

Sacred Space in the First Creation – Function and Fall

I. Human Function In Sacred Space – Dominion as Communion

1. Shalom and Shabbat as essential qualities of the initial creation underscore that God’s design for His creation was its *ordered functioning* – the remedy to *tohu wa bohu*.

Shalom has to do with integrity and harmony – created entities conforming to their created function, and shalom is attested by shabbat – God administering His reign over His creation.

2. The ancient Israelites would have seen the creation account as a *temple-building episode* – the construction of God’s dwelling, with man, God’s image as its climax.
 - a. But intended function determines form, so that man’s identity as *image-bearer* is unto his role as *image-son*.
 - b. Genesis 1 highlights man’s nature as image-bearer unto his role as lord of the created lords; Genesis 2 then reveals that man’s **dominion** is a matter of **communion**: *he exercises God’s dominion over the creation, not in his own right, but as image-son.*
3. God created humans in His image to be capable and suited to knowing and relating to Him in a personal, intimate way. *Man is person-from-person in order to be person-unto-person.*
4. This relational function, then, is the starting point for understanding the significance of man sharing in God’s image and likeness. *Man is son of God, and a son is of his father.*
 - a. Sonship involves *sameness*: shared essence in nature and attributes – *the progenitor is embodied in, and therefore manifested by, the offspring.* * John 14:1-11, 15:18-24
 - b. So Adam as *son of God*, and Jesus then as Son of God as *son of man* (Adam).
 - c. Sonship is ontological and relational, and thus implies and involves devotion.

Thus the communion that God intended to exist between Him and His image-bearers is the intimacy that exists between a father and son – the objective intimacy of “I in you and you in Me” and the subjective intimacy of perfect devotion.

5. This dynamic informs the human obligation of fruitfulness, filling and subduing. * Gen.1:28
 - a. Man was created to administer and consummate God’s work of ordering and filling.
 - b. In this way, man would fill the earth with God’s presence, love, wisdom, and care.
6. Thus the charge to *fill the earth* and *subdue it* was effectively the charge to *extend sacred space* until the whole earth became God’s sanctuary. * cf. 1 Cor. 15:20-28; Rev. 21-22
 - a. God reiterated this charge to *Noah* (Gen. 9:1ff), and it was fundamental to *Israel’s* vocation, beginning with the *patriarchs*. * Gen. 12:1ff, 17:1ff, 26:1ff, 28:1ff; Deut. 6:1ff
 - b. In realizing the Abrahamic promise of dominion and global blessing, Israel would also fulfill the Adamic mandate. *Jesus would ultimately fulfill this mandate as True Israel through the covenant family in which He has His fullness.* * Mat. 28:18ff; John 15:26ff

II. Sacred Space and the Fall

1. In this way, then, Genesis 1-2 is the lens through which we must view the fall.
 - a. Reformed Theology treats the fall as failure under a supposed **covenant of works** – which has profound implications for how one understands human obligation to God, and especially Jesus’ atoning work and its application to human beings.
 - b. The creation account doesn’t define the divine-human relationship as a covenant, but that relationship has covenantal overtones – *covenants are mutually-embraced relational instruments that establish and define the terms of the respective relationship, including the parties’ obligations under it and penalties for failure to meet them.* * ref. Hosea 6:7
2. How one views the divine-human relationship drives one’s understanding of the fall and its consequences, particularly in relationship to the “*tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*”
 - a. So the *covenant of works* premise of Reformed Theology and its view of the fall: *Eating of the forbidden tree was disobedience to commandment, which violated the covenant probation and so forfeited God’s promise of sealed righteousness and eternal life.*
 - b. But the creation account points in a different direction – *it discloses the true nature of human obligation, and so illumines the failure described in chap. 3. This failure involved man’s violation of his created nature and function – **image-bearer to be image-son.***

Thus man’s covenantal obligation was – and remains – a matter of relational fidelity.

3. The episode of the fall underscores the human obligation of obedience, but obedience as *conformity to truth* – i.e., true nature and function, not compliance with a moral standard.
 - a. Man’s nature (image-bearer) and function (image-son) are critical to the creation’s order (shalomic character), and conformity to them is the essence of human **righteousness**.
 - b. The Genesis account of the fall underscores that human **sin** is deviation from the truth, *which has its most basic expression in the notion that wisdom – which man was created to possess – can be obtained independently of God.* * Gen. 3:6; Prov. 9:10; Col. 2:1-3

Thus the fall account highlights the human predicament: *Man was created for wisdom and instinctively pursues it, but he does so out from himself, and so is left with a deceptive and destructive counterfeit that undermines and vandalizes order and shalom, not nurtures them.*

4. This is the perspective for discerning the two trees that are the focal point of the garden.
 - a. The tree of life signifies man’s destiny of **immortality** – *which is participation in the life that God Himself – and He alone – possesses.* * Gen. 2:7, 3:19; 1 Cor. 15:51-58
 - b. The other tree signifies man’s pursuit of **autonomous wisdom**, which precludes life.

Man’s ordained destiny is consummate conformity to his created design, which is realized and expressed in comprehensive intimacy with God, in whom are life and wisdom. The pursuit of autonomous wisdom is departure from God, and so departure from His life. The incarnate Son came to attain this human destiny of life and wisdom – and not merely on behalf of mankind, but the entire created order, so that God at last should become “all in all.”