

§ 10. Doctrine of Man

Lecture 2

Biblical Data Concerning Man as the Image of God

Last week we began a new locus, or topic, in our survey of Christian doctrine, namely the doctrine of man. We differentiated empirical, philosophical, and theological approaches to anthropology. Today we want to turn to our first topic in theological anthropology which is man as created in the image of God.

Let's look first at the biblical data concerning man as the image of God. The classical theological term for this in Latin is the *imago dei* – the image of God. Man is created in God's image. The *imago dei*. Let's look at the biblical data that's pertinent to the doctrine of man as the image of God. The classical biblical text on this subject is Genesis 1:26-27. There we read:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Notice here that there are two words used to express the resemblance of man to his creator. The first word is the Hebrew word *tselem* or "image" which connotes a resemblance or a literal image of something. The second word is *demut* which is translated "likeness." *Tselem* and *demut* – image and likeness. Man is said to be created in God's image after, or according to, his likeness. In Hebrew (or at least in this Hebrew text) there's probably no difference between these two. It's not as though these represent two different aspects of man's nature – image and likeness. It's rather a sort of parallelism to describe the resemblance or relation of man to God. The image of God is also referred to in Genesis 5:1 where it says, "This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness [*demut*] of God." Finally, Genesis 9:6 is God's command concerning capital punishment for murder. Genesis 9:6 reads, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image [*tselem*]." These are the passages in Genesis that describe man as made in the image and likeness of God.

But we might also want to compare with these texts Genesis 5:3. This verse speaks of Adam's begetting his son, Seth. Genesis 5:3 says that Adam, "became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth." Here the offspring of Adam is also said to be created in Adam's image – *tselem* – and also his likeness – *demut* – in the same way that Adam was created in the image and according to the likeness of God. So

just as Adam was created in the image and after the likeness of God, so Adam's offspring were created in his (Adam's) image and likeness.

Genesis is certainly the *locus classicus* for the doctrine of the image of God in Scripture, but there are also a couple of passages in the New Testament that speak of this concept as well. For example, 1 Corinthians 11:7. Here Paul says, "For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image [the Greek word here is *eikon*] and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man." Here we have a reference in the New Testament to man as created in God's image. Notice the asymmetry here. Paul does not say that woman is the image and glory of man. Paul knows that, according to Genesis, woman is created in the image of God just as much as man is. When you go back to Genesis and look at the *locus classicus* for this notion (namely, Genesis 1:26-27) it uses the plural pronoun "them" – "let us make man in our image after our likeness. Let them [plural] have dominion over the fish of the sea . . ." Then verse 27 says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Clearly in Hebrew thinking man and woman alike are created in God's image. So mankind is created in the image of God, and mankind comprises both male and female. They are equally in the image of God. That's why Paul says woman is the glory of man. He doesn't say she is the image of man. The woman is the glory of man, but he understands that she is just as much in the image of God as her husband is.

Finally, in James 3:9, speaking about controlling our tongue, James says the following, "With it [the tongue] we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God." The word in the Greek here for "likeness" is *homoiosis*.

So in both the Old Testament and the New Testament we have this notion of human beings as being special, singled out in being created in God's image and likeness, unlike all of the rest of the creatures in the biosphere.

As I reviewed this material, I wondered if there weren't some aspect of it that might be pertinent to this Christmas time of the year that I could share, and to my surprise there was an aspect of this doctrine that did strike me in this way. Because the New Testament not only speaks of man as being the image and likeness of God, it also uses language which is the very reversal of this expression to say something very radical – that God himself was made to be in the image or likeness of man. Philippians 2:6-7:

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men [*homoiosis*].

Though Christ was God himself, Christ humbly came to be born in the likeness of man.

Similarly in Hebrews 2:17 we read that since we share in flesh and blood, Christ, “had to be made like [*homoioo*, same root] his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest . . . to make expiation for the sins of the people.”

So at this time of year as we think about man as being made in the image and likeness of God, let's not forget as well that in Christ God was actually made in the image and likeness of man for the sake of our salvation, and that's what we celebrate at Christmas.¹

¹ ?Total Running Time: 12:28 (Copyright © 2019 William Lane Craig)