

Doctrine of Man

I. The Image of God:

A. Read Genesis 1:26-27

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”

B. What is the “image of God”?

1. The Substantive View: The image of God consists in a definite physical, psychological, and/or spiritual characteristic within the nature of man. (see House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine*, for this view and the other views enumerated below).
2. The Functional View: The image of God consists in what man does, i.e. he rules/has dominion over the rest of creation.
3. The Relational View: This is the ability to have personal interaction, esp. with God. God’s relational nature (within the persons of the Godhead and towards us) is very evident. Since we can interact with each other and with God, we are in His “image”.
4. The Reformed View: The image of God is man’s conscious propensities and man’s true knowledge. Man’s spiritual, moral and immortal being.

From a paper I wrote entitled *How One’s Doctrine on the Imago Dei Affects Christian Apologetics*: “In my opinion, the first two viewpoints appear especially weak. The substantive view while intriguing by virtue of its simplicity, by definition rules itself out. While it is true that in Christ, God took on flesh and that in Christ the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form, the pre-incarnate Christ did not have a body. The Father and Holy Spirit never did and never will. Thus for God to mean, ‘Let us make man look like us’ could have in no way referred to a non-existent physical body [also see the first three words of John 4:24]. As for the functional view, this basic fact is glaring: the *imago Dei* is clearly announced as in effect in Genesis 1:27 *before* the granting of dominion in Genesis 1:28. Image and dominion are two distinct aspects.”

What is left according to House then, are the relational view and Reformed view. The difference between these, however, includes this vital distinction:

1. The Relational View limits the image of God to man pre-Fall and post-conversion [because in the fallen, unregenerate state man is unable to relate to God in faith].

2. The Reformed View allows at least a partial image of God in man at all times.

[here ends my reference to the paper]

However, we must keep in mind that the Bible also offers these verses: Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9 that teach that people in general are made in the likeness of God. How do these two verses seem to militate against the relational view (consider esp. Genesis 9:6 as this verse was given to Moses in referring to man *after* the fall?)

- C. So where does this leave us? It appears this leaves us with the Reformed View.
- D. However, this is not satisfactory, because after the fall of man as recorded in Genesis 3, there is a radical change in man's relational being. Not only is he now afraid of God, but he is hostile towards his fellow man (note that after Adam and Eve run away from God and hide, the man blames his wife for the Fall)!
- E. How do we account for this change and still accurately define the image of God? Lutheran theology does an excellent job of doing just that! This is theological viewpoint #5:
 1. In our Small Catechism, p. 115, we ask the question, "Do people still have the image of God?" Answer: "No, this image was lost when our first parents disobeyed God and fell into sin. Their will and intellect lost the ability to know and please God. In Christians God has begun to rebuild His image, but only in heaven will it be fully restored."
 2. This is a startling statement, but it appears to be completely Biblical. Notice how radically sin has impacted man*:

*We are about to consider the spiritual consequences, but these are tied to our physical lives here on earth as well. After the fall into sin the life-span of human beings significantly changed (Genesis 6 and Psalm 90).

#1: After sin entered into the world, man became spiritually _____. See 1st Corinthians 2:14 and Eph. 4:17-18.

#2: After sin entered into the world, man entered into spiritual _____. See Ephesians 5:8, Acts 26:18 and John 1:5.

#3: After sin entered into the world, man is spiritually _____. See Eph. 2:1 & 5 and Col. 2:13.

#4: After sin entered into the world, man is in _____ to God. See Romans 8:7.

#5: After sin entered into the world, man is a _____ to sin. See Romans 6:17 & 20.

#6: After sin entered into the world, man is therefore captive to the _____. See Eph. 2:2 & 2nd. Tim. 2:26.

#7: After sin entered into the world, man will be eternally condemned until spiritual death is removed through conversion to Christ. (See John 3:16-18)

3. But we still have Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9. Even the unregenerate still have the image of God TO SOME EXTENT. But how do we explain this in light of the Scriptures we just considered above? I'm going back to my paper mentioned above here:

“There are two major answers within classical Lutheranism. First there is the answer on the side of Martin Luther himself. These two passages ‘describe man as the noble creature who once bore the image of God and in whom God would recreate this image through faith in Christ.’ [Pieper, vol. 1, pg. 519, and my summary: that is the passages refer to man according to what he used to be and according to what all could be again] The other view is that these passages simply describe man as he is after the fall in regards to their endowment with intellect and will and that these represent a certain similarity to God. This view distinguishes ‘between the image of God in a wider sense, according to which man, in distinction from the animals, is still a rational being even after the Fall, and the divine image in the proper sense, consisting in true knowledge and service of God, which was lost through the Fall.’” (Pieper, pg. 519)

“In either view, however, the Lutherans never deny that man does not retain his intellect and will, nor do they deny that these are ‘remnants of the divine image in the mind and will of man.’” (Preus and Smits, *The Doctrine of Man In Classical Lutheran Theology*, p. xv)

- F. What's the bottom line then? In the spiritual capacity and sense, the image of God has been completely lost due to the fall (sin entering into the world). Consider once again all the affects of sin per the Scriptures above. This is what we mean by saying that the image of God was lost. We also refer to this image as “original righteousness”. That is we desired what God desired, and we loved His will and Word. This is no longer true. By nature, we do not desire the things of God. In fact, we rebel and fight against them! Again, this is what we mean when we say that the Scriptures teach that we have lost the image of God.
- G. Now this condition is referred to as ORIGINAL SIN. On account of sin entering into the world, we now have the following (per Genesis 3):
 1. Shame and guilt within self.
 2. Fear towards God.
 3. Hostility and blame towards others.
- H. At this point, we might ask, how did sin come into the world to begin with. We formally recognize TWO* causes:

(* We may add a third, namely the world itself when Scripture uses it in terms that aspect of the world which is committed to and spreads evil, see Jn 15:19, James 4:4, Gal 1:4 “evil age,” 2nd Peter 1:4, and 1st Jn 2:15-17)

1. There is an external cause: The devil (see Ezekiel 28).
2. There is an internal cause: We are joined to what Adam and Eve did (see Romans 5:12).

- I. That is to say, original sin is an inherent, spiritual condition and per Psalm 51:5 it is something that we are conceived with. This by the way is one of the fundamental reasons we baptize babies. Original sin is the fountain and source of all actual sins (see Matthew 15:19). See the condition of the heart at Jeremiah 17:9.
- J. The big problem people have here is that sin is typically conceived in terms of ACTUAL SIN. Instead of seeing sin as a core condition, sin is reduced to violations against the Law of God through thoughts, words and deeds (e.g. violations against the Ten Commandments). But James 2:10 teaches that if we break even just one commandment, this is proof that we are sinners and guilty of breaking the entire law. The Lord Jesus Christ elaborated on the heart problem over and above the deed problem: Matthew 5:21f and 27f.
- K. Thus in the Scriptures sin is seen primarily as CONDITION, not simply what we do or do not do (i.e. moralism). Note that while Christianity cannot be reduced to moralism, *how* we live and *what* we do indicates whether we follow Christ or follow sin. Understand that the Christian (in weakness) still commits sin, but sin is not the master of the Christian; sin does not dominate the Christian. Nevertheless the condition of the “sinful flesh” or “sinful nature” still exists.
- L. Because of our sinful condition (nature), these various categories of sin apply:
 1. There are sins of commission and omission.
 2. There are voluntary and involuntary sins.
 3. There are sins against God and against our neighbor (see the TWO TABLES of the Ten Commandments).
 4. There are grievous and less grievous (John 19:11 & Luke 12:47 & 48).
 5. There are mortal and venial (mortal may lead to a loss of faith, see Gal. 5:4).
 6. There are pardonable and THE unpardonable sin (Matthew 12:31-32; Heb. 6:4-6).
- M. Finally, we are described in terms of a dichotomy: a human being is by definition “body and soul” or “body and spirit” (Luke 1:46-47 & 2nd Corinthians 5:6-10). There is the physical-material and the spiritual-non-material aspects of human beings. In regards to the soul, however, it seems that there are two realms of relation. 1. The relationship to earthly experiences; 2. The relationship with God.

All people have souls, but the difference seems to be whether or not they are in relationship to God.

- N. That is to say, some people know God and others do not. This has a great impact on the soul.
- O. The Bible describes the spirit that does not know God as “dead.” This doesn’t mean that their spirit is non-existent, but that they do not have communion with God who is LIFE. The person “born-again,” however, has a spirit that is “alive,” and has communion with God.

- P. Either way, the soul of man (spirit) is an immortal essence. It will go on beyond the physical body. The only question that remains is WHERE. There are only two possibilities: heaven or hell.

NEXT: How then are we saved? The Doctrine of GRACE and FAITH.

Catechism Review of The Doctrine of Man: 95-101, 113-119, 187 (#216), 197 (#229).