

## Chapter 31

# THE CREATION OF MAN

### I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MAN'S CREATION

The biblical record alone gives us accurate information about the origin of mankind. Certain characteristics of this act stand out in the text.

#### A. It Was Planned by God (Gen. 1:26)

The act of creating man was based on the deliberate counsel of God. Though all that God had done in Creation up to that point He pronounced as good, Creation was incomplete without man. Man was no afterthought, but the result of deliberate forethought on the part of the Godhead. And after God created man, He then said that everything He had made was "very good" (v. 31).

#### B. It Was Direct, Special, and Immediate (Gen. 1:27; 2:7)

It did not involve any evolutionary processes that relate man to some sub-, non-, or prehuman brute forms.<sup>1</sup> That would mean that as far as his physical nature was concerned man was derived from some nonhuman animal form into which God breathed the breath of life. Genesis 2:7 does not support this theory at all. Indeed, it reinforces the fact of special creation from materials that were inorganic; it does not lend support to the idea of a derived creation from some previously living form.

If one could sustain the theory that Adam was created from some preorganic form, Eve certainly was not. Her body was clearly a direct, special, and immediate act of creation. To acknowledge this in the case of Eve while denying it in the case of Adam is, to say the least, illogical.

Furthermore, the dust of the ground out of which man's body was made cannot be an allegorical reference to some animal form because God said man will return to dust when he dies, and man does not return to an animal state at death (3:19).

### C. It Involved Two Facets

God used the dust from the ground into which He breathed the breath of life. This caused man to become animate. The same phrase ("a living creature") is also used of animals (1:21, 24; 2:19), but since animals were not created in the image of God, as was man, there exists a clear distinction between animals and man.

In the case of Eve, God first took a rib with its surrounding flesh from Adam's side and then fashioned or built it into a woman (Gen. 2:21-23). God constructed Eve after taking the parts from Adam's side. "Build applies to the fashioning of a structure of some importance; it involves constructive effort."<sup>2</sup>

### II. THE PATTERN FOR MAN'S CREATION

God created man in His image and according to His likeness (Gen. 1:26-27). Other relevant Scriptures to this doctrine include 5:1, 3, which speak of the transmission of the image from Adam to his descendants; 9:6, which relates the concept to capital punishment; 1 Corinthians 11:7, which correlates the doctrine to headship; Colossians 3:10, which exhorts the believer to put on the new man that is according to the image of his Creator; and James 3:9, which relates the concept to proper speech. Psalm 8, though not containing the phrase "image of God," deals in poetic form with the creation of man and his dominion.

#### A. The Meaning of the Words "Image" and "Likeness"

The Hebrew words in Genesis 1:26-27 are *tselem* and *demuth* (translated in the Vulgate by *imago* and *similitudo*). The equivalent New Testament words are *eikon* and *homoiosis*. Though some have attempted to make a distinction between the two words to teach two aspects of the image of God, no sharp distinction between them can be sustained linguistically. *Tselem* means a fashioned image, a shaped and representative figure, an image in some concrete sense (2 Kings 11:18; Ezek. 23:14; Amos 5:26). *Demuth* refers also to the idea of similarity, but more in the abstract or ideal. By using the two words together, the biblical author "seems to be attempting to express a very difficult idea in which he wants to make clear that man is in some way the concrete reflection of God, but at the same time he wants to spiritualize this toward abstraction."<sup>3</sup>

The Greek and Latin fathers distinguished between image and

likeness, referring the former to the physical and the latter to the ethical part of God's image. Irenaeus understood the image to refer to man's freedom and reason and likeness to the gift of supernatural communion with God that was lost in the Fall. But such distinctions cannot be substantiated on the basis of the words. Note also that the prepositions are used interchangeably in Genesis 1:26–27 and 5:1–3.

## B. The Meaning of the Concept

Much has been written attempting to explain what is meant by man's being created in the image of God. Here are some of the explanations.

1. *The corporeal view.* This relates the image of God to man's total being, including his corporeality. Strictly speaking, it includes both the material and immaterial aspects of man. But since it includes the material body of man as part of the image of God, it may be labeled the corporeal view.

Man is a representative by his entire being, for Israelite thought always views man in his totality, by his physical being as well as by his spiritual functions, and if choice had to be made between the two we would say that the external appearance is perhaps even more important than spiritual resemblance. According to L. Koehler the image of God could consist in man's upright position . . . [but] the solemnity with which the priestly writer speaks of the *imago Dei* seems to prove that he did not restrict it to this single aspect. . . . It is also to a rather physical sense that we are directed by the passage in Genesis which refers to the image of God over the matter of blood vengeance (9:6).<sup>4</sup>

Two obstacles appear to stand in the way of accepting this view. (1) Since God is spirit and has no body, how could the image of God in which man was created be corporeal? (2) Animals have bodies but are not said to have been created in the image of God, so corporeality does not necessarily have to be related to the image of God.

2. *The noncorporeal view.* This view connects the image of God to facets of personality. Many writers emphasize moral likeness, dominion, the exercise of will, and intellectual faculties (ability to speak, organize, etc.) as specifics of the noncorporeal image of God.

3. *A combination view.* I would suggest a combination of the two previous views, as follows. Genesis 1:27 states that mankind, male and female, was created in the image of God. No one attributes gender to God because of this statement; yet male and female indicate gender.

Similarly, just because man, created in the image of God, has a body, does not necessitate attributing a body to God. But obviously man was created a total being, material and immaterial, and that total being was created in the image of God.

Therefore, (1) man's body is included in the image of God.

While God is not physical in any way, there is a sense in which even a man's body is included in the image of God, for man is a unitary being composed of both body and soul. His body is a fit instrument for the self-expression of a soul made for fellowship with the Creator and is suited eschatologically to become a "spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44). . . . [His body] was not something apart from the real self of Adam, but was essentially one with it.<sup>5</sup>

(2) To be created in the image of God also means to be a living being. This was Paul's emphasis on Areopagus (Acts 17:28–29). Refuting the belief that inanimate idols could represent the living God, he argues that since mankind is the offspring of God, and since human beings are living beings, God must also be a living Being.

(3) Man is not only a living being, but a being like God with both intelligence and will that give him the ability to make decisions that enable him to have dominion over the world (Gen. 1:28).

(4) Adam was not only a unitary, living, intelligent, determining being, but also one who was able to have unhindered fellowship with God. How can we express Adam's original condition? Some use the word *innocent*, but Adam was more than innocent, which seems to connote only the absence of wrong. Adam's original holiness was positive; yet it was not equal with God's—it was creaturely. Because it was subject to testing, it was unconfirmed. It provided immortality, for until Adam failed the test, he was not subject to the inevitable law of death due to sin.

To sum up: the image of God in which man was created included the totality of his being as living, intelligent, determining, and moral.

4. *The Roman Catholic view.* This distinguishes image and likeness. Image is the natural image that belongs to man as created and includes spirituality, freedom, and immortality. Likeness indicates that moral image that did not belong to man as originally created but was rapidly and very early superadded to him. It needed to be added because of concupiscence, which is a natural bent toward the lower appetites, though not in and of itself sinful. Likeness adds original righteousness and holiness.



When man sinned he lost the likeness but kept the image. That original righteousness that was lost in the Fall can be added through the sacraments of the Roman church.

5. *The neo-orthodox view.* Among neo-orthodox writers Brunner's concept is somewhat similar to that of the Roman Catholic church. He taught that there was a formal image that could not be lost in the Fall because it constituted man as man. He also saw a material image that was lost through the Fall.

Barth rejected the idea of a formal image because of his belief that man was utterly corrupted by sin.

### C. Ramifications of the Concept

When sin entered the human race, the image of God in which man was created was not lost. One may say it was defaced though not erased. If the image concept was described correctly, then if man lost it he would no longer be a living, rational being.

Further evidence that the image was not lost is found in the use the Scripture makes of it after the Fall. The fact that man was created in the image of God is the basis for the institution of capital punishment (Gen. 9:6). Headship of the man is also based on his being in the image of God (1 Cor. 11:7). James cautions us about cursing a fellow human being on the ground that mankind was made in the likeness of God (James 3:9). These passages would have no basis if the image had been erased in the Fall.

Regeneration and sanctification serve to renew the believer according to the image of Christ, to whose image we shall someday be perfectly conformed (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18). Only grace can do this.

## III. THE TRANSMISSION OF MAN'S BEING

When Adam begat Seth, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image (Gen. 5:3). Though Adam was made directly in the image of God, his children were generated in Adam's image, which, of course, still bore God's image even after the Fall (cf. 1 Cor. 11:7). Thus the transmission of man's being was and is through natural generation.

No one questions this as far as the material aspect of man's being is concerned. Our bodies come from our parents, and theirs from theirs, etc. But how is the immaterial aspect of man passed from generation to generation? To this question several answers have traditionally been proposed.

### A. Preexistence

This view states that at the beginning God created all human souls, which were confined in physical bodies as punishment. Souls go through various incarnations throughout history and in the process incur sinfulness. Plato and the Greeks taught this transmigration of souls, and in the early church Origen held a similar view (ca. 185–ca. 254). In modern times it is taught by theosophy, Hinduism, and philosopher F. R. Tennant. Orthodox Christianity has never held this view, for it has no biblical basis. Furthermore, the reincarnation aspect of the teaching stands in direct conflict with the biblical teaching on eternal life or eternal punishment for every individual born into this world.

### B. Creationism

As defended by Charles Hodge, creationism teaches that God creates the soul at the moment of conception or birth and immediately unites it with the body.<sup>6</sup> The soul is sinful not because its creation was somehow defective, but because of its contact with inherited guilt through the body. Hodge offers three arguments in support of creationism. (1) It is more in accord with Scriptures like Numbers 16:22 and Hebrews 12:9, which say the soul comes from God (while, in contrast, the body comes from earthly parents). (2) Since the nature of the soul is immaterial it could not be transmitted by natural generation. (3) Christ's sinlessness could only be true if His soul were created (and of course it would not have been united with a sinful body—hence His Person would be sinless). Roman Catholics and many Reformed theologians prefer creationism.

### C. Traducianism

This view holds that the soul is transmitted along with the body through the processes of natural generation. William G. T. Shedd cited three kinds of support for this view.<sup>7</sup> (1) Scriptural: Hebrews 7:10 indicates a rational and moral act on the part of unborn Levi; Genesis 2:1–3 states that God rested on the seventh day of Creation because His work of Creation was finished. No fresh acts, like creating new souls, are indicated; and verse 7 does not allow for the breath of life to be breathed into anyone else other than Adam. (2) Theological: creationism places God in the position of creating a perfect soul (He could not create a sinful one), then having it fall in the case of each

newborn infant. The case of the sinless Christ is in every respect an exception and not the pattern for deciding this question. (3) Physiological: man is always seen as a union of soul and body; therefore, it is more natural to consider both the psychical and physical as developing together.

It seems to me that traducianism provides a more natural explanation than creationism does. I agree with J. O. Buswell's observation:

As between these two views, it does seem to me that there is a certain obvious fact which has been neglected in the historical discussion, and that is the perfect uniformity and regularity of the arrival of a soul whenever a human life begins to be. In our ordinary thinking when we observe such perfect uniformity and regularity in other matters, we usually ascribe the results to the secondary forces which God has created and which He maintains by His divine providence. For this reason, and for this reason only, I am inclined toward the traducian view, but I do not feel that it can be firmly established on the grounds of any explicit scriptural teaching.<sup>8</sup>

### NOTES

1. Contrast A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1907), 465–76.
2. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Columbus: Wartburg, 1942), 135.
3. Addison H. Leitch, "Image of God," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 3:256.
4. Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 168–69.
5. Ralph E. Powell, "Image of God," in *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia* (Chicago: Moody, 1975), 1:832.
6. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1940), 2:70ff.
7. William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (New York: Scribner, 1891), 2:7ff.
8. J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962):252.

## Chapter 32

# THE FACETS OF MAN

## I. THE NATURE OF MAN

### A. Bipartite Unity

When God created Adam, He took the dust of the earth and breathed into it the breath of life to make a living person (Gen. 2:7). Although there were two steps to the act of creating, the result was a single, unitary living person. To be sure, the particles of the earth provided the material, while God's breath effected life. Material and immaterial combined to produce a single entity. Within the material exists a variety of features—arteries, brain, muscles, hair, etc., and within the immaterial we also find a variety—soul, spirit, heart, will, conscience, etc. But without the unity of man's being, this diversity could not function. "The biblical view of man shows him to us in an impressive diversity, but it never loses sight of the unity of the whole man, but rather brings it out and accentuates it."<sup>1</sup>

That man is bipartite in nature is undebatable. Man is a material and nonmaterial entity, the two aspects being distinguishable. Physical death is described as the separation of body and spirit (James 2:26). Biblical dichotomy differs from Plato's teaching that the body was perishable but the soul existed in the heavenly world of pure form or idea before its incarnation in the human body and was therefore uncreated and immortal, a part of Deity. Biblical dichotomy certainly does not teach that the body is the prison house of the soul, which is released at death to return to the heavenly world or to be reincarnated in another body. Biblical dichotomy is radically different from Platonic dualism.

### B. Not Trichotomy ("cut in three parts")

Aristotle further developed Plato's twofold division by dividing the soul into (a) an animal soul (the breathing aspect) and (b) the rational soul (the intellectual aspect). This distinction was further developed in Roman Catholic doctrine through Thomas Aquinas. Early Christian writ-