

Substantive View

- So again, is the image of God something we have, something we are, or something we do?
 - Substantive view = something we have.
 - Relational view = something we are.
 - Functional view = something we do.
- The dominant view in history is the substantive view.
 - It was common to read in ancient theologians that the physical body of man is vertical and upright, whereas the animals are bent over and bowed down. Additionally, we have a moral compass and animals apparently do not.



Substantive View (Early)



- Most theologians throughout history held this view.
- Early Christian writers, such as Origen and Ireneus, made sharp distinctions between the image and likeness of God.
 - The image was said to be our free will and reasoning abilities given at creation.
 - The likeness was thought of as amazing human potential.
 - To the early thinkers, the image was retained through the Fall thus leaving us with free will and reasoning abilities, but the likeness of God was lost thus leaving us limited and mortal.

Substantive View (Medieval)

- The Medieval Scholastics denied that either the image or likeness were lost. But they redefined what was meant by likeness.
 - They agreed with early definition of image having to do with the natural powers of reason or will.
 - They thought likeness were the moral qualities added as a gift to human nature.
- With their semi-Pelagian views, they thought the image and likeness existed within us to the same degree as Adam and Eve before the Fall.
 - Thomas Aquinas championed this view.
 - Eventually, this leads to a Natural Theology and Natural Ethic.



Substantive View Medieval

- Natural Theology is the idea that human beings with their reason alone apart from the special revelation of the Bible can discover God to such a point that they can learn enough by which would be sufficient for salvific faith.
- Since humans were thought to be undamaged by the Fall, they are seen as neutral beings who if they had the right information available to them, could of their own volition and will choose God and be saved.
- The power of reason is strong enough to discover God without Scripture according to this view.



Substantive View (Reformed)

- Luther and Calvin believed it was a mistake to separate the image and likeness, but instead they correctly saw them as the same.
 - The terms mean that humans are like God, and God can be seen somehow in the humans.
- Luther argued that the uncorrupted image of God still exists as God's intention for mankind, but right now all humans have been altered by the Fall and only possess remnants or fragments of the image.
- Calvin agreed and called the image that remains in us a mere relic of the original image in Adam and Eve.
- Looking at passages like Romans 1, they believed that our ability to reason was affected by the Fall; something Reformers call the Noetic effects of sin.

Substantive View (Reformed)

- Rom 1:21 For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened.
- So reason and will were part of the original image, but now they are damaged by the Fall.
 - Our thinking is darkened and our unaided reason will never lead us to God.
 - We need special revelation plus illumination.
- So the Reformers rightly saw that the image and likeness of God were interchangeable, but were damaged in the Fall. We need a divine rescue.



Substantive View (Reformed)

- Since the image and likeness is broken, this makes sense out of NT passages that liken sanctification to the restoration of the image.
 - Rom 8:29 For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers.
 - 2Co 3:18 We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.
 - Col 3:9-10 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old self with its practices (10) and have put on the new self. You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your Creator.
 - Eph 4:23-24 to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, (24) and to put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth.
- Passages like this clearly show our will, reason, and morals were greatly damaged by the Fall. The Medieval Catholics were wrong.
- These also support the idea that the image is something we have.

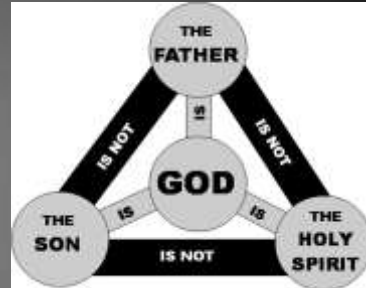
Relational View

- In the last century, theologians tried to move away from the substantive view.
- One alternative is the relational view. This says the image is something we are.
 - This has little to do with our rational, moral, and volitional abilities.
- Instead, humans ARE social. God is a community of three divine persons that are one God.
 - Likewise, humans are community. It was not good for the man to be alone, so you have male and female.
- I and thou and thou and I.



Relational View

- We are to have a vertical relationship with God and a horizontal relationship with other humans.
- Jesus, the perfect image and representation of God had a perfect vertical relationship with the Father and Holy Spirit.
- At the same time He was caring, loving, selfless, and nurturing towards other human beings.
- Thus the experiencing of relationships is the imago dei. It is something we are. We are social.
 - Some see the marriage relationship as the ultimate expression of the imago dei.
- The idea is that before creation, the members of the Trinity loved one another, and so the God desired the same relational ability to be given to his human creations.

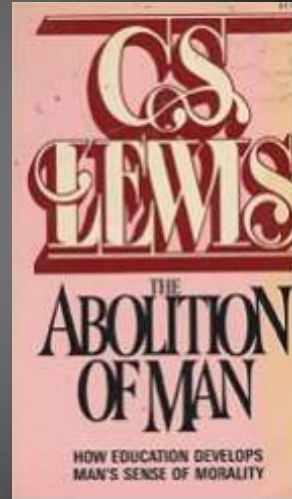


Functional View

- The image is something man is supposed to do.
 - Gen 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth."
 - Psa 8:4-9 what is a human being that You remember him, a son of man that You look after him? (5) You made him little less than God and crowned him with glory and honor. (6) You made him ruler over the works of Your hands; You put everything under his feet: (7) all the sheep and oxen, as well as animals in the wild, (8) the birds of the sky, and fish of the sea that pass through the currents of the seas. (9) LORD, our Lord, how magnificent is Your name throughout the earth!
- Image of God seems linked to rulership. Perhaps the image is the vice-regent position man has on the earth. A growing number of scholars hold this.

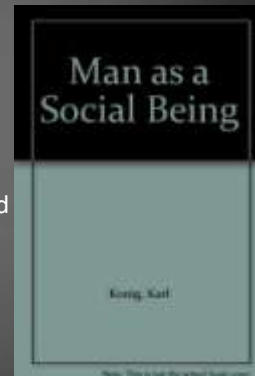
Which View is Correct?

- **Support of Substantive View:**
 - It's the oldest.
 - It speaks of qualities absent from other creatures: volition, morality, reason.
- **Problem:**
 - No scripture directly ties these qualities to the image of God. They are speculations based on general revelation.
- **Comeback:**
 - When NT talks about us being conformed to the image of God, it usually references our moral and ethical nature.
- **Overall assessment:**
 - The other views have more direct scriptural support. The substantive view's big strength is it makes sense.



Which View is Correct?

- **Support of Relational View:**
 - Humans uniquely have a vertical relationship with God.
 - Like God, humans represent a one and many.
 - Unity with Christ explains what the NT means when it says we are being conformed to God's image.
 - Humans are soul and body, which again supports the image is something we are.
 - Scriptural support. The image is tied with being male and female, which is something we are.
- **Problem:**
 - Scripture doesn't directly say this is the image of God.
- **Overall Assessment:**
 - It makes sense, but the other two views make more sense. Also, the idea is quite new.



Which View is Correct?

- Support of the Functional View:
 - Genesis 1:26 is the defining text on the issue of the image of God. It is clearly a matter of function, not substance. The Hebrew could just as easily be translated as, "Let us make man AS our image."
 - We are God's representative on the earth. Thus, our "function" is to be God's image on earth.
 - Gen 1:26-28 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth." (27) So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female. (28) God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth."



Which View is Correct?

- Support for the Functional View (cont.):
 - The fact that we have substantive differences from creatures does not mean those are what make us the image of God.
 - It can be better explained that reason, will, intelligence, spirituality, and morality are qualities given to us to enable us to fulfill the functional end of having dominion over the earth. They are means to an end.
 - The Hebrew word tselem, as it is used in the Old Testament, is used of stature, likeness, and representation.
 - It is the same word used for "idols."
 - Therefore, a physical aspect to the image of God is intended here. The word almost always refers to physical representations of something and is related to stature, something unique in humans.



Which View is Correct?

- Support for the Functional View (cont.):
 - History corroborates this. In the Ancient Near East, the notion of idols, dominion, and reigning were commonly associated with each other.
 - ANE kings demonstrated dominion by placing idols/images of themselves all over their kingdoms with inscriptions naming the king and announcing dominion and sovereignty.
 - That very much matches what we see in Genesis 1:26-28. Moses was a man of the ANE, and the practice would make sense to him.
 - God made living statues of Himself to represent His perfect rule over the perfect earth. Man was only the steward or vice regent.



Which View is Correct?

- Support for the Functional View (cont.):
 - The Fall ruined man as the image of God.
 - The perfect earth was cursed, just as man was cursed, thus making dominion over the earth difficult. Survival is by sweat and toil.
 - The effect was not only physical. Adam was negatively affected spiritually, intellectually, and morally.
 - So perhaps the image of God is a functional thing with substantive and relational components.
 - We had a set job (functional) and were given superb qualities and abilities to carry it out (substantive). This was exercised in a perfect relationship with God.
 - In the Fall, we lost the full dominion, the superb qualities were diminished by sin, and we were now separate from God and at war with each other.
 - This is spiritual death.



Which View is Correct?

- Support for the Functional View (cont.):
 - There is more evidence in Genesis 2.
 - In Genesis 1, when God created everything, God named it. That is another function of sovereignty in the ANE. Kings named and renamed cities and people (Joseph and Daniel).
 - God created man, and called him man.
 - In Genesis 2, after man was created, God let Adam name all the animals. This demonstrated Adam's rule and authority over the whole earth.
 - Adam was even the one who named woman. So even though both are ontologically equal (imago dei), man has authority over the woman in his role. It does not mean she is inferior (e.g. the Trinity). "Greater" doesn't mean "better." She is the image of God, but the glory of man.

Which View is Correct?

- Problem with the Functional View:
 - An alternative explanation of Genesis 1 is to stress the equality of all men, rather than the image of God as a function.
 - In other words, ANE kings declared themselves sovereign over regular people by viewing themselves as gods or images of the gods. This is a perversion of creation.
 - Thus, God revealed to Moses that all men are equal representatives of the one and only God.
 - This argument stresses that the creation account in Genesis 1 is a polemic against ANE kingship. Dominion is equally everyone's.
 - If correct, then the image has nothing to do with function.



Have We Lost the Image?

- Have we lost the image?
- Luther and Calvin were right that the image has been shattered. This is true for all three imago dei positions. The image still resides in us, but it pales in comparison to what it was prior to the Fall.
- Because the image is still there, we have subdued the earth, but not entirely.
 - People do starve, natural disasters destroy civilizations, certain animals attack and kill humans, and some parts of earth are uninhabitable.
- In the Millennial Kingdom, these conditions change.
 - The conditions of the Fall are reversed.
- The saints will reign over the earth with Christ. This is more evidence that the image of God is primarily functional (reigning).
- For this reason, God conforms His saints to His image and one day will give them the completed image of Christ in a new glorified body.
- When that day comes we will have perfect volition, reason, intellect, spirituality, and morality. We will also have perfect dominion over the earth.

An Eclectic Approach is Best

- Of the three views, all clearly contain aspects of the truth.
- So it may be best to use the functional view as the dominant starting point, and then realize the other two views work in conjunction with it.
- In other words, the image is a matter of function (dominion), but it required certain abilities of God, only in a finite version (reason, intellect, logic, volition, morality), and it also required a relationship with God, and subsidiary relationships with others.
 - Subsidiary means authority is best carried out in levels from the smallest unit to the largest (i.e., family, clan, tribe, nation).

