

Imago Dei: Man in the Image of God; or, The Heights of Humanity, the Depths of Depravity- Part One

Genesis 1:26-28

Scripture Reading: Psalm 8; Genesis 2:4-25

Introduction

What is man that God is mindful of him? Quite an insignificant chap considering the size of God's great and vast universe! What insignificant lives in insignificant houses with insignificant people we lead, most of us probably believe. What *good* might one find within them? The question is not merely *What is man*, but *What is man* - - that is, what or *who* is man, and what is his significance? The question longs for immediate answers – we ask this question repeatedly in one form or another!

We search all our lives for *significance* because we truly long to leave behind a heritage. We long to be remembered after our flesh has again turned back to dust. We want a legacy to leave behind after our deaths. How much should a man (using the term generically as in Genesis 1 to refer to humanity by the way), focus on himself for answers? If our *esteem* is built up will that curb the hunger of our longing, and fulfill the significance for which we search? Is man a worthless, merely a worm, or is he valuable, sufficient unto himself (i.e. *Man the Measure*)? How do we understand man between these two polar extremes? When we consider this question, in this way, we are getting close to what Blaise Pascal wrote in His *Pensees*:

It is dangerous to make man see too clearly his equality with the brutes without showing him his greatness. It is also dangerous to make him see his greatness too clearly, apart from his vileness.

Man has always wanted to *know himself*. In fact, the great Socrates' burning statement of purpose was *Know Thyself*. Man wants to know himself, but *how* - well, that is the question! If all men are made in God's image, then there is only way to know thyself, or to know God, or to know anyone, or anything else according to Genesis chapter one. Here at the apex, the pinnacle, the culmination, and the ultimate moment of God's creation: God creates man his Prince. The Prince will rule as Vice-Gerent over God's creation by ruling or having dominion over the creation. Man is personally in communion with his Great and Sovereign Creator - -there is no relational distance between them, only the ontological distinction between THE Creator and his creature. Lord willing, the next two sermons will be on the *Imago Dei*, in two parts. We want to consider the *heights of our humanity and the depths of our depravity!*

I. "Image of God, Likeness of God" – *Let us make man in our image, in our likeness* (v.26).

A. What it *is not*...

1. **No difference between *Image and Likeness* - *bendiadys*.**
2. **Roman Catholic Doctrine of *Donum Superadditum* (*Superadded Gift*).**
 - Roman Catholics have historically taught that *image* and *likeness* were different. This has brought them to the position of theology that a man still can choose, or will to follow Christ and to do good works. You see,

for the Roman Catholics, the image remained in man, but the likeness was lost. Part of this image was the ability to reason and to think ultimately, the likeness was the extra-added gift of holiness and righteousness. In other words, *likeness* was an “added gift of grace.”

- Because they make a dichotomy between image and likeness, man still has the ability to think and choose the good. Since holiness and righteousness were super-added gifts, they were not necessary gifts for a relationship to the Creator. This theology paved the way for the possibility of Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism in the Ancient Church, and Arminianism, from the Reformation to the present.

3. No Greek dichotomy between body and soul-spirit.

- Contrary to Greek thought, man as body/soul-spirit make up a *duality*, not a *dualism*! Our hope is the *redemption of our bodies*, not a release from the *prison house of the body*!

B. What it *is*...

1. Man in his entirety (body/soul-spirit) made in God’s image.

Genesis 5:1 This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. 2 He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created. 3 And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.

- Although the body reflects God’s glory, the “chief seat” of the divine image is in the mind and the heart (cf. The Greatest Commandment), yet as Calvin teaches, “there is no part of man in which some scintillations of the (inner) image did not shine forth...in the body there was a suitable correspondence with this internal order.”
- John Murray wrote concerning man’s body reflecting God: “It is man in his unity and integrity who is made in the image of God. Man is body, and it is not possible to exclude men in this identity from the scope of that which defines his identity, the image of God.”
- God is Spirit. Contrary to our Mormon friends, he does not have a body. But nevertheless, there is something about the body of man as man, complete in body and soul that reflects the Creator. Man in his wholeness is made in the image of God. Genesis 2 further describes the creation account from man’s perspective (Gen. 1 is more from God the Creator’s transcendent perspective). Gen 2:7 says:

7 And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

- Gen. 2:7 teaches us that both body and soul created by God was good and man is incomplete without both of these qualities.

- **Illustration:** What we want to be aware and prayerfully avoid is any kind of Greek dualism or what was known as Ancient Gnosticism. Ultimately, dualism asserts that materiality, or the physical created things in the world are evil, but the realm of ideas or pure spirit is good. Margaret and I once attended a marriage seminar as new Christians at a very large Southern Baptist Church in the South. The couple that taught the seminar, rather than explaining the fall and evil that we must overcome in the Christian life, explained marriage as an understanding that we are *spiritual beings in earth suits*. Supposedly this was to account for our longing to go to heaven and to be without the suits- - *naked in pure spirit I reckon!*?

The point is that Greek dualism teaches that matter is evil and spirit is good. It is common today when well-meaning Christians withdraw from engaging and influencing the world or culture in the arts, education (particularly the university), politics, science, etc. and remove themselves to create their own enclave or subculture. This is a dangerous form of dualism. There is a denial of the body that can be good when understanding our passions, such as fasting, prayer, and other spiritual disciplines, but this is not to disconnect oneself from our embodied existence. It is to focus on worshipping the True God in Spirit and Truth as embodied people of Christ! The incarnation should wipe away any Greek notion or dualistic concept of the body!

- **Illustration:** Dehumanizing Gnostic effect of modern technology: mouses and remote controls.
- Bavinck said: “Humanity (is) where the spiritual and material world are joined together.” Calvin and the Ancient Fathers described man as *micro-cosmos*- -“a world in miniature.”

2. **Man is unique in his being** *created in God’s image.*

- a. Calvin wrote that the image of God in which man was created, “is evident in the whole excellence by which the nature of man surpasses all the animal species,” and he added that “there was no part of man, not even the body, in which some rays of its glory did not shine.”

Read Gen. 1:24-25: *Let the earth bring forth...* (compare this with v.26-man’s creation.

- b. As we learned last week, the animals were not made *in God’s image*, and man was to rule over the animals not to be *like them*.
- c. Darwinian evolution teaches the contrary. Man is *like the animals*, in fact, he *is* an evolved animal himself.
 - i. Depersonalization of man (even if he is the *highest of the animals*), leads to the dehumanization and brutalization of man.

- Illustration: If man is merely an animal, even the highest of the animals, then slavery should be acceptable theoretically and ethically, because we work and enslave our animals *against their will*, so there should be no argument against the act of slavery or the will of the powerful, etc. In other words, the Napoleons, Nietzches, and Hitlers, should be no surprise to us!
- Illustration: Also, to be self-assertive and “looking out for #1” would be the right path for one to ferociously pursue their own individual agendas - -it is indeed *swimming with the sharks* as one writer commented recently in a very popular self-help book! There is no reason for so-called “random acts of kindness” we ought to be devouring each other, trying to steal the bone from the other dogs!

3. Man is a Personal being requiring fellowship.

- a. ...*Male and female he created them (v.27)*. Man was made male and female. This is a mirror of the “I-Thou” relationship in the Trinity. There is unity in man, but also diversity. There is equality ontologically (being), but functionally, the roles are unique within the Divine Godhead. So, also in man.

Read: 1 Cor. 11:7

- b. ...*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it... (v. 28)*. Man is not an island, he requires fellowship with God and other men. Man was to “be fruitful and multiply” in family, society, as the people of God.
- i. In contrast, animals are *individuals*, but they are not persons!
- c. **Individualism**- individualism is dehumanizing in its effects. It leads to a culture of narcissism where there is no responsibility neither to God, nor our neighbor- - only a commitment to oneself. This the modern atmosphere for encouraging *self-fulfillment, self-gratification, and self-affirmation!*

4. Man’s purpose is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

- Ovid wrote in his poem *Metamorphoses*:
*...while mute creation downward bend
their sight and to their earthly mother tend,
Man looks aloft, and with erected eyes
Beholds his own hereditary skies.*
- a. **Man was made upright...in order to glorify God and enjoy him (Ecclesiastes 7:29).**

- i. **Knowledge, Holiness, and Righteousness-** Knowledge of God and knowledge of man; God’s holiness, man’s holiness (moral responsibility), righteousness of knowing what is *good and evil*. Concerning the knowledge of God and man, Calvin has explicated and explained one of the most profound and sublime biblical truths found in Scripture:
 - “Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern” (*Institutes*, I.1.i).

- b. **...But they have sought out many devices...and do not seek to glorify God, nor to enjoy life as God intended! (*Ecclesiastes* 7:29)**
 - i. G. K. Chesterton has said: “When man ceases to worship God, it is not that he doesn’t worship *nothing*...he worship *anything* and *everything*.”
 - ii. Romans 1 about man being the *religious man*, but he has misdirected his worship of the True and Only God. Man is an *idol factory* because he worship- - he longs to worship because he is made in God’s image.
 - Calvin has written of man’s knowledge of God: “No human can be found, however barbarous or completely savage, untouched by some awareness of religion. It is evident consequently that all of us have been created in order to acknowledge our Creator’s majesty and to receive it and esteem it, once acknowledged, with all fear, love, and reverence.” –Calvin’s Catechism, 1538.
 - “...[Man] cannot cease to be what he is by constitution, namely, a creature formed in the divine image. It is a truth that he may attempt to deny or to cover up, but even that he can attempt only because of the unique powers which set him above the rest of the animal creation. These powers...are evidence of the stamp of the divine image at the core of his being...The powers that are man-perverted (rational, scientific, artistic) are still God-given. In fighting against God, man is fighting against himself. He cannot escape from what *he is*.
 - iii. Worship of God = “Worship”

- iv. We should and ought to love the LORD our God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves, but alas, we do not...and *ought never implies can* (ought or should never implies the ability to do a thing). This was part of the consequence of the fall of man.
- v. Implications of man's created in God's image: the death penalty discussion- *Love thy neighbor; kill thy neighbor.*
 - Some ask me about the death penalty and why it is required, 'even if' someone becomes a Christian. They usually ask how someone can become a member of the Church (the elect), but can be sentenced by the state as a member of society. I say that the main reason is that God required death for anyone who took the life of someone made in God's image.

After the flood, God gives another *creation mandate* as he did to Adam to have dominion and multiply:

Genesis 9:1 So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. 2 "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move *on* the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. 3 "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. 4 "But you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood. 5 "Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. *From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man.* 6 "*Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.* 7 And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; Bring forth abundantly in the earth And multiply in it.

- We must remember that by killing someone who had killed someone else, you were actually protecting thy neighbor. In Exodus 20-23 and Genesis 9, the importance of the death penalty is keeping in line with God's commandment of loving God and neighbor as self. "You shall not murder" is the sixth commandment and if you remember from the Westminster Larger Catechism, this has positive as well as negative implications. Not killing a neighbor is not only the avoidance of killing another, but doing everything in one's power to protect the neighbor from any harm. Once someone has taken a life, we must kill that person because he is always a continued threat to the living. This the state takes care of in our day, in theocratic Israel, the elders took care of it. A person who takes a life can repent, be placed in the Lamb's book of life, be on the roll as a new church member, and still be on death row for a crime. This is true and biblical justice. It is the living, not the dead that we should be concerned about primarily!
- Additionally, it is interesting how God requires the death of animals for crimes against humans as well (cf. Gen. 9 and Exodus 22-23). If

God requires the death of animals for usurping authority over their princes (man)- -that is, for killing a man...HOW MUCH MORE, will God require the death of his princes made in his image when they usurp God's authority and take life and death in their own hands (that is, except in the case of protection of another).

1. “God’s Idol” over creation.

a. ANE Kings who placed idols over their territory.

- b.** We are the *icons of God*, creatures made with a unique capacity to mirror and reflect God’s glory in the world. This is why the LORD God instructed Moses to strictly forbid the making of all images of God (same word used in Genesis to describe man made in God’s image):

Exodus 20:4 " You shall not make for yourself a carved *image*, or any likeness of *anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth...

Deuteronomy 4:16 "lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved *image* in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female

Numbers 33:52 Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten *images*, and quite pluck down all their high places

c. Israel’s “First Worship Service”

- d. God’s Image and false images-** Scripture teaches that anything that is an image of God is an image of false gods and the worship or dedication of one’s heart to idols and demons. It is interesting to note that while God made man in his image and therefore, man in this sense is *God’s idol*, false idols pull man away from the worship of God to a substitute. Notice in Revelation 21, those who are cast into fire and brimstone are those who not only worshipped the Beast, but his image:

Revelation 19:20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his *image*. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

C. The Effects of the Fall- *Man was tempted to be LIKE GOD (iniquitous), rather than like God (virtuous).*

1. The subtlety of Satan in the temptation.

2. The great consequences of the fall:

a. The marring of God’s image.

- i. Augustine wrote: “God’s image has not been so completely erased in the soul of man by the stain of earthly affections as to have left absolutely no vestiges of it...what was imprinted on

men's hearts when they were created in the image of God has not been wholly blotted out...the image has become tarnished.”

- ii. “Mirror is fogged” since the Fall (mirror is *still* a mirror, it has been fogged). “Brass is tarnished” since the Fall (to use Augustine’s metaphor).

James 3:9 says: With [the tongue] we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God.

James reminds us of the importance of remembering that all men are still created in the image of God. They are to be supremely regarded and respected as we shall seek further to understand in part two!

- iii. Disobedience fails to bring in God’s promised consummation of all things upon perfect obedience to God’s commands: the renewal of the bodies, man’s permanent confirmation in perfect glory, incorruptible and immortal! The reality of the estate of *sin and misery*.

D. The Redemption in Christ

1. Christ restores us in God’s image because he is the True Image of God

a. 2 Corinthians 3:18-4:6:

18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. 4:1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. 2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. 3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, **who is the image of God**, should shine on them.

b. Romans 8:28-32:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also **predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

1 Cor. 15:49 And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*.

2. The Glorious Resurrection

- a. It is important to remember that the incarnation was a rescue operation. It is important to never separate creation from redemption.

- The redemption of Christ was to re-establish the *purpose* of creation – *Consummation: Rulership over the creation (or dominion), incorruptible, resurrected, glorified bodies, and eternal life in communion with God forever!*

21 For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming, 24 Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death...

...47 The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven. 48 As *was* the *man* of dust, so also *are* those *who are made* of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *Man*, so also *are* those *who are* heavenly. 49 And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*.

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed -- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

55 "O Death, where *is* your sting? O Hades, where *is* your victory?"

56 The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. 57 But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

Imago Dei: Man in the Image of God; or, The Heights of Humanity, the Depths of Depravity- Part Two

II. **The Dignity of Man-** *Man is Designed for Dignity.*

A. **Significance:**

1. *Who are we?*
2. *What are we?*

3. **The search for lost significance.**
 - a. Man the *idol factory*- Man's search for meaning *apart* from God his Creator.
 - b. Transcendental and immanent idols of man's own making.
 - c. Too much self-esteem.
 - d. *Homo Mensura, or* Man the Measure of all things.

B. **Responsibility:**

1. **Loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength** (*Special Grace*).
2. **Loving our neighbor as ourselves** (*Common Grace*).
 - a. **Loving and forgiving our enemies** (*those made in God's image*).
 - Calvin wrote: "We must not be hindered by the malice of men, but rather contemplate the image of God in them, which by its excellence and dignity moves and enables us to love them."
 - b. **Manners** (*Civility*).
3. **Sanctification- Man is a "Work in Progress"** (*Excuse your brother made in God's image, he is a work in progress*).

C. **Calling:**

1. **Providence-** *To know that all that you are, all that you do, and all that you have is preserved and governed by the LORD God your Maker.*
2. **Purpose-** *To know that all that you are, all that you do, and all that you have is given for the purpose of glorifying the LORD God your Maker and enjoying him forever!*

Purposive origin + purposive destiny = meaningful life; meaningless origin + meaningless destiny = meaningless life.

3. **Priorities-** *To give all that you are, all that you do, and all that you have to the LORD God your Maker.*
4. **Potential-** *To know that all that you are, all that you do, and all that you have has been given to you as steward of the gifts of the LORD God your Maker.*

D. **Man versus His Maker:**

1. **Creator/Creature Distinction.**
2. **"Cosmic Rebellion"**

E. Redemption in Christ

1. Christ redeems us from the fall by *becoming a little lower than the angels.*

5 For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. 6 But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him?"

7 You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands.

8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. 9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. 10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." 13 And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." 14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

E. Rulership- Vice-gerent or Vice-regency over creation- *Let them rule over...* (v.26).

2. God's Prince- *Implies Sonship.*

a. Implications of Sonship at Creation (cf. Gen. 5:1-3).

- i. Great Inheritance- All that God has created belongs to man.
- ii. Great Importance- All of God in his grace and goodness in communion with man his Son. Additionally, man as vice-gerents were to mirror God's rule over the universe in their dominion over creation.
- iii. Great Incentive- All that man is devoted in love back to God his Creator.