

Implications of the imago Dei (Gn 1:26) on gender equality and agrarian land reform in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The creation of humanity (Gn 1:26–2:25) marks the climatic point of the creation process because after it, God is said to have rested. A clear marker that humans are the epitome of creation is the fact that they were created in God's image (Gn 1:26). Unlike animals, humans have the capacity to think, act with free will, exert self-control and also have a conscience. These distinctive characteristics earn humanity not only dominion over creation (Gn 1:28), but also the care towards the created order. The fact of having been created in God's image, imago Dei, or to be godlike, is therefore associated with certain rights and responsibilities over creation. Further, being created in God's image implies that human life itself is sacred and thus should not be terminated in any way, either by the individual themselves or by any other person(s) (Gn 9:6). Given that human life is so sacred, such a rationale is invoked in the absolute prohibition on murder. Above all, being created in God's image connotes gender equality – 'male and female he created them' (Gn 1:27b). In view of the land reform exercise in Zimbabwe, so much has happened, but the big question which remains is whether women have received a fair share in the land redistribution exercise. Making a womanist contextual reading of Genesis 1:26, this article seeks to reflect on the Zimbabwean land reform exercise, challenging the lack of gender inclusion in the redistribution exercise. Contribution: Given that women theology is that of liberation, empowerment and affirmation, this research makes a unique contribution to women theologies as it pushes for women's empowerment through fair land redistribution. By tapping into the implications of having been created in God's image, the research has successfully argued that the current situation, whereby gender gaps in land ownership are still quite large, needs to be addressed as stewardship over creation was given to both men and women.

Keywords: creation; jambanja; image of God; Zimbabwe; Genesis 1; women