

The image of God

I am uncomfortable with the phrase *"in God's image."* The idea that God shaped us into His physical image from the dust, is derived from the creation accounts in Genesis, which I believe should not be taken literally. We assume that God is a male, despite the fact that the word used for God in one of the creation accounts (Gen. 1:26-27) was Elohim, which was plural. What need would God have for male body parts? The idea was also conveyed in Genesis that the woman was somehow inferior to man because Eve was fashioned from the Man, not directly from God (See 1 Cor. 11:7).

In my view, it is ridiculous to assign a gender to God. It does perpetrate the false notion that males are somehow superior to females, which, of course, many writers of the Bible believed. We even find this idea in the New Testament, where women are still pictured as subservient to men. This was the reason given, in 1 Cor. 11:7, for women needing to cover their heads: *"For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man."*

In Col. 1:15, Jesus Christ is said to be the *"the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."* In Phil. 2:6-8, we are told that Christ pre-existed his physical birth in invisible (spirit) form. *"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!"* In these passages, a distinction is made between the form of man and the form of God. Man's fleshly form is not made in the likeness of God. It is man's spiritual nature that is in the "form" of God.

It's OK to refer to God as our Father, and to man as being made in the image or form of God, so long as we understand that we are not talking about a physical likeness or gender, but a spiritual likeness instead. God is our Father not in any physical sense, but in the sense that He possesses the characteristics of unconditional love that we find in human fathers. Mother's also possess those characteristics. In a male dominated society, describing God as our Father also conveyed the idea of God's being in authority over us. While it is true that God is sovereign, this has nothing to do with gender.

Christ lived in a patriarchal society, so it would be natural for Him to refer to God as our Father. If He were among us today in physical form, I think that He most likely would be OK with the term "Mother/Father God." The pronouns "it" and "they" would also be appropriate. The correct view of God transcends physical gender and personhood. God is greater than any human description. God is also more than just a single being. God exists in/as more than just the three persons of the Trinity. He exists as all of us, as well. We have all been fashioned from God's spiritual DNA. We all share, with Christ, the divine nature.

So how does one refer to God in speech or writing? Is it OK to use the word "He?" I believe so, because no other pronoun is as simple and easy to use. For me, it is awkward to refer to God as "He/She" or "It" or "They." There is no pronoun that accurately fits with the true nature of God. Is it OK to use the term "our Father" when praying to God, and when talking or writing about

God? If it was OK with Jesus, it's OK with me. At the same time, however, we need to keep in mind that our Creator God transcends all human description.