

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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The Image and Likeness of God

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In order to describe the nature of the image one can immediately assert the principle that any interpretation that identifies the image with some characteristics not found in God must be incorrect. For example, the image cannot be man's body. If anyone says that the upright position of the human body, in contrast with four-footed beasts and creeping things, allows it to be the image, the reply is not merely that birds have two legs, but rather that Genesis makes no reference to a physical image. A more important reason for denying that man's body is the image is the fact that God is not and has not a body.

One can at the same time see a more notable distinction between the creation of animals and the creation of man. In *Genesis* 1:11 we read, "Let the earth bring forth grass"; a few verses further on, "God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly." Verse 24 adds, "Let the earth bring forth cattle and every creeping thing and beasts." But *Genesis* 1:26, 27 quote God as saying, "Let us make man in our image"; and then continues, "So God created man in his own image." Because the earth brings forth cattle, while God says "let us," the wording suggests a more direct relationship with God and man than between God and the animals. Animals are indeed beautiful and interesting and useful, but man is superior. How? Some contemporary theologians, on the whole quite orthodox, insist that man is a unity, not a duality; hence they conclude that he is not his soul, but the combination of soul and body.

Soul and Body

Before discussing such a view, one should realize that the New Testament terminology, though a development from the Old, is not precisely the same. *Genesis* explicitly describes the soul as the combination of earthly clay and divine breath, and calls man a living soul. The language in the preceding paragraph takes soul to be something quite distinct from the body, and this in general is the New Testament usage. While the Old Testament often uses soul and spirit synonymously, the New Testament—especially when the adjectival forms of the words occur—imposes on them a moral distinction. *Soulish* carries an evil connotation (compare *1 Corinthians* 2:14; 15:44; *Jude* 19). On the other hand, spiritual no longer denotes the human spirit, but the influence of the Holy Ghost (compare *1 Corinthians* 2:11-16 and 15:42-47; *Colossians* 1:9; *1 Peter* 2:5).

With this Scriptural background in mind, one may return to the question, not whether man is a unity, but what sort of unity man is. A parallel case should help. Salt is a sort of unity too, being the chemical combination of sodium and chlorine. So also the compound man is not the soul. Here, of course, the word *soul* does not reproduce the usage of *nephesh* in *Genesis* 2:7. It is a New Testament usage and is the common usage of our present century. Now, to show that man himself is not the combination—but is precisely the soul, mind, or spirit—one may

appeal to *2 Corinthians* 12:2, which says that on one occasion Paul did not know whether or not he was in the body or out of the body. Quite obviously the *he* cannot be the body, for he, Paul, could be either in the body or out of it. And if man *is* the soul, we have a more perfect unity than a chemical compound of sodium and chlorine. One may also quote *2 Corinthians* 5:1, "For we know that if our earthly home of the tabernacle be destroyed, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Similarly *Philippians* 1:21ff. says, "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain... for I am faced with two choices, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for this is far better...." The body is not the person; it is a place in which the soul dwells. The home eternal in the heavens is not the soul, for our souls are not eternal. By God's grace they are everlasting, but eternity would be a denial of their creation. What Paul is saying is that if the soul's present residence is to be destroyed, we need not worry because in our Father's house there are many mansions, and Christ has ascended to prepare them for the arrival of our souls. Or to change the figure, the present body, as Augustine said, is an instrument that the soul uses. It is the latter that is the image and the person.

Though the two verses just quoted come from Paul, Peter teaches the same doctrine when he says that he will shortly put off this earthly tabernacle. The body had been his house or tent. He himself would soon move to elaborate quarters.

This dispenses with the notion that the body is a part of the image. The image is the soul. Indeed the soul is more than image. Of all the passages quoted, *1 Corinthians* 11:7—previously used to show that man is the image—remains the strongest of all, for it adds an astounding phrase. It is so amazing that no devout person would have dared to invent it, for it says that man is not only the image of God, but also that man is the glory of God. Only the authority of direct revelation permits this assertion. Hodge in his commentary on *1 Corinthians* offers an explanation of this additional designation, but it is sufficient here simply to recognize how emphatic it is.

This view of man seems to maintain the unity of the person better than its rivals; it seems to be more consistent and logical; and with all the scriptural support indicated it seems impossible to find a view that is more Biblical. Since the doctrine is so important relative to soteriology, it maybe interesting, if not essential, to see how the earthly church began to study the subject.

Some Earlier Ideas

The idea that God created man in his own image is so clearly stated in *Genesis* that the early church fathers could not miss it. It is also such an amazing idea that they could not refrain from discussing it. Some of the first attempts were, naturally, less than intelligible. For example, Gregory of Nyssa expatiates in flowery metaphors conveying awe of the subject, but which lack any explanatory clarity. Well, perhaps there is one clear point: The image has something to do with human intelligence. This is at least better than Justin Martyr's identification of it with the bodily form. Augustine took the image to be the knowledge of the truth, and he took the likeness to be the love of virtue. In his *Summa Theologica* (Q. 93, Art. 9) after stating some views to be rejected, Thomas Aquinas in his usual form writes, "*On the contrary*, Augustine says, 'Some consider that these two were mentioned not without reason, namely image and likeness, since if they meant the same, one would have sufficed.' " This attempt to distinguish rather than to identify image and likeness was not one of Augustine's happiest tentatives. If the Bible were written in the technical language of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, one could well imagine that the two words bore different meanings. But in literary language such as the Bible uses, two such words can be synonymously used for the sake of emphasis. The *Psalms* are replete with this device: "I *cried* unto Thee, O Lord, and unto the Lord I made my *supplication*"; and "Blessed is he whose *transgression* is *forgiven*, and whose *sin* is *covered*," where there are two pairs of synonyms; and "Thy word is a *lamp* unto my feet and a *light* unto my path." There are many such.

Even so, it is not fatal to the doctrines of grace if a distinction, without faulty additions, is made between image and likeness. Since the New

Testament refers to knowledge and righteousness, we could call the one the image and the other the likeness. Such a speculation, however, is rather fanciful and futile. One must therefore consider what distinction the Roman church imposed on the terms and how it fitted into a distortion of Biblical truth.

In support of the distinction, Thomas had already (Q. 93, Art. 1) argued that where an image exists, there must be likeness; but a likeness does not necessarily mean an image. Now, the Roman church developed this, which so far is innocuous, into something that contradicts important parts of the Biblical message. Their present view is that the image itself is rationality, created because, when, and as man was created. But after man was created, God gave him an extra gift, a *donum superadditum*, the likeness, defined as original righteousness. Man therefore was not strictly created righteous. Adam was at first morally neutral. Perhaps he was not even neutral. Bellarmine speaks of the original Adam, composed of body and soul, as disordered and diseased, afflicted with a *morbis* or languor that needed a remedy. Yet Bellarmine does not quite say that this *morbis* is sin; it is rather something unfortunate and less than ideal. To remedy this defect God gave the additional gift of righteousness. Adam's fall then resulted in the loss of original righteousness, but he fell only to the neutral moral level on which he was created. In this state, because of his free will, he is able—at least in some low degree—to please God.

Obviously this view has soteriological implications. Even though the neutral state was soon defaced by voluntary sins, man without saving grace could still obey God's commands upon occasion. After regeneration, a man could do even more than God requires. This then becomes the foundation of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the treasury of the saints. If a particular man does not himself earn a sufficient number of merits, the Pope can transfer from the saints' accounts as many more merits as are necessary for his entrance into Heaven. One horrendous implication of all this is that although Christ's death remains necessary to salvation, it is not sufficient. Human merit is indispensable.

However logically implicated this soteriology is, the present study should not stray too far from the image itself. Above, it was said that an assertion of a distinction between image and likeness, by itself, is not fatal. But it is not Biblical either. Scripture makes no distinction between image and likeness. Not only does the New Testament make nothing of such a distinction, even in Genesis the two words are used interchangeably. *Genesis* 1:27 uses the word *image* alone, and *Genesis* 5:1 uses likeness alone, though in each case the whole is intended. The likeness therefore is not an extra gadget attached to man after his creation, not a *donum superadditum*, like a suit of clothes that he could take off. It is rather the unitary person.

The Definition

This short account of earlier views has somewhat trespassed on the territory of the nature of the image. That knowledge, and possibly righteousness, have commonly been associated with man's original endowment is a point no reader above third grade can have missed. The majority of devout evangelical Christians would probably stress righteousness, and if the subject were soteriology that would be proper. But during the second half of the twentieth century a rather pointed debate has centered on the factor of knowledge. As an important development in apologetics, it has become a bit technical. Even so, the debaters try to base their views on Scripture. Let us begin with one important passage.

Since the verses in *Genesis* imply more than they state, and for the purpose of showing that Scripture defines the image as knowledge and righteousness, the first verse to be quoted is *Colossians* 3:10. The definition is derived by noting that the new man is such because God has renewed him after the image in which he was originally created. *Ephesians* 4:24 mentions righteousness, but *Colossians* has knowledge only. Its previous context speaks of "the old man with his deeds." Then comes a contrast with "the new man." In what consists the renewal that makes the old man the new man? The verse says, he is renewed "to knowledge." He is renewed to knowledge according to the image of the Creator. That is to say, the image of God is the knowledge to

which he is renewed. Thus the image of God, in which image man was created, is knowledge. Of course this does not mean that Adam was omniscient; yet he had some knowledge, and this is not said of the animals. Since this knowledge comes by the act of breathing into Adam the spirit of life, the knowledge must be considered—not as the result of observation, since Adam had not yet observed anything at all—but as the *a priori* or innate equipment for learning.

If it be suggested that angels also have rational knowledge, they too must have been created in God's image and therefore man is not the only image of God. This is plausible since the *Psalms* say that man was created a little lower than the angels. But it does not militate against man's being the image of God. And further, while the Bible distinctly asserts the image in man, it does not make this assertion of angels. The creation of angels is left in obscurity, and so we too must leave it there.

A study of the nature of man can become complex, and cannot avoid becoming complex. But because sin is a disturbing factor, it is easier to study man in his original state of innocence. Modern psychology and secular philosophy face extreme difficulties. Six hundred years after Socrates said, "Know thyself," Plotinus wrote fifty-four tractates on the problem. Here we reject that well-known bad advice, "Seek not the face of God to scan, the proper study of mankind is man." Contrary to this advice we do indeed seek the face of God to scan, and for the very reason that one of the proper studies of mankind is man. Without a revelation from God who made man, it is doubtful that we could learn much about him at all. Even with the aid of a divine revelation, the subject is still difficult.

The Bible asks the question, "What is man?" Can we answer what a person is? Do you know yourself? The Bible also says, "The heart of man is desperately wicked: who can know it?" Can we know the heart or nature of man before he became desperately wicked? Is man what he thinks? Or is he Immanuel Kant's "transcendental unity of apperception"? Hume described him as a group of sensations. This would make him not much superior to the animals, for many animals have sharper

sensations than man has. But animals cannot think. At least they cannot do geometry, and geometry is just about the best example of thinking that one can think of. Man then is a rational being, like God, while animals, bless their little gizzards, are not.

But let us get back to the Scripture. There were two verses that connected knowledge and righteousness. Such a brief statement requires further explanation. We need additional information because a correct view of the original nature of man must underlie—not only an understanding of sin and the fall—but also the Biblical view of death, the intermediate state, the resurrection, and our final beatitude. To repeat: Theology is systematic: All its parts interpenetrate each other.

Genesis clearly distinguishes man from animals. Every book in the Bible describes sinful man as thinking, often thinking incorrectly, but sometimes thinking correctly. We must more closely examine Adam as he was before the Fall; but to provide a background, without which one's view would be too restricted, some other parts of Scripture will be more or less haphazardly introduced.

The image must be reason because God is truth, and fellowship with him—a most important purpose in creation—requires thinking and understanding. Without reason man would doubtless glorify God as do the stars, stones, and animals; but he could not enjoy him forever. Even if in God's providence animals survive death and adorn the heavenly realm, they cannot have what the Scripture calls eternal life because eternal life consists in knowing the only true God, and knowledge is an exercise of the mind or reason. Without reason there can be no morality or righteousness. These too require thought. Lacking these, animals are neither righteous nor sinful.

The Johannine Logos

The identification of the image with reason explains or is supported by a puzzling remark in *John* 1:9: "It was the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." How can Christ, in whom is the life that is the light of men, be the light of every man, when Scripture teaches that some are lost in

eternal darkness? The puzzle arises from interpreting light in exclusively redemptive terms.

The first chapter of *John* is not soteriological. Obviously there are references to salvation in verses 7, 8, 12, and 13. It is not surprising that some Christians understood verse nine also in a soteriological sense. But it is not true that all men are saved; hence if Christ lightens every man, this enlightening cannot be soteriological. This is not the only non-soteriological verse in the chapter. The opening verses treat of creation and the relation of the *Logos* to God. If the enlightening is not soteriological, it could be epistemological. Then since responsibility depends on knowledge, the responsibility of the unregenerate is adequately founded.

John 1:9 cannot be soteric because it refers to all men. But this is far from showing that the light hits them in a merely external way, as it might shine on a rock or tree. The conclusion therefore is that creative light gives every man an innate knowledge sufficient to make all men responsible for their evil actions. This interpretation ties in with the idea of creation in verse three. Thus the *Logos* or rationality of God, who created all things without a single exception, can be seen as having created man with the light of logic as his distinctive human characteristic.