation is the attempt to explain the image of God by referring to certain mental characteristics that the human (soul) allegedly shares with God. Humans are created in the image of God, because they alone are, e.g. rational, self-conscious, immortal, or spiritual. The relational interpretation holds that creation in God’s image refers to relationality, as it directly follows in Gen. 1:27 that humankind is created “male and female”. To be human – in God’s image – means to live in close, caring relationships with each other and with the whole of creation (including animals). It means above all to be able to relate and respond to God, who personally addresses humankind and expects them to answer. The functional interpretation is inspired by the “let them have dominion”-words in Gen. 1:26 and proposes that creation in God’s image entails humanity’s being bestowed with the royal task to rule on God’s behalf. A less prominent approach is the so-called dynamic or eschatological view of the imago Dei which focuses on the (eschatological) transformation of humans. Often various approaches are combined, as they do not necessarily preclude each other, as we will also see with Clough, Fergusson and Deane-Drummond. See for an overview of these various interpretations, e.g. Marc Cortez, Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 14-40; Cornelis van der Kooi and Gijsbert van den Brink, Christian Dogmatics: An Introduction (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 260-266.
16. David L. Clough, “All God’s Creatures: Reading Genesis on Human and Nonhuman Animals,” in Reading Genesis after Darwin, eds. Stephen C. Barton and David Wilkinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 145–162.
17. David L. Clough, “Not a Not-Animal: The Vocation to be a Human Animal Creature,” Studies in Christian Ethics 26 (2013), 11.
18. Clough, “All God’s Creatures,” 15.
19. “Every creature plays its own role before God and therefore can be said to have its own vocation: it is called into being by God and is called to take its particular part in the earthly chorus of divine worship, whether supernova or hill or stream or tree or worm or hedgehog or human.” See David L. Clough, “On Thinking Theologically about Animals: A Response,” Zygon 49 (2014): 766.
20. Clough, On Animals (Vol.1), 67.
21. Clough, On Animals (Vol.1), 100–101. So here Clough seems to adopt the dynamic or eschatological view (cf. n.6).
22. Clough, On Animals (Vol.1), 101.
26. Clough, “Not a Not-Animal,” 11–12; Clough, On Animals (Vol.1), 81–89. “(...) if we judge it illegitimate to discriminate between Jews and Gentiles or women and men on the basis of the kind of creature in whom God became incarnate, it seems that we should also consider it illegitimate to discriminate between humans and other animals on this basis. Theological positions employing the doctrine of the incarnation to create a boundary between humans and other animals are misreading the particularity of creature we know as Jesus of Nazareth.” See Clough, On Animals (Vol.1), 84.

27. Clough, On Animals (Vol.1), 101–102. At first sight, it looks like there is a contradiction. In the 'Creation' part of On Animals (Vol.1), Clough stresses that while we are aware of our creaturely commonality, we should attend to 'creaturely differences'. God's creatures do not belong to a homogeneous category. But in the 'Reconciliation' part, we are so to say lumped together again because of the event of the incarnation. Apparently, it depends on what kinds of difference we come to speak about, be it our (natural) skills or theological position as creatures before God's sight.

28. Clough, On Animals (Vol.1), 102.

29. Clough, "On Thinking Theologically about Animals," 765.

30. Paul Ricoeur defines the concept of metaphor as “a calculated error, which brings together things that do not go together and by means of this apparent misunderstanding it causes a new, hitherto unnoticed, relation of meaning to spring up between the terms that previous systems of classification had ignored or not allowed”. See Paul Ricoeur, Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 51. According to Sallie McFague, a metaphor "finds the vein of similarity in the midst of dissimilars, while symbol rests on similarity already present and assumed". See Sallie McFague, Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 17.

31. David Fergusson, “Humans Created According to the Imago Dei: An Alternative Proposal,” Zygon 48 (2013): 440, 442; David Fergusson, The Cosmos and the Creator: An Introduction to the Theology of Creation (London: The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1998), 13.

32. Fergusson, “Humans Created According to the Imago Dei,” 445.

33. David Fergusson, Creation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 13; David Fergusson, “Are We Alone? And Does It Matter?” Theology Today 72 (2015), 200–202. According to Fergusson, “it is not at all clear from Genesis that the image is lost at the fall as Protestant theologians have sometimes claimed. The implication of Genesis 1 seems to be that human beings everywhere and at all times bear the image of God – it is this that renders them of sacred value and equal with one another.” See Fergusson, Creation, 12–13.

34. Fergusson, “Humans Created According to the Imago Dei,” 446.

35. Fergusson, Creation, 13.

36. Fergusson, “Humans Created According to the Imago Dei,” 446.

37. Fergusson, Cosmos and the Creator, 13.

38. Fergusson, “Humans Created According to the Imago Dei,” 447.

39. Ibid., 446–447.

40. David H. Kelsey, Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010).

41. Fergusson, “Humans Created According to the Imago Dei,” 450.

42. Fergusson, Creation, 13–14; Fergusson, “Humans Created According to the Imago Dei,” 446.

43. Fergusson, Creation, 13–14.

44. Fergusson, “Humans Created According to the Imago Dei,” 446.

45. Fergusson, “Are We Alone?” 201–202. In this article Fergusson engages with the work of Wentzel van Huyssteen on evolutionary theory and human uniqueness. See J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, Alone in the World? Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

46. Fergusson, “Are We Alone?” 202.
47. Ibid., 200.
48. When it comes to the fastidious task of determining which non-human animals do or do not belong to the image of God – or all of them? – Fergusson’s hesitations are more understandable. His choice not to speak about other creatures as created in God’s image may very well be pragmatic, as there is ambiguity in developing ‘animal criteria’ for participation in the *imago Dei* – species boundaries are fuzzy. Where precisely should we draw the line?
49. Due to the long publication process of this article, I was not able to engage with Deane-Drummond’s recent monograph, *Theological Ethics through a Multispecies Lens: The Evolution of Wisdom*, Volume I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). However, along similar lines as presented in this article Deane-Drummond argues in this work for “confining the terminology of bearing the image of God to humans, while using the Thomistic term ‘the likeness of God’ to apply to other animals (…)”. See *Theological Ethics*, 223, and 236–240.
50. Celia Deane-Drummond, *The Wisdom of the Liminal: Evolution and Other Animals in Human Becoming* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 11, 22.
51. “(…) in each case what used to be thought of as a uniquely human characteristic has now come under fire, inasmuch as the difference between humans and other animal kinds is one of degree. Reason, freedom, morality, and language – all have their counterparts in those animals who have relevant cognitive and social capacities.” See Deane-Drummond, *Wisdom of the Liminal*, 302.
52. Deane-Drummond, *Wisdom of the Liminal*, 10–11.
53. Ibid., 11.
54. Ibid., 10–11.
55. Ibid., 4.
56. Ibid., 11–12.
57. Deane-Drummond, *Wisdom of the Liminal*, 12. See also Celia Deane-Drummond, “Performing the Beginning in the End: A Theological Anthropology for the Anthropocene,” in *Religion in the Anthropocene*, eds. Celia Deane-Drummond et al. (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 184–185.
58. Deane-Drummond, *Wisdom of the Liminal*, 306. See for the original source, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, vol. 13, *Man Made to God’s Image* (London: Blackfriars, 1964), Qu. 93.4. Aquinas discusses the three stages in relation to differences between men and women; women cannot ‘progress’ beyond the first stage. Deane-Drummond does – not surprisingly – disagree with him here and explains his position by referring to the general attitude towards women in those days.
59. Celia Deane-Drummond, “God’s Image and Likeness in Humans and Other Animals: Performative Soul-Making and Graced Nature,” *Zygon* 47 (2012), 936. 942–943.
60. Deane-Drummond, *Wisdom of the Liminal*, 307.
61. Deane-Drummond, “God’s Image and Likeness in Humans and Other Animals,” 936. See for the original source, Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 13, 1a, 93.2. See also Deane-Drummond, *Wisdom of the Liminal*, 305.
62. Deane-Drummond, “God’s Image and Likeness in Humans and Other Animals,” 943.
63. Deane-Drummond, “God’s Image and Likeness in Humans and Other Animals,” 943. See for the original source, Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 13, 1a, 93.4. See Deane-Drummond, “God’s Image and Likeness in Humans and Other Animals,” 946 (footnote 6).
64. Deane-Drummond, “God’s Image and Likeness in Humans and Other Animals,” 937.
65. Ibid., 937, 944, 946 (endnote 16).
66. Deane-Drummond, *Wisdom of the Liminal*, 304. See also Deane-Drummond, “Performing the Beginning in the End,” 186.
67. Deane-Drummond, “God’s Image and Likeness in Humans and Other Animals,” 941. Deane-Drummond is of the opinion that there are valid evolutionary explanations for the development of religion in humankind, but is eager to stress that these accounts cannot “explain religion away”. She remarks that “what they might do at best is to show how human brains are primed in order to be most responsive to a range of religious ideas
rather than the proof or otherwise of such ideas”. Deane-Drummond, “God’s Image and Likeness in Humans and Other Animals,” 941.

68. Deane-Drummond, “God’s Image and Likeness in Humans and Other Animals,” 941–942. See on Homo floresiensis, e.g. Celia Deane-Drummond, Genetics and Christian Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), xvi–xviii, where she argues that “it is a somewhat naïve approach to theology to presume that such scientific discoveries [in relation to H. floresiensis] undermine the validity of human image-bearing, or religious understandings of the human”.

69. Deane-Drummond further explains the notion of ‘likeness’ in Aquinas’s view: “The extent of likeness to God is related to existence, being alive, and finally intelligence.” See Deane-Drummond, Wisdom of the Liminal, 305. See for the original source, Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, 13, 1a, 93.2. She also points out: “Likeness is used in a general sense to apply to the whole of the created order reflecting the Trinity.” Deane-Drummond, Wisdom of the Liminal, 307. See for the original source, Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, 8, 1a, 45.7.

70. Deane-Drummond, Wisdom of the Liminal, 305.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid., 306.
73. Ibid.
74. Celia Deane-Drummond, “Are Animals Moral? Taking Soundings Through Vice, Virtue, Conscience and Imago Dei,” in Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals, eds. Celia Deane-Drummond and David L. Clough (London: SCM Press, 2009), 190–210.

75. Deane-Drummond, “God’s Image and Likeness in Humans and Other Animals,” 946.
76. Deane-Drummond, Wisdom of the Liminal, 307; Celia Deane-Drummond, “In God’s Image and Likeness: From Reason to Revelation in Humans and Other Animals,” in Questioning the Human: Toward a Theological Anthropology for the Twenty-First Century, eds. Lieven Boeve et al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 60–61.
77. Deane-Drummond, “In God’s Image and Likeness,” 61.
78. Deane-Drummond, “In God’s Image and Likeness,” 61. Deane-Drummond refers to critical remarks of David Clough about “unilinear scales of creaturely difference” that are ethically damaging. See David L. Clough, “Putting Animals in Their Place: On the Theological Classification of Animals,” in Animals as Religious Subjects: Transdisciplinary Perspectives, eds. Celia Deane-Drummond, Rebecca Artinian-Kaiser, and David L. Clough (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 209–224.
79. Deane-Drummond, Wisdom of the Liminal, 307.
80. Deane-Drummond, “God’s Image and Likeness in Humans and Other Animals,” 943.
81. Ibid., 945.
82. See e.g. Wenham, Genesis 1-15, 29–30.

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