

Letter: Voices: The image of God is a theological foundation for race relations

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RE: [Voices: The image of God is a theological foundation for race relations](#)

Jim Lemons certainly is right to call our attention to the importance and relevance of the doctrine of *imago Dei* in today's discussions on race. Few other Christian doctrines come to bear as directly on this issue as the doctrine of *imago Dei*.

Nonetheless, we cannot point out this important truth without, at the same time, recognizing how this doctrine has been misused and abused in defense of racist ideas. As Christians, we have to face our past. Unfortunately, the past is filled with the misuse and abuse of Scripture and doctrine in ways that perpetuate racism.

For example, in the year 1900, Charles F. Carroll—of no known relation to the Texas Baptist B.H. Carroll—published a book titled *The Negro a Beast ... or ... in The Image of God*. In this book, he argued against the racist idea that Black people are descendants of Ham in favor of the even more horrific view that Black people are not humans at all. On the title page of this book, Carroll states, "The Negro a beast, but created with articulate speech, and hands, that he may be of service to his master—the White man."

Carroll was wrong. Black people are human beings created in the image of God.

As we stress the importance of the doctrine of *imago Dei*, we also must apologize for the way our predecessors have used this doctrine in service of hate and bigotry. We must repudiate these horrific ideas, strive to celebrate diversity within the human family and love our fellow human beings well.

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