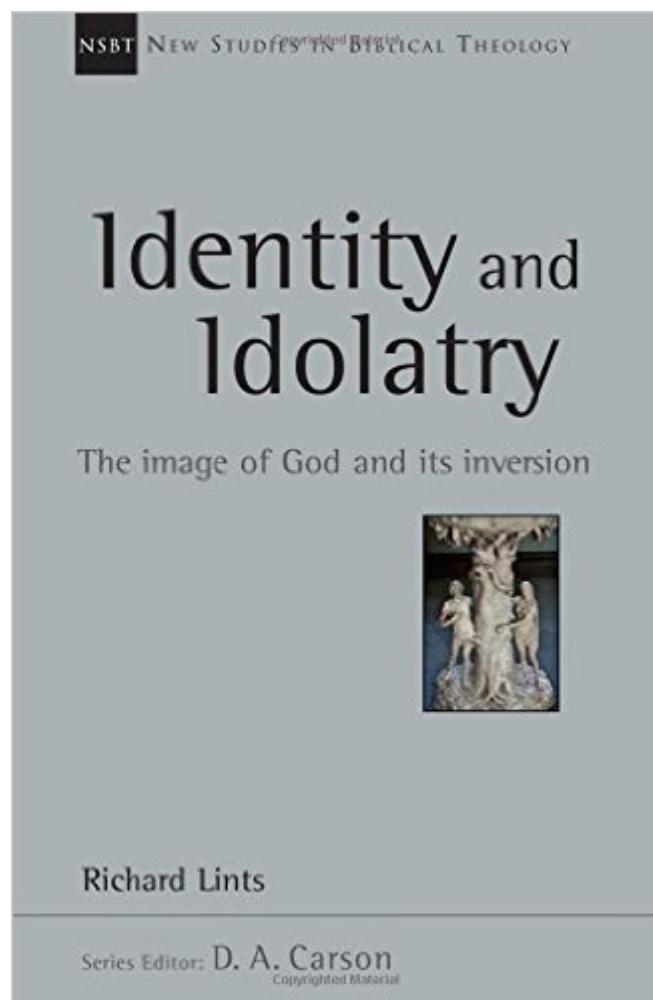


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Identity And Idolatry: The Image Of God And Its Inversion (New Studies In Biblical Theology)



Synopsis

One of Desiring God's Top 15 Books of 2015 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27) Genesis 1:26-27 has served as the locus of most theological anthropologies in the central Christian tradition. However, Richard Lints observes that too rarely have these verses been understood as conceptually interwoven with the whole of the prologue materials of Genesis 1. The construction of the cosmic temple strongly hints that the "image of God" language serves liturgical functions. Lints argues that "idol" language in the Bible is a conceptual inversion of the "image" language of Genesis 1. These constructs illuminate each other, and clarify the canon's central anthropological concerns. The question of human identity is distinct, though not separate, from the question of human nature; the latter has far too frequently been read into the biblical use of "image". Lints shows how the "narrative" of human identity runs from creation (imago Dei) to fall (the golden calf/idol, Exodus 32) to redemption (Christ as perfect image, Colossians 1:15-20). The biblical-theological use of image/idol is a thread through the canon that highlights the movements of redemptive history. In the concluding chapters of this New Studies in Biblical Theology volume, Lints interprets the use of idolatry as it emerges in the secular prophets of the nineteenth century, and examines the recent renaissance of interest in idolatry with its conceptual power to explain the "culture of desire." Addressing key issues in biblical theology, the works comprising New Studies in Biblical Theology are creative attempts to help Christians better understand their Bibles. The NSBT series is edited by D. A. Carson, aiming to simultaneously instruct and to edify, to interact with current scholarship and to point the way ahead.

Book Information

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Lints forces us to think critically, biblically, and theologically about the logical complement to Godâ™s image, namely, idolatry and its deleterious effects. Put differently, if the *imago Dei* within is not protected and nourished, then an imposter gradually takes its place and becomes the product of human hands and, tragically, we become its slave. The *imago Dei* becomes the *imago creatio*. That which gives life (the *imago Dei*) becomes that which has no life (*imago creatio*), powerless to provide the safety and security and significance that all humans long for. Israelâ™s creation and worship of the golden calf is prime example (Exodus 32). With theological precision Lints recounts the monumental effects of this act of disobedience. Turning to the New Testament we find that the upside down image of Adam is turned right side up in Christ Who is the âœinverted idol of Godâ• (p 123). Lints shows us that âœthe *imago Dei* attains a unique status in the person of Jesus Christ, not merely as a human but as the perfect image of Godâ• (p 120). And carefully carving out the practical implications of these two competing images for the believer, Lints reasons from 1 Corinthians 15 (also Romans 5) that "All of humanity bears the image of Adam, the man of dust. In Adam humans inherit death as their just sentence. In the resurrection Christâ™s people will bear his image, the man of heaven, and will inherit an imperishable existence. Yet strangely, on this side of paradise Godâ™s people bear both the image of Adam and the image of Christ. These images are not mutually exclusive. This argues that âœimageâ™ functions not as an ontological description of oneâ™s essence, but as a theological depiction of the divided worship of the human heart.

In the newest addition to the NSBT series (New Studies in Biblical Theology) Richard Lints explores the relationship between identity and idolatry, with special regard to relevancy of the topic for modern Christians and how it actually affect how Christians think. He is currently the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Hamilton Campus at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He is also the Andrew Muth distinguished Professor in Theology. His focuses in philosophy and theology, apologetics, and identity, all shine through his work. Identity and Idolatry utilizes these areas to show how and why *imago Dei* is an absolutely formative element to establishing and maintaining Christian identity, and even humanity. He begins by providing an introduction to identity dynamics outside of a philosophical anthropological context and indicates a fundamental key that God is the triune, communal creator who is apart and unique from creation. Following he illustrates

the constraints and conceptual resources viable for understanding *imago Dei*. He provides two important keys: Genesis is not metaphysically concerned but theologically concerned with the well-being of created community, and human identity involves the reflecting of the identity of God or idols. In his words, “the key question of the Scriptures is, what will images reflect? Will the image of God (humankind) image God?” (42)? Chapters Three through Five explore the Hebrew Bible and its appropriations of *imago Dei* and semantically related ideas. Rooted initiates his analysis of Scripture’s view of *imago Dei* through the “two accounts of creation in Genesis” (43).

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