§ 10. Doctrine of Man
Lecture 3
Systematizing the Biblical Data

We are in our new section of the Defenders class studying the doctrine of man. We've been looking at the notion of man as created in the image of God, and we looked last time at a number of verses primarily in Genesis that indicate that man is made in God's image and likeness.

You'll notice that there's no indication in the biblical text that this image or likeness is lost through the fall of man into sin. In fact, in the command in Genesis 9:6 where the rationale for capital punishment is given it says that man is created in the image of God even in his fallen state. So even fallen man retains the divine image in which he was created. So there isn't any indication in the biblical text that this image or likeness to God is something that is lost through the human fall into sin.

Let's talk briefly about Christ as the image of God. There's another use of the word “image” with respect to God's image; that is to say, Christ is the image of God. In Colossians 1:15 it says that Christ “is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.” This is quite a different use of the expression “image of God.” Here Christ is said to be the visible representation of the invisible God in a special sense that is not true of Adam and Eve. Christ is God's image.

Finally, let's say a word about man in Christ as the image of God. Man in Christ is said to be conformed to Christ's image. Romans 8:29 says, “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image [eikon] of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren.” Here we as Christians are said to be destined toward conformity with Christ's image. Similarly in 2 Corinthians 3:18 we read, “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness [eikon] from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” Here we are said to be sanctified as we are brought into the image of Christ the Lord. There is a kind of image of Christ toward which believers are destined and progressing.

Such are the biblical data with respect to the image of God. Man is created in God's image. Christ is God's image. Man in Christ is brought into conformity with the image of Christ.

START DISCUSSION

Student: That's a different word for “image” or the same word?
Dr. Craig: The same word in these last passages – *eikon* – is the same one that is used for “image.” Of course, in Hebrew, as I explained, it's different in the Old Testament. But it is this word “*eikon*” from which we get our word “icon.”

I haven't looked at the Septuagint for Genesis 1:26-27. I think so, but I shouldn't commit myself.

**END DISCUSSION**

Having looked at the biblical data on the image of God, we now want to look at various attempts to systematize this data.

Let's talk first about the Roman Catholic view. The traditional Roman Catholic view differentiates between the image and the likeness of God. You'll remember that Genesis says that man was created in God's image according to his likeness. For Roman Catholics these are two different things in man. In man's original state of righteousness in which man was created, man had the likeness of God. So the likeness of God consists in man's original righteousness that he had prior to the Fall. But man in that original state was also in God's image as well. This is usually understood in terms of man's having a rational soul. But then comes the Fall, and with the Fall that original righteousness is lost.

Therefore, man in his fallen condition no longer stands in the likeness of God. The image of God, however, though impaired and disrupted by the Fall, still exists even in the fallen state and so is not entirely lost. Finally, in the state of grace insofar as we are in Christ the likeness of God is restored because we now have Christ's righteousness, and the image of God is also healed and restored from the disruption that it experienced.

We can illustrate this difference by drawing two lines concerning the image and likeness of God. In the state of original righteousness man exists in God's image. Then with the Fall this image is distorted and impaired. But then as one is in Christ in a state of grace the image is healed and restored. The likeness of God which is man's original righteousness is however just lost in the Fall. Man no longer has it but then insofar as one is in Christ the original righteousness that Adam and Eve had is restored. On the traditional Roman Catholic view there's a distinction drawn between the image and the likeness of God in man. The image is distorted by the Fall into sin and then repaired in the state of grace, but the likeness of man to God (that original righteousness that he possessed) is lost in the fallen state and then restored in Christ.

By contrast to the traditional Roman Catholic view, the Protestant Reformation theologians did not distinguish between the image of God and the likeness of God. They held that the image of God just is the likeness of God. These are not two different aspects of man. So in that original state of righteousness man was in the image or likeness of God. It means the same thing.
The key difference between the Protestant Reformers and the Catholic view emerges with respect to the question whether fallen man is still in the image of God. The Reformers’ view implied that fallen man is no longer in God's image. They identified the image of God with the likeness of God which was man's original righteousness, and since that original righteousness was lost so was the image of God. Nevertheless, they did try to affirm some sense in which fallen sinful human beings are still in God's image by differentiating between a general image and a special image of God. They said that only the special image of God is lost and that in a sort of general sense even fallen man would still be in God's image. Luther, for example, said that man almost lost the image of God in the Fall. Calvin says that a relic of the image of God remains in this fallen condition. He says, “we can trace some remains of the divine image distinguishing the whole human race from other creatures.” The question, I think, here is whether the Reformers are consistent in seeing the image of God as lost because of the identity of that image with the likeness of God (man's original righteousness) and yet they're still wanting to preserve some vestige of God's image in man.

You’ll notice that the Reformers and the Catholic theologians are united in seeing God's image as rooted in ontology or in man's constitution. Sometimes this is called a substantial view of the *imago dei*. Man is structurally different than other animals. Only he has or is a rational soul. God is the supremely rational being. He is the *Logos* of John 1: “In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God.” Similarly, our being in God's image means that we, too, are rational creatures. This view is in line with Aristotle's view of the nature of humanity which is that human nature is to be a rational animal. Our physical bodies are shared with the animals. We have bodies that are very similar to the great apes and other primates. But our soul or our mind makes us godlike. It is our reason that distinguishes us from mere animals. So on both the Catholic view and the Reformation view the image of God is something that is constitutional in humanity. It is a substantial aspect of human being.

Others, as we've seen, have suggested differently – that the image of God is simply the original righteousness in which Adam and Eve were created. They were created innocent and unfallen, and it was that original righteousness that they had that made them in God's image. On that view the image of God would be lost in the Fall if it is identical simply with this original righteousness.

Some modern theologians on the other hand have interpreted the image of God relationally. We stand in I-thou relationships, or to use contemporary parlance, I-you relationships. First-person relationships with one another – both with other persons (other human beings) and also with God. We stand in an I-thou relationship with God as well as with other human persons. So man is in God's image not in being structurally different from the beasts but by his standing in personal relationships.
Again, it has been suggested that the image of God consists in our relative freedom. We have freedom of the will. We're not like animals which are guided by instinct. Rather, we have the ability to make morally significant choices, and it is our freedom that constitutes the image of God in us.

Another possible interpretation would be our answerability to God. This would again seem to be a relational interpretation where it is our responsibility in relationship to God that constitutes being in God's image. We have moral duties to fulfill, and we are answerable and accountable to God. So the image of God would consist in our answerability to God.

Yet a different view of the image of God in man is the so-called functional interpretation. Rather than God's image being due to an ontological component in man's being or man standing in relationships, the image of God is thought of functionally. It's a way in which humanity functions or exists. So, for example, some have suggested that the image of God consists in man’s having lordship over the Earth and its creatures. To be in God's image means to have the God-given duty and role of governing the Earth and its creatures. We are functioning on the Earth as God's royal representatives. This is a functional understanding of God's image rather than an ontological one.

As you can see, there are quite a wide variety of interpretations of what it means to say that man is created in the image of God and according to his likeness.

**START DISCUSSION**

Student: I’m just following up on the question earlier about the Septuagint’s use of the word “image.” It's *eikon* in Genesis 1:26 and 27.

Dr. Craig: Good. Thank you.

Student: I've heard other people teach on image of God in man as being some sort of a trinity of man. There are loads and loads of verses about where heart and spirit and soul are all mentioned. It seems to me those are kind of literary devices of expounding on the same thing – it's being restated. So when Jesus says to love the Lord your God with all your mind and soul and heart, I don't know that those are different things. But then you get to the verse in Hebrews 4 where it talks about the power of the word to be able to separate soul from spirit. I wonder: is soul and spirit a different thing? Or is that part of our image of God? I even heard people go so far as to explain that this trinity of man is like the body is more like Jesus and the soul is more like the Holy Spirit and spirit is more like it's God the Father. That seems like that's really reaching to me.

Dr. Craig: I think so as well. I think the question would be whether or not two discussions are being run together here that need to be kept distinct. It seems to me that what you are talking about are whether or not there are reflections or vestiges or traces of
the Trinity in humanity. This would be a Trinitarian discussion – whether or not Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit finds some sort of analogy or reflection in humans. But I don't see that that is connected with this question of man created in God's image. I suppose somebody could push it that way, but I think he would have a hard time justifying that biblically. Let's simply point out that on that view that would be a substantial view. There it would be an attempt to understand the image of God in terms of ontology, the structure of human being. So it would fit in with the view that I described as a substantial or ontological view of the image of God, but instead of rooting it perhaps in the rational soul it might appeal to this tripartite division. I think that there's a functional difference in that the soul describes the mind’s workings normally in this world but insofar as the mind relates to God in its spiritual function it could be called “spirit.” So I would see it not as an ontological composition in man – that man is made of soul and spirit – but I would see this more as a functional differentiation. The soul insofar as it relates to God can be referred to as spirit. I think we're going to talk about that later in the class when we come to these different constituents in human being.

Student: My question is about the image – how it is damaged in the Fall and then how both the Catholic and the Protestants agree that it gets restored to its original form. Do they discuss anything other than the fact that the power of sin revives and keeps us alienated, and once we're born again in Christ we can live his desire. So it's only the lordship that is different in the image, or is there something else they allude to being damaged by the Fall?

Dr. Craig: This is a great question. I wonder exactly what is meant by saying the image of God is damaged or hurt, and I could imagine that one might say that, for example, the different faculties would be disrupted. That the will would no longer naturally incline toward God but would be bent upon itself and will other things than God. Perhaps reason is twisted and distorted by the Fall so that fallen man doesn't reason properly. One could imagine that these different faculties would still be possessed by fallen man but that they wouldn't be functioning properly.

Student: We'd be using them to hide because of the guilt.

Dr. Craig: Yes. Right. The Scripture talks a lot about the darkened intellect and as a result they suppress the truth in unrighteousness – Romans 1.

Student: What is the Eastern Orthodox traditional view of the imago dei?

Dr. Craig: I didn't have that as part of my notes, so I would have to look at that. I would suspect that it would be very similar to the Roman Catholic view that would distinguish original righteousness from the rational soul that makes us different from the beasts. That was a very, very widespread view among the early church fathers.
Student: Of all the lists that you provided, I attempted to put them together and want to run it through you and see if you agree with this integration. First, God created man for there is a design and there is a purpose. So ontological is the design. And the function is his purpose, and his purpose is for man to rule his creation according to his will. And so ontologically he designed us with our soul which is comprised of our emotion, our intellect, and our will. And so the fallen state is that our conscience (which is actually the conscience before the Fall) is in agreement with God. And the devotion is the I-thou relationship dominates, but after the Fall it's I-you because Satan comes in and basically deceives us and broke that I-thou relationship. So our conscience is distorted to a point that we lost the purpose of God's design, and so we try to live out the image without God's will, without his purpose, and basically lost.

Dr. Craig: I think you're quite right in seeing that these are not mutually exclusive alternatives but can be integrated into a sort of synoptic view. I like very much the way you put it. I wouldn't say that the purpose was lost because it does remain God's purpose. He has placed us here for the purpose of serving as his royal representatives on this planet, but we have failed to discharge that purpose. That's what you meant. Similarly I think you'd want to say that there's something about the design that makes man capable of functioning in this way. I'll say something more about that as well, but apart from those comments I think you expressed it very nicely.

Student: I know it's probably not prominent of a belief, but my initial reaction to anything looking like the image of something I would think that it almost physically looks like it. Therefore, is there any view out there that's like God has a corporeal face and looks like a human being?

Dr. Craig: There are theologians who are exegetes who would say this just means that human beings are physically like God – that God looks like a man in the sky (the sort of popular misconception of God). They would say that was the sort of crude understanding that some people had at that time. So the image of God should just be straightforwardly interpreted in that way – that God looks like us. The difficulty with that, I think, is that whatever the background or oral traditions there might be behind Genesis 1, by the time it gets to Genesis 1 and the author of the Pentateuch he clearly doesn't think of God that way because he says “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” God is portrayed as a transcendent being beyond the physical world who creates the entire universe. So for the final author I don't think he could have understood the image of God in that physicalistic, anthropomorphic way because the concept of God in Genesis 1 is so transcendent.

Student: Trying to synthesize a trichotomous view, I would agree with what was earlier said. That with the Fall we have the image of God, but after the Fall the influence of the
body on the soul is much more dominant and minimizes the effect of the spirit on the soul. So when you're a believer, that's restored. You can push back. The spirit could push back through the soul and then to the body rather than the other way around. The other direction is more dominant after the Fall, and that's the loss of the image. So it's what affects our volition, cognition, and emotion.

*Dr. Craig:* In a case like this, what is the image? It seems to me that, as I said earlier, we're conflating two different discussions here. What is the image of God?

*Student:* I think the image is a three-part being. As you know, God is Trinitarian. I think we are.

**END DISCUSSION**

We're out of time so we'll close now and then we'll turn to an evaluation of these different interpretations the next time we meet.¹

¹ Total Running Time: 29:33 (Copyright © 2020 William Lane Craig)