

The Doctrine of Man

What is man? Simply the “outcome of accidental collocations of atoms”?¹ The highest evolutionary stage to date of the primate? Is he among world species primarily *homo sapiens*? According to the Bible, none of these popular current ideas captures what man is *essentially*. Rather, man is a *creature* of God, indeed, the crowning work of God’s creative activity; uniquely the “image of God” with whom God has entered into covenant, and as a covenant creature man is accordingly *homo religiosis* before he is *homo sapiens*.²

Having looked at God’s glory in His creation of the universe and of the angelic realm, we now turn to focus on the pinnacle of His creative activity, His creation of human beings, both male and female, to be more like Him than anything else He has made.

Why did God Create Humans?

Simply put, God did not need to create man, yet He created us for His own glory.³ When we looked at God’s attributes, we noted that God needs nothing. He is both self-existing and self-sufficient. He is completely independent. Nothing can be added to God, and nothing can be taken away from God.

If God as Trinity needs nothing, then why did He create anything? The answer, according to Jonathan Edwards, and, more importantly, according to Scripture, is love. The Bible says that “God is love” (1 John 4:16). And Scripture teaches that the primary attribute of *agapē* love is the giving of one’s self for the good of another. Using Edwards’ analogy, creation is simply the “spilling over” of God’s glory and love within the Trinity. Love loves to share one’s best with others. And so out of love, the true and Triune God created all things to display His glory to others, with the effect that they should be eternally and joyfully satisfied in God. Edwards’ argument is that the ultimate end of the supreme being in the works of

¹ Bertrand Russell, “A Free Man’s Worship,” in *Why I am not a Christian*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 107.

² Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 415-16.

³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 440.

creation and providence is the manifestation of His own glory in the highest happiness of His own creatures.⁴

Unlike the false god of Islam (or the false gods of other other false religions), wherein their diminutive 'deity' was lonely all by himself and in desperate need of company (as well as someone to be angry with), the true God created all things out of the overflow of His glorious love.

- According to Isaiah 43:7, we are created for God's glory, which is all a part of the Triune God's eternally wise counsel and will (cf. Eph. 1:11).

As Wayne Grudem notes, this truth has great implications for us.

First, this fact guarantees that our lives are significant. One might initially conclude that since God does not need us for anything, our lives have no importance at all. But since God created us for His glory, we have eternal importance imputed to us.

Second, the fact that God created us for His own glory answers the plaguing question, "What is the purpose of my life?" This is nicely summarized in the first question and answer of the Westminster Shorter Catechism: Q – *What is the chief end of man?* A – *Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.*

When we realize that God created us to glorify Him, and when we start to act in ways that fulfill that purpose (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31), then we begin to experience an intensity of joy in the Lord that is impossible to find elsewhere (cf. Psa. 16:11; 73:25-26; 84:1-2, 10; 1 Pet. 1:8).⁵

Man as the Zenith of Creation

⁴ Sereno Dwight, *Memoirs of Jonathan Edwards*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), p. clxiii. In Edwards' own words, "Because [God] infinitely values His own glory, consisting in the knowledge of Himself, love to Himself, complacency and joy in Himself; He therefore valued the image, communication or participation of these, in the creature. And it is because He values Himself, that He delights in the knowledge, and love, and joy of the creature; as being Himself the object of this knowledge, love and complacency...[Thus] God's respect to the creature's good, and His respect to Himself, is not a divided respect; but both are united in one, as the happiness of the creature aimed at, is happiness in union with Himself." In, *The End for Which God Created the World*, section 278.

⁵ Cf. Grudem, *ST*, 441-42.

Out of all the creatures God made, only one creature, man, is said to be made “in the image of God.” Thus, the biblical witness is that man occupies a position of the very highest significance in the creation order, as shown in the Genesis narrative (read Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:5-25). Reymond points out eight significant takeaways:

1. Man’s creation occurs as the last major event of the sixth day of the creation week, as the climax of God’s activity. Clearly, God intended all that He had done prior to man’s creation to be preparatory to the creation of man.
2. The very pattern of expression introducing the details of the consecutive acts of creation – quite uniform until the account reaches the creation of man – undergoes a noticeable change at 1:26. Instead of the “And God said, ‘Let there be’” formula (1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24), we are confronted with the new expression, “And God said, ‘Let us make man’” – suggesting a pause in the divine activity for the purpose of solemn divine counsel.
3. It is man alone who is described as having been created in the image of God.
4. Man alone is granted dominion over God’s creation as God’s viceregent. In David’s inspired commentary on Gen. 1-2, he says that God views man as His ‘crowning’ act in creation (see Psalm 8).
5. The creation of man receives special attention in Gen. 2:5-25, which is not a ‘second account’ of creation differing in many details from the account in Genesis 1. Rather, it is a more detailed account of God’s creative activities on day six of Genesis 1. Genesis 1 as it were gives an overview of the creation week *as a whole*, then concentrates in Genesis 2 on the creation of man.
6. Man is distinguished from animals in a very special way in Genesis 2. Not only is he made their ruler in the Genesis 1 narrative, but also into man’s nostrils alone does God breathe the breath [נְשָׁמָה, *neshamah*] of life (2:7). This word for breath refers to more than the impartation of mere physical

life, which all animals equally possess. Unlike animals, man has a “soul,” and he thus has a conscience, as well as the ability to comprehend and fellowship with his Creator.

7. It is to man that God gives the capacity of rational speech. It is to man that God Himself speaks, thereby ennobling him and honoring him above the animals.
8. Finally, it is with man that God enters into covenant.⁶

Man as Created in God’s Image

As John Frame notes, theologians have long puzzled over what exactly ‘the image of God’ consists of. Some have referred it to man’s unique intellectual power, others to the soul as distinct from the body, others to man’s ability to have a relationship with God. Karl Barth suggests a parallel between ‘image’ and ‘male and female’, arguing that man is unique with regard to his social relationships. More recently, many scholars see ‘image’ to refer to man’s dominion over the rest of creation (i.e. Gen. 1:28 ‘unpacks’ 1:26), mirroring and reflecting God’s own lordship over all things. Still others, with NT justification, have identified this image with ethical qualities such as knowledge, righteousness, and holiness (see Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).⁷

There is truth in all these representations. In an attempt to succinctly summarize them into a unifying concept, Frame says, “The image of God consists of those qualities that equip man to be lord of the world, under God.”⁸

In Genesis, the Hebrew words “likeness” (דְמוּת, *d^emût*)⁹ and “image” (צֶלֶם, *tselem*),¹⁰ when used together, describe human beings who in some way reflect

⁶ Reymond notes that though the Hebrew word for “covenant” (בְרִית, *b^rith*) does not occur until Genesis 6:18, (I) the elements of a covenant between God and man are present in Gen. 1-2 (two parties, a condition laid down, blessings for obedience, cursing for disobedience) and (II) Hosea 6:7 clearly speaks of a covenant God made with Adam). For a fuller biblical treatment of this “covenant of creation”, see *Kingdom through Covenant*, by Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum, or their abridged *God’s Kingdom through God’s Covenants*.

⁷ Cf. John Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburgh: P & R, 2013), 784-85.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 786.

⁹ The word צֶלֶם (*tselem*, “image”) is used frequently of statues, models, and images – replicas. Outside of Genesis, these “images” almost always refer to crafted idols.

the form and the function of the creator. The form is more likely stressing the spiritual rather than the physical. Thus, "image of God" would be the God-given mental and spiritual capacities that enable people to relate to God and to serve him *by* ruling over the created order as his earthly vice-regents.

From a careful comparison of Gen. 1:26 with 5:3, Grudem understands the image of God to "mean that man is like God and represents God."¹¹ Seth was not Adam or even identical to Adam; but he was like him in many ways, and 'represented' him in so far as 'carrying his name.' Thus, Grudem warns against over-speculating about what exactly it was that Seth "imaged" Adam, and that we need to be careful in being overly dogmatic about what it means to "image" God as human beings.

Man as God's Son

Another pervasive biblical model of man's relationship to God is that of sonship. In Luke's genealogy, Adam is "the son of God" (3:38). Israel is also called God's son (Deut. 1:31; 8:5; Hos. 1:10). Jesus is the eternal Son, the Son who succeeds to His Father's throne (Matt. 14:33; 16:16; 27:54). In and through Christ, believers are redeemed from sin to be adopted as God's sons (Rom. 8:14, 16, 19; Gal. 4:1-4; Phil. 2:15; Heb. 12:7; 1 John 3:1-2).

The content of sonship is very similar to that of image. The son resembles his father as the image resembles the thing it reflects. In the Hebrew idiom, to say that someone is "son of" something is to say that it has the same characteristics (e.g. Mark 3:17; Acts 4:36; Eph. 2:2; 5:6, etc.). A son of God is someone who thus resembles God, who is like God.

Sonship also entails royal qualities. Like kings, sons of God have power, authority, and presence within their domains.¹² As Frame points out, through the figures of

¹⁰ The word דְמוּת (*d^omut*, "likeness") is an abstract noun; its verbal root means "to be like; to resemble."

¹¹ Grudem, *ST*, 442.

¹² In fact, the Bible often equates Israel's "king" with God's "son" (e.g. 2 Sam. 7:14; Psa. 2:6, 12, etc.). For a fuller treatment, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, especially their treatment of the Davidic covenant.

“image” and “son”, God made man to be His covenant servant, His vassal king, and sons within His family.¹³

Male and Female

“So God created man in His own image,
in the image of God He created him;
male and female He created them.” (Gen. 1:27)

As Grudem notes, the creation of humanity as male and female shows God’s image in (1) harmonious interpersonal relationships, (2) equality in personhood and importance, and (3) difference in role and authority.

1. Personal Relationships

God did not create human beings to be isolated persons, but, in making us in His image, He made us in such a way that we can attain interpersonal unity of various sorts in all forms of human society.

Between men and women, interpersonal unity comes to its fullest expression in this age in marriage, where husband and wife become “one” (Gen. 2:24). This unity is not only a physical unity; it is also a spiritual and emotional unity of profoundest dimensions: God has “joined [them] together” (Matt. 19:6).¹⁴ This union is so profound that God created it in order to picture the relationship between Christ and His bride, the church (Eph. 5:23-32).¹⁵

The fact that God created two distinct persons – male and female – rather than just one sex, is part of our being in the image of God because it can be seen to reflect *to some degree* the plurality of persons within the Trinity.

- Just as YHWH is one entity comprised of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so *adam* (“humanity”) is one entity comprised of male and female.

As Grudem notes, “Just as there was fellowship and communication and sharing of glory among the members of the Trinity before the world was made, so God made Adam and Eve in such a way that they would share love

¹³ Frame, *ST*, 791-92.

¹⁴ This is why Paul can say that sexual union with someone other than one’s spouse is an especially offensive sin; adultery is a sin against one’s “own” body (1 Cor. 6:16, 18-20).

¹⁵ Grudem, *ST*, 454-55.

and communication and mutual giving of honor to one another in their interpersonal relationship.¹⁶

2. Equality in Personhood and Importance

Just as the members of the Trinity are equal in their importance and in their full existence as distinct persons, so men and women have been created by God to be equal in their importance and personhood. Men and women are made *equally in God's image*.¹⁷

- In other words, men are not 'more' like God than women, or vice versa.

This means that we should see aspects of God's character reflected in each other's lives. If there were only males or females, we would not gain as full a picture of the character of God as when we see both men and women together with their complementary differences reflecting the beauty of God's image.¹⁸

Since men and women are equally made in God's image, they are *equally important* to Him and *equally valuable* to Him.

- The fact that both men and women are equal image-bearers should exclude pride or inferiority and any idea that one sex is 'better' or 'worse' than the other.

3. Difference in Roles

Between the members of the Trinity there has been equality in importance, personhood, and deity throughout all eternity. But there have also been differences in roles between the members of the Trinity.

- Though all three members are fully and equally God, the Father is not the Son, the Spirit is not the Father, and the Son is not the Spirit.¹⁹

¹⁶ Grudem, *ST*, 455.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ For example, in creation, the Father speaks and initiates, but the work of creation is carried out *through* the Son and sustained *by* the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit (Gen. 1:1-2; John 1:1-3; Job 33:4; 34:14-15). In redemption, the Father plans, the Son purchases, and the Spirit applies Christ's work to the elect. Each person of the Trinity thus has distinct roles and functions, and thus differences in roles and authority between the members of the Trinity are completely consistent with equal importance, personhood, and deity.

- Likewise, though male and female are both fully and equally God’s image, men are not women, and women are not men; boys are not girls, and girls are not boys, no matter how we dress them up.²⁰
 - ➔ Paul sees this difference in creation to be the basis for telling the Corinthians to wear different kinds of clothing appropriate for the men and women (and I would add boys and girls) of that day, so that the distinctions between the sexes might be outwardly evident, especially in the Christian assembly.²¹
- God did not create males to conceive and bear children and nurse infants; only women can do that (cf. Gen. 3:16).
- God created males with higher levels of testosterone and greater bone and muscle mass as “the stronger vessel”, most likely because men were to be created to carry out the duties that require more strenuous labor (cf. Gen. 3:17-19).

Moreover, to the great scourge of feminists, the Bible clearly teaches that though men and women are equal in worth and dignity, there are differences not only in their functions, but also in their roles, both in the family and the church.

- 1 Cor. 11:3 – “But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.”
 - The point is clear and simple: just as God the Father has authority over the Son, though the two are equal in deity, so in a marriage, the husband has authority over the wife, though they are equal in personhood. In this case, the husband’s role is like that of God the Father, and the wife’s role is parallel to that of God the Son. They are equal in importance, but have different roles.

²⁰ Of course, many in our day vociferously fight against God’s creational order with their modern ‘gospel’ of transgenderism. But the Bible simply says God created humanity “male and female.” Humanity is binary. With slight mutational exceptions, one is either XX or XY, regardless of how one ‘feels deep down on the inside.’

²¹ Grudem, *ST*, 460.

Paul teaches that the husband is head of his household because Adam was created first, then Eve.

- The text in Gen. 2:7, 18-23 suggests that Eve, being created from Adam after a period of time, would be Adam's "helper",²² not head.²³
 - Paul clearly picks up on this in 1 Cor. 11:9: "Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man."
- Adam's naming of Eve also indicates his authority in the relationship. The fact that Adam gave names to all the animals (Gen. 2:19-20) indicated his authority over the animal kingdom, because in OT though the right to name someone implied authority over that person. Therefore when Adam named Eve by saying "She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Gen. 2:23), it indicated a leadership role on his part as well.
 - It is noteworthy that this "naming" ceremony happened before the Fall, since many liberals and 'evangelical feminists' say that man's domineering authority over women is the result of sin (e.g. Gen. 3:16b).
 - ➔ The biblical response is that sin did not change this relationship, but distorted it. Because of sin, the man's "rule" over his wife is now corrupted, and her submission to her husband is no longer natural.
 - ➔ Grudem: the curse brought a distortion to previous roles, not the introduction of new roles. In the punishments God gave to Adam

²² The Hebrew word for "helper" (עֵזֶר, 'ezer), in no way connotes inferiority. Amazingly, this word is used many times of God Himself: He is the "helper" of the fatherless and needy (Psa. 10:14; 72:12), and He is David's "helper" (Psa. 30:10; 54:4; 118:7; cf. Heb. 13:6). Interestingly, in John 14:16, the ESV, NKJV and NASB say that the Holy Spirit will be sent to be the "Helper" (παράκλητος, *Paracletos*) of Christ's people. Cf. John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7.

²³ Some scholars claim that the word for head (κεφαλή, *kephalē*) does not connote "headship", but rather pictures a source of life. Just as Christ is the source of life ("head") of His church (Eph. 1:22; 5:23; Col. 1:18), so too the husband is a source of life to his wife. Although this is indeed true, it is not what Paul is teaching. The point is clear: Christ is Head – Lord – of His church. It should be noted that a wife is also a source of life to her husband, but in no way 'head' over him.

and Eve, He did not introduce new roles or functions, but simply introduced pain and distortion into the functions they previously had. Because of sin, conflict and pain was introduced into the previously harmonious relationship between husband and wife.²⁴

What about Gal. 3:28?

- This is the lynchpin verse on every ‘evangelical feminists’ coffee mug, and so we need to think through this verse and what Paul is teaching in it.

What about Eph. 5:21?

- If anything, this passage teaches that redemption in Christ reaffirms the creation order.
 - The Spirit works in believers not to remove their roles, but rather the painful aspects in their relationship that were introduced by sin.
 - ➔ In Christ and by the power of the Spirit, husbands can now lead as God had originally intended them to (see Eph. 5:25), and wives can joyfully submit to their husband’s leadership as God originally designed (5:22-23).

Questions for Discussion

1. What does this doctrine have to say about chauvinism? feminism? racism? sex-selected abortion? euthanasia?
2. How is this doctrine encouraging to the various ‘classes’ of humanity? (e.g. fathers, mothers, children; e.g. stay-at-home moms vs. working dads, etc.)
3. If, as Nietzsche asserted, “might is right”, what is the consistent and logical implications of this philosophy? Has the history of fallen humanity borne this out? How does this doctrine, especially as fulfilled in the gospel, contrast to this evolutionary worldview?

²⁴ Grudem, *ST*, 463-64.

- E.g. Eph. 5:25-30
- E.g. 1 Pet. 3:7

4. Are distinctions a good thing or a bad thing? What are some of the dangers of 'egalitarianism' (the doctrine that there are absolutely no differences between men and women)?