

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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Man as Created in God's Image

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The Psalmist posed the question nearly three millennia ago: "What is man that You [God] are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?" (*Psalms* 8:4). There have been numerous attempts to answer to this question.

Some Non-Christian Views of Man

Behaviorists such as J. B. Watson and B. F. Skinner view man as little more than a higher form of the animal kingdom. Man is entirely physical or corporeal; there are no souls or spirits. Man is the result of an evolutionary process and can be "conditioned" like other animals (such as Pavlov's dogs).

Sigmund Freud regarded man primarily as a sexual being. The human personality, said Freud, is tripartite. There is the animal desire of man (the Id), which is the source of man's sexual drive (the libido) ; there is man with his higher motivations, his rational awareness (the Ego) ; and there is also the umpiring factor in man: the Superego. Psychological maladjustments take place when man's sexual drives are unduly checked. The key, then, to understanding and governing human behavior is found in properly directing his sex drive.

Karl Marx, who also believed man to be a higher form of the animal kingdom, taught that man is an economic being. Economic forces motivate man and move history. This movement occurs through a

process known as dialectical materialism. The final phase of this movement, and the ultimate destiny of man, will be realized with the achievement of a "classless" society.

Existentialists, such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, see man as only a pawn in the universe. The blind forces of nature, over which man has no control, govern man's destiny. The world is indifferent to the welfare and needs of man. Ultimately, man's life is one of despair, a meaningless existence to which he must resign himself.

Some existentialists view man as "a free being." To be himself man must be left alone; he who is without restraint is able to realize his true potential, his essential nature. True man, as expressed in William Ernest Henley's "Invictus," can boldly state: "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul."

In stark contrast to these non-Christian concepts of man is that of the Psalmist. His view is the highest view. He describes man as one whom God made "a little lower than the angels," one whom God had "crowned with glory and honor." God has created man "to have dominion over the works of [His] hands." He has "put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen—even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas" (*Psalms* 8:5-8).

The Christian View of Man

In agreement with the Psalmist is the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. According to the *Confession* (4:2):

After God had made all other creatures, He created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after His own image, having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfill it: and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change. Beside this law written in their hearts, they received a command, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; which while they kept, they were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over the creatures.

Among other things which may be taught in this section of the *Confession*, at least four are either explicitly or implicitly evident:

1. Man was created as a direct act of God, in His image. Man is a "living soul," composed of a physical (body) and a non-physical (spirit) element.
2. The image of God in man resides in the spiritual element.
3. Being God's image-bearer somehow involves "dominion over the earthly creatures."
4. The image is two-fold: there is a broader and narrower aspect the image. The former is intrinsic and inalienable, the latter is not—it was lost in the Fall.

Man the Image of God

The *Confession* begins by stating that man was created "after God had made all other creatures." Here we see two things. First, man was created as a direct act of God. As Robert Reymond says: "There

is not a hint that he is the product of either naturalistic or theistic evolution."¹

The *Genesis* 1 passage is to be viewed as progressive in the sense that there is an ascending order in creation; the more significant creatures were made after the less significant. Man was created on the sixth day as God's crowning creational act. In the words of John Calvin, man "is the noblest and most remarkable example of His justice, wisdom, and goodness." As such, man is set apart from all other creatures.² This is particularly noticeable when we read that only after the creation of man did God pronounce His creation "very good" (v. 31).

This second point, of course, is not meant in any sense to demean any other part of the creation. On the contrary, in *Genesis* 1:31 we read that the entirety of the created order is "very good." Nevertheless, man is God's image-bearer. Interestingly, in verses 11, 12, 21, 24, and 25 of *Genesis* 1, we read that God created certain plants and living creatures "after their kind." Not so with man (vv. 26-28); he is created "after the kind" of God, *i.e.*, in His image.

The special relationship that man has with God is further expressed in *Genesis* 2:5-25 where we read, not a second account of creation, but a more detailed account of the sixth day creation of man. Here God enters into a unique covenantal relationship with Adam (2:16,17; Hosea 6:7).

The Old Testament speaks of man being made in God's image and/or likeness in *Genesis* 1:26,27; 5:1-3; and 9:6.³ The New Testament teaches the same in *Colossians* 3:10; *Ephesians* 4:24; *James* 3:9; and *1 Corinthians* 11:7. This latter verse goes so far as to say that man does not merely possess the image of God, but that "he is the image." Hence,

¹ Robert L. Reymond, *God and Man in Holy Scripture* (unpublished syllabus, Covenant Theological Seminary, 1990), 155.

² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vols. I & II, edited by John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Westminster, 1960), I:15:1,3.

³ The Apocryphal books of *Wisdom of Solomon* (2:23) and *Ecclesiasticus* (17:3) also teach that man is God's image-bearer.

John Murray concludes that "man's origin is not only the unique subject of God's counsel; man is from the outset the recipient of unique endowment and dignity."⁴

The *Westminster Confession* maintains that the words "image" (*tselem*) and "likeness" (*demuth*), in *Genesis* 1:26,27, are used synonymously; it is an instance of the Hebrew practice of parallelism. A comparison of *Genesis* 1:26, 27 with 5:1 reveals the interchangeable use of the terms. Douglas Kelly notes that the Hebrew word *tselem* means "to carve out" or "to pattern after." Thus, we can see that God has created man to be like Himself, i.e., after His pattern or likeness."⁵

In *Genesis* 2:7 we read that "the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." The Bible defines man as "a living soul," consisting of a physical and a non-physical element. Animals consist of a non-physical as well as a physical element (*Ecclesiastes* 3:19-21; *Psalms* 104:29,30; *Genesis* 1:20, 21, 24 [literally, "living souls"]). But their non-physical entity is different from that of man's, in that man has a "rational soul." Man can reason (*Isaiah* 1:18), whereas the earthly creatures cannot (see *Psalms* 32:9; *Jude* 10; *2 Peter* 2:12).⁶ This, says Calvin, is what sets man

apart from the rest of creation: He has been "endued with reason."⁷

Not only did this divine "inbreathing" give life to Adam (and all mankind following him; *Job* 33:4), but it also gave (pre-Fall) man the capacity to relate spiritually to God (*Job* 32:8). The law of God was written in his heart (*Romans* 2:14, 15); thus man (even post-Fall man, according to *Romans* 2:14, 15) has a conscience (*Proverbs* 20:27), which is not the case with the animals.

The view of the Westminster divines that man is "a living soul" composed of a physical and a non-physical element is referred as the dichotomistic view of man. This is opposed to monism and trichotomy. The latter theory asserts that man consists of three parts: body, soul, and spirit;⁸ the former, of one.

Trichotomists lean heavily on two particular verses: *1 Thessalonians* 5:23 and *Hebrews* 4:12. An examination of these verses will show that they do not teach trichotomy. In the former verse, Paul is not teaching about man's constitutional makeup. Rather, he is praying that God would sanctify the whole man. (Jesus makes a somewhat similar statement in *Matthew* 22:37.) In *Hebrews* 4:12, on the other hand, the author is using hyperbole; he is stating that the Word of God is so powerful that it is able to divide that which is indivisible: the soul and spirit. The Word of God, says the author of *Hebrews*, is powerful enough to penetrate into the inner recesses of man.

Moreover, the Bible frequently uses the words *spirit and soul* as synonyms. For example, in *Matthew* 6:25 and 10:28, man is said to consist of body and soul. But in *Ecclesiastes* 12:7 and *1 Corinthians* 5:3,5, he is said to be body and spirit. Likewise, in *Genesis* 35:18 and *1 Kings* 17:21, death is described as a giving up of the soul. But in *Psalms* 31:5 and *Luke* 23:46, it is a giving up of the spirit. A very

⁴ John Murray, *Collected Writings*, Vol. II (Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 5.

⁵ Douglas F. Kelly, *The Creation* (Dillon: unpublished manuscript, 1977), 113; see also John Calvin, *Commentaries*, (Baker, 1981), on *Genesis* 1:26. Roman Catholicism, on the other hand, differentiates between "image" and "likeness." Rome maintains that the former is that which belongs to man as created morally neutral. "Likeness" is the "superadded gift" (*donum superadditum*) of righteousness which God gave to Adam. In the Roman Catholic view, the Fall cost man original righteousness ("likeness"), but not the state of moral neutrality ("image") in which he was created. Thus, redeemed man, with the superadded gift of righteousness restored, is able to supererogate, i.e., do works over and above that which God requires (Gordon H. Clark, *The Biblical Doctrine of Man* [Trinity Foundation, 1984], 12, 13). The Christian church has roundly denounced this heretical teaching. For example, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (16:4) states that: "Those who in their obedience attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life, are so far from being able to supererogate, and to do more than God requires, as that they fall short of much which in duty they are bound to do."

⁶ Gordon H. Clark, *Man*, 6; Augustine, *City of God*, 7:29.

⁷ John Calvin, *Commentaries*, (Baker, 1981), on *John* 1:4.

⁸ Trichotomy, which originated in the fourth century with Apollinarius (or Apollinaris) the Younger was denounced by the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381. It is espoused today by some dispensationalists and charismatics. See, for example, *The Scofield Reference Bible*, note on *1 Thessalonians* 5:23.

strong case for dichotomy can be found in *Philippians* 1:27, where Paul clearly uses the words *spirit* (*pneuma*) and *soul* or *mind* (*psuche*) synonymously. And another strong case is found in *Luke* 1:46, 47, where Mary, in biblical parallelism, uses *spirit* and *soul* as functionally equivalent terms. Of course, *Genesis* 2:7 mentions only two parts: the body made of dust and the God-breathed spirit.

The other faulty view mentioned above is monism. Monists teach that man is a radical unity, rather than a composite unity of two elements. J. A. T. Robinson, for example, asserts that the New Testament views man as "the whole man," and the words "body" and "soul" are virtual synonyms. Man is just "a self."⁹ G. C. Berkouwer is another monist, although he is not nearly so radical as Robinson. Nevertheless, he overstates the "whole man" theory, to the point where the distinction between the body and the soul or spirit is blurred.¹⁰ This view is sometimes erroneously expressed as the "Hebrew view" of man as opposed to the "Greek view," which distinguishes between body and spirit.

Biblical dichotomy teaches that man is a bipartite unity. He was created as a living soul with a physical and a non-physical element. Man's final state will be the same. As the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (32:2) says: "At the last day . . . all the dead shall be raised up with the self-same bodies, and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls for ever."

The Image is Spiritual

The *Confession* also teaches that the person himself is the spiritual element of man. God created man with "reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after His own image, having the law of God written in their hearts." Most obviously, rationality, knowledge, righteousness, holiness, and the internalized law of God are all spiritual or mental characteristics. To be sure, the whole of man is to

manifest righteousness and holiness, but, as Augustine stated, it is the soul that "rules the body"; the body is the instrument which the soul uses.¹¹

Calvin agrees. Even though there is "no part of him [man] in which some scintillations of it [God's image] did not shine forth," nevertheless, "the chief seat of the divine image was in his mind and heart [i.e., the non-physical element] where it was eminent."¹² It is in the soul, says Calvin, that "the powers" of the image are located.¹³

The body of man, then, is neither the person nor the image. The body is the place where the soul, i.e., the image of God, the person himself dwells. It is the soul, writes Charles Hodge, which "is the man himself, that in which his identity and personality reside. It is the Ego. Higher than the soul there is nothing in man. Therefore it is often used as a synonym for self. Every soul is every man; my soul is I; his soul is he."¹⁴ Or as John Gerstner says: "Man is a soul. Man has a body."¹⁵

Biblical confirmation of this is found in *Proverbs* 23:7, where we read that, "as he [a man] reckons in his soul, so he is." Then too, in *Mark* 7:21-23, the Lord Jesus teaches that the outward deeds of men are driven by the inward desires. Why? Because it is "from it [the heart, i.e., the mind or spirit] that flow the springs of life" (*Proverbs* 4:23). It is the soul that drives the body.

Further, there are (at least) four particular New Testament passages which teach that the image of God is to be found in the spiritual element of man. First, *John* 4:24 teaches us that God is pure Spirit; He does not have a body (*Luke* 24:39). This alone should guard us against believing that the body of man is in any way the image.¹⁶ And since the

¹¹ Augustine, *On the Magnitude of the Soul* 12.22; *City of God* 10.30. For an excellent discussion of how the body and soul function together, see Clark, *Man*, 88-95.

¹² John Calvin, *Commentaries*, on *Genesis* 1:26.

¹³ John Calvin, *Institutes* I:15:3.

¹⁴ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II (Eerdmans, 1977), 48.

¹⁵ John H. Gerstner, *Tabletalk*, edited by Robert F. Ingram (Ligonier Ministries, December 1992), 11.

¹⁶ To assert that the image is somehow physical would apparently lead to the conclusion of the Mormons and the

⁹ John A. T. Robinson, *The Body*, as cited in Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Baker, 1983-85), 525.

¹⁰ G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Eerdmans, 1962), 194-233.

constitutional makeup of man is body and spirit, man must be God's image-bearer in a spiritual sense.

Second, in *2 Corinthians* 12:2 we read that there was a time when Paul did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body. Obviously, if he was out of the body, it was still the same person: Paul, the image-bearer of God. Then in *2 Corinthians* 5:11 and *Philippians* 1:21-24, Paul writes that he, as God's image-bearer, will continue to exist, even after he dies and leaves the body behind.

It is the soul or the person himself that is immortal, says the apostle, not the body. It is the "immortal soul," says the Confession, along with Paul, that is the seat of the divine image. When man dies, the body dies; the person, God's image-bearer, does not die. Man remains man—God's image-bearer—whether in the body or out of the body.

It is, of course, true that the Second Person of the Trinity took upon Himself a human nature (*John* 1:14). The Bible also teaches that He is the image of God (*Colossians* 1:15; *2 Corinthians* 4:4).¹⁷ But this does not support the theory that the whole man is the image. First, Christ took upon Himself a human nature that He might become like man, and not vice-versa (*Hebrews* 2:14-18). And second, as Reymond points out, "Christ is the 'image of God' because He is deity and because as such in His incarnation He took our flesh."¹⁸

ancient Anthropomorphites. They believe that God Himself has a body, *i.e.*, a physical element in His nature.

¹⁷ Karl Barth used the biblical teaching that Christ is the image of God to support His Christomonism theology. According to Barth, man *qua* man is not the image of God, because God does not enter into such relationships with natural man. Christ, then, is the true man and His humanity is the original. The natural man's humanity is merely a derivative of Christ's. Natural man must therefore participate in His humanity, not He in ours. This kind of thinking led Barth to see the image, as it is found in *Genesis* 1:26, 27, as referring to the male-female (I-Thou) relationship, which is analogous to the inter-Trinitarian (I-Thou) relationship and the relationship which Christ has with man (Reymond, *God and Man*, 163; Sinclair B. Ferguson, "Image of God," *New Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J. I. Packer (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 328, 329.

¹⁸ Reymond, *God and Man*, 163.

The fact that the image resides in the spiritual element of man does not demean the physical aspect. As Calvin has stated, this image is to "shine forth" from every part of man. Man, body and soul, was created "very good" (*Genesis* 1:31).

Dominion over Earthly Creatures

Being God's image-bearer somehow involves "dominion over the creatures." In *Genesis* 1 we read: Let Us make man in our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the Earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the Earth . . . and God said to them [mankind], 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the Earth and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the Earth' (26, 28).

This mandate, so far as we are told, was given only to man. As God's vice-gerent, man is to rule over all the earthly creation for the glory of God. As stated in Psalm 8, even post-Fall man is to keep this command. Of course, only redeemed man can do so for the glory of God.

According to some theologians (*e.g.*, Buswell, Berkhof), this mandate is part and parcel of the image, as a functional aspect. Other scholars (*e.g.*, Calvin, Murray) concur with Reymond that "*Genesis* 1:26 implies that dominion was to be a bestowment, an investiture grounded in and contingent upon the fact that man is God's image"¹⁹ In other words, man's dominion investiture is not part of the image, but is given to him in light of the fact that he is God's image-bearer. The concept of dominion itself is the same: As the Confession says, man is God's vice-gerent and has God's "law written in [his] heart" with which to exercise dominion.

Genesis 2:15 teaches about the dominion aspect of the image. Here we read that man is to cultivate the Earth; he is to labor in his God-given calling of life (businessman, farmer, homemaker, etc.). Man is to see his occupational calling as an area to be brought under the righteous standards of Almighty God. The

¹⁹ Reymond, *God and Man*, 163.

dominion mandate given to man by God "intends to affect his entire life-pattern."²⁰

This is further supported by the fact that Jesus Christ, the God-man, came to exercise dominion over each and every facet of life, i.e., universal dominion (*Hebrews 2:5-9; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28*). In the words of Hodge: "This universal dominion, as we learn from the Scriptures, has been realized and attained only by the incarnation and exaltation of the Son of God. But as God sees the end from the beginning, as His plan is immutable and all comprehending, this supreme exaltation of humanity was designed from the beginning and included in the dominion with which man was invested."²¹

The Two-Fold Image

Reformed theology generally acknowledges that there is a two-fold image of God in man: the metaphysical (or epistemological) and the ethical.²² The former is broader in scope: man is a personal, rational, immortal, spiritual being. The broader image was defaced by the Fall, but not erased. The fact that the broader image remains basically intact, but marred, is that which allows non-believers to achieve a certain level of excellence in law, medicine, philosophy, and so forth.

²⁰ O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 80; compare Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 102, 103. The dominion mandate does not give man the authority to exercise dominion over his fellow man. Jesus makes this very clear in Matthew 20:25-28. Man is only a vice-gerent, and his dominion must always be viewed in light of Scripture. Scripture, being God's Word, is the authority by which the various God ordained institutions are to be governed: family (*Genesis 2:18-25; Ephesians 5:22-33*), church (*Matthew 16:13-20; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9*); civil magistrate (*Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17*); and the employer-employee relationship (*Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-4:1*). Each institution is different in function, but not in the source of authority. All are to be ordered

²¹ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II, 102, 103.

²² John Murray, *Collected Writings*, II, 40. A reading of Calvin's *Institutes* (I:15:4; II:1:5; 2:4,12,17; III:3:9; 7:6) and his *Commentary on Genesis* 1:26, 7, will show that although he did not use this exact wording, Calvin did hold, at least basically, to the concept of a two-fold image of God in man. See also Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, 48.

Man did not stop being man after *Genesis 3:1-7*; he is still a human being. As Clark points out, if this were not the case, man could no longer sin, because "sinning presupposes rationality and voluntary decision. Animals cannot sin. Sin therefore requires God's image because man is responsible for his sins."²³ Thus, post-Fall man still possesses the metaphysical image of God (*Genesis 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9*).

Speaking of the broader image, Abraham Kuyper, Jr., writes:

This image of God cannot be lost since, if man can lose it, he would at the moment of losing it, cease to be a human being. The image of God in the wider sense . . . has reference to the human in man, to that whereby man, in distinction from all other creatures, is man and not an angel or an animal or a plant.²⁴

The ethical image is more restricted. Man was created with true holiness, righteousness, and (ethical) knowledge (*Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10*). Adam possessed original righteousness. This more narrow, ethical image was erased at the Fall, leaving man in a state of "total depravity," i.e., incapable of doing anything that pleases God (*Romans 3:1-18; 8:7,8*). Kuyper states: "The image of God in the narrower sense . . . was lost, and in its place there came blindness, guilt, and sinfulness."²⁵

While both believers and non-believers continue to bear the image metaphysically, only the former have the ethical image restored. This, of course, is accomplished through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Only redeemed man can do "good works" (*Ephesians 2:8-10*): those works which are properly motivated out of love for God (*Matthew 22:37-39*), have as their goal the glory of God (*1 Corinthians 10:31*), and have as their standard the Word of God

²³ Clark, 73.

²⁴ Abraham Kuyper, Jr., *The Image of God*, 123, as cited in W. Gary Crampton and Kenneth G. Talbot, *Toward a Creedal Theology* (Lakeland: unpublished manuscript, 1991), 29.

²⁵ Kuyper, 126, as cited in Crampton and Talbot, 30.

(John 14:15, 21).²⁶ Biblical good works are "Godworks."

Conclusion

In summary, it may be said that man, as the image-bearer of God, is the crown of God's earthly creation. He is a bipartite unity, consisting of both a physical and non-physical element. Further, the image resides in the "immortal" spiritual, or non-physical element, even though the image "shines forth" in every part of man, both body and soul. Of the earthly creatures, man alone is able to reason, and to enter into a spiritual relationship with his Creator.

As God's image-bearer on earth man is given the dominion mandate. He is God's vice-gerent, and he bears the responsibility of subduing the Earth for his Creator's glory. Although the Fall left man in God's image metaphysically, the ethical image was altogether erased. The latter is only restored through Jesus Christ. Only redeemed man can truly carry out this mandate as service to his God.

²⁶ See the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (16:1, 2).