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CREATED
in
GOD'S IMAGE

Anthony A. Hoekema

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To our dear children:

Dorothy

James

David

Helen

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Preface

This is the second in a series of doctrinal studies. An earlier volume, *The Bible and the Future*, dealt with Christian eschatology, or the doctrine of the last things. The present study will concern itself with theological anthropology, or the Christian doctrine of man.

In this book I will attempt to set forth what the Bible teaches about the nature and destiny of human beings. Central to the biblical understanding of man is the teaching that men and women were created in the image of God. I will present the image of God as having both a structural and a functional aspect, as involving man in his *being*—to God and to himself—and as going through four stages—the original image, the perverted image, the renewed image, and the perfected image. I have based my study on a close examination of the relevant scriptural material. The theological standpoint represented here is that of evangelical Christianity from a Reformed or Calvinistic perspective.

I should like to express appreciation to my students over the years at Calvin Theological Seminary, to whom this material was originally presented, and whose responses and comments helped to sharpen my thinking on this topic. I particularly wish to thank Professors John Cooper, Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., and Louis Vos, who read parts of the manuscript and offered helpful suggestions.

I am grateful to the Calvin Theological Library for the use of its facilities and, particularly, for letting me occupy an office in the library after my retirement. I wish especially to thank the theological librarian, Peter De Klerk, for his exceptional helpfulness.

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Above all, I want to thank the God who created us in his image, and who continues to make us more like himself. We look forward eagerly to the day when we shall be totally like him, since we shall see him as he is.

Grand Rapids, Michigan

—ANTHONY A. HOEKEMA

Abbreviations

ASV	American Standard Version
Bavinck, <i>Dogmatiek</i>	H. Bavinck, <i>Gereformeerde Dogmatiek</i> , 3rd ed.
> Berkouwer, <i>Man</i>	G. C. Berkouwer, <i>Man: The Image of God</i>
<i>Inst.</i>	J. Calvin, <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i>
ISBE	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> , rev. ed
"JB	Jerusalem Bible
KJV	King James Version
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NIV	New International Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>

(See Bibliography for full publishing information.)

CHAPTER 1

The Importance of the Doctrine of Man

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of the doctrine of man.¹ It has, of course, always been true that one of the most important questions to which the philosopher addresses himself is, What is man? In one of his dialogues Plato pictures his master, Socrates, as a man obsessed with one central aim in his search for wisdom: namely, to know himself. Various thinkers have given various answers to the question "What is man?", each one with far-reaching implications for thought and life.

Today, however, this question about man is being asked with a new urgency. Some have observed that people today are no longer much interested in questions about ultimate reality or ontology, but they are vitally interested in questions about man. There are many reasons for this. One is that since Immanuel Kant the problem of epistemology (how do we know?) has become primary, whereas the problem of ontology (what is ultimate being?) has become secondary. The rise of existentialism as a philosophical, theological, and literary way of thinking has brought a new emphasis: namely, that man's existence is more important than his essence—that what is unique and unrepeatable about a person is more important for understanding him or her than what he or she has in common with all other persons. Existentialism, therefore, is a new way of asking the question "What is man?" As belief in God becomes more rare, belief in man is taking its place; and so we are witnessing the rise of a new humanism.

1. I use the word *man* here and frequently in what follows as meaning "human being," whether male or female. When the word *man* is used in this generic sense, pronouns referring to man (he, his, or him) must also be understood as having this generic sense; the same is true of the use of such masculine pronouns with the word *person*. It is a pity that the English language has no word corresponding to the German word *Mensch*, which means human being as such, regardless of gender. *Man* in English may have this meaning, though it may also mean "male human being." It will usually be clear from the context in which sense the word *man* is being used.

But even humanism is in trouble. Two world wars and the unmentionable atrocities of the Nazi regime have shaken many people's faith in man's basic goodness and in the significance of human values. Hence there has appeared a new wave of nihilism which denies all human values and speaks of the meaninglessness of life. Among the factors that threaten human values today are the following: the growing supremacy of technology; the growth of bureaucracy; the increase of mass-production methods; and the growing impact of mass media. Forces such as these tend to depersonalize humanity. New developments in biology, psychology, and sociology increase the possibility of the manipulation of the masses by the few. Practices such as artificial insemination, test-tube babies, abortion, chemical control of behavior, euthanasia, genetic engineering, and the like raise questions about the dignity of human life. Add to this such burning issues as racism, the problem of alienation (old versus young, conservative versus progressive, majority versus minority groups), the problem of equality between women and men, and the problem of decreasing respect for authority, and one can see why the question "What is man?" has acquired new urgency today.

The problem of man has therefore become one of the most crucial problems of our day. Philosophers are wrestling with it; sociologists are trying to answer it; psychologists and psychiatrists are facing it; ethicists and social activists are attempting to solve it. Novelists and dramatists also concern themselves with this question. Dostoyevski's penetrating are attempts to answer it, along with the related question, "What is man here?" Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus have tried to give us their non-Christian answers to the question, whereas writers like Graham Greene and Morris West have tried to give us their Christian answers. Virtually every contemporary novel or play deals with the question "What is man?"

* What one thinks about human beings is *pf* determinative significance for his or her program of action. (The goal of the Marxist is rooted in his conception of man. The same can be said for the program of the political revolutionary who may not be a Marxist. The recent feminist movement is also rooted in a certain understanding of the human person, particularly of the relation between man and woman.

We can distinguish different types of non-Christian anthropology. *Idealistic anthropologies* consider the physical body foreign to his real nature. We find this view in ancient Greek philosophy; according to Plato, for example, what is real about man is his or her intellect or reason, which is actually a spark of the divine within the person that continues to exist after the body dies. The human body, however, partakes of matter, which is of a lower order of reality; it is a hindrance to the spirit,

and one is really better off without it. Those who hold this view teach the immortality of the soul but deny the resurrection of the body.

More common today is the opposite type of non-Christian anthropology, *materialistic*. According to this view,—man is being composed of material elements, his mental, emotional, and spiritual beings simply by products of his material structure. For example, the Marxist view of the economic determination of history rests on a materialistic or naturalistic view of human nature. For the Marxist, man is simply a product of nature. Human beings have not been created in the image of God—in fact, the very existence of the Creator is denied. Foreign to Marxism are such concepts as an ethical imperative or one's moral responsibility to God. Humans are part of a social structure; evil arises from that structure and can be eliminated only by changes in it. The individual is not primarily responsible for the evil that he may do; society is. In Marxism, therefore, the human being is not important as an individual; he is important only as a member of society. Thus, the goal of Marxism is not individual salvation but the future attainment of the perfect society, in which the class struggle between the "haves" and the "have-nots" will have been eliminated. Violent revolutionary action may be necessary for the attainment of that future society.

Another type of materialistic anthropology influential today is the view of man that underlies the writings of B.F. Skinner. In *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* Skinner maintains that the idea that the human being is responsible for his or her behavior is rooted in a tradition that is no longer scientifically acceptable. The determination of behavior must be shifted from what Skinner calls "autonomous man" to the environment.² The idea that the human person has freedom to act as he "wills" is a myth; one's conduct is totally determined by his or her environment. There is in man no decision-making "mind"; there is in him or her neither freedom nor dignity. Human activity is totally determined by the environment; if that environment were perfectly known, human behavior would be completely predictable.

One way of evaluating these views would be to say that they are one-sided; that is, they inspect of the human being at the expense of others. The emphasis on one's "soul" or "reason" while denying full reality to his or her material structure like those of Marx and Skinner, absolutize the physical side of man while denying the reality of what we might call his or her "mental" or "spiritual" side.

We must go beyond this kind of judgment, however, and enter

2. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972.

3. Ibid., pp. 195, 214.

into the heart of the matter. Since each of the above-named views of man considers one aspect of the human being to be ultimate, apart from any dependence on or responsibility to God the Creator, each of these anthropologies is guilty of idolatry: worshiping an aspect of creation in the place of God. If, as the Bible teaches, the most important thing about man is that he is inescapably related to God, we must judge as deficient any anthropology which denies that relatedness.

We must therefore make a sharp distinction between idealistic and materialistic anthropologies on the one hand, and a Christian anthropology on the other. In this book our purpose will be to explore the Christian view of man—what it is, how it differs from non-Christian views, and what are its implications for our thinking and living. We shall be trying to identify the uniqueness of the Christian view of man, that which makes Christian anthropology different, from another anthropology.

We must remember, however, that often non-Christian notions have crept into so-called Christian anthropologies. For example, the scholastic view of man prominent during the Middle Ages, though accepted as Christian, was actually more of a hybrid anthropology. It attempted to synthesize the idealistic view of man found in Aristotelian philosophy with the Christian view. The results of this mismatching of two diverse anthropologies are, unfortunately, with us to this day. For example, the common notion among Christians that "sins of the flesh" (like adultery) are far more serious than "sins of the spirit" (such as pride, jealousy, self-centeredness, racism, and the like) stems from the view, implicit in scholastic anthropology, that evil has its roots chiefly in the body.

It is therefore important for us to have the right understanding of man; As we try to arrive at a proper Christian understanding, we should keep in mind such questions as these: Are there still remnants of non-Christian anthropology in our thinking about man? How does our view of the human person help us better to understand God (e.g., does the truth that man has been made in the image of God teach us something about God as well as something about man)? What light does our anthropology shed on the work of Christ? What light does our view of man shed on soteriology (the way in which the benefits of Christ are applied to us by the Holy Spirit)? What light does our view of human nature shed on the doctrine of the church and the doctrine of the last things? What relevance does a Christian anthropology have for our daily life? How does the Christian view of man help us better to face the pressing problems of today's world? "

CHAPTER 2

Man as a Created Person

i

One of the basic presuppositions of the Christian view of man *if belief in God as (the Creator) which leads to the view that the human person does not exist autonomously or independently, but as a creature of God. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. . . . So God created man" (Gen. 1:1, 27)* ^j_____ ^

An obvious implication of the fact of creation is that ^TJill created reality is completely dependent on God? Werner Foerster puts it this way: "Thus in becoming, being, and perishing, all creation is wholly, dependent on the will of the Creator." ^f

The Scriptures make it very clear that all created things and all created beings are totally dependent on God. "Thou [God] hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas with all that is in them; and thou preservest all of them"; (Neh. 9:6, RSV), That God preserves all his creatures, including human beings, implies that they are dependent on him for their continued existence. In his address to the Athenians Paul affirms that God "gives all men life and breath and everything else," and that "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:25, 28). We owe, Paul is saying, our very breath ^TTo God; we exist only in him; in every move we make we are dependent on him. We cannot lift a finger apart from God's will. _____ ^

Man is not only a creature, however; he is ^{also} a person ^jAnd to be a person means to have a kind of independence—^{not absolute} but relative. To be a person means to be able to make decisions*, to ^{set} goals, and to move in the direction of those ^{goals}. It means to possess freedom?—at least in the sense of being able to make one's own choices. The human being is not a robot whose course is totally determined

1. "Ktizo," in NT, 3:1011.

2. More will be said in Chap. 12 about the meaning of the concept (of freedom when applied to human beings. , ' .

by forces outside of him; he has the power of self-determination and self-direction. To be a person means, to use Leonard Verduin's picturesque expression, to be a "creature of option."³

In sum, the human being is both a creature and a person; he or she is a *created person*. This, now, is the central mystery of man: how can man be both a creature and a person at the same time? To be a creature, as we have seen, means absolute dependence on God; to be a person means relative independence. To be a creature means that I cannot move a finger or utter a word apart from God; to be a person means that when my fingers are moved, I move them, and that when words are uttered by my lips, I utter them. To be creatures means that God is the potter and we are the clay (Rom. 9:21); to be persons means that we are the ones who fashion our lives by our own decisions (Gal. 6:7-8).

I have called this the central mystery of man/because to us it seems deeply mysterious that man can be both a creature and a person at the same time. Dependence and freedom seem to us to be incompatible concepts. We grant that a child is completely dependent on his or her parents in infancy, but we note that as that child develops in the direction of greater freedom and maturity, the child becomes less dependent on his or her parents. This we can understand. But how are we to conceive of a relationship in which complete dependence on God and personal freedom to make our own decisions continue to go hand in hand?

Though we cannot rationally comprehend how it is possible for the human being to be a creature and a person at the same time, clearly this is what we must think. Denial of either side of this paradox will fail to do justice to the biblical picture. The Bible teaches both man's creatureliness and man's personhood. Sometimes it addresses the human being as a creature: for example, when it speaks of God as the potter and man as the clay (Rom. 9:21). More often, however, it addresses him or her as a person: "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Josh. 24:15); "We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). >

Our theological understanding of man must, therefore, keep both of these truths clearly in focus. All secular anthropologies fail to take into account human creatureliness and therefore give a distorted view of man. Any view of the human being that fails to see him or her as centrally related to, totally dependent on, and primarily responsible to God falls short of the truth. On the other hand, all deterministic ah-

3. Verduin develops this thought extensively in Chap. 5 of his *Somewhat less than God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970).

terministic anthropologies, which treat humans as if they were puppets or robots, perhaps with God pulling the strings or pushing the buttons, fail to do justice to human personhood, and therefore give an equally distorted view of man.'Robert D. Brinsmead stated this point well:

The creaturehood and the personhood of man must be held both together and in tension. When theology stresses creaturehood and subordinates personhood, a hard-faced determinism surfaces and man is dehumanized. . . . When personhood is stressed to the exclusion of creaturehood, man is deified and God's sovereignty is compromised. The Lord is left standing helplessly in the wings as if man had the power to veto the plans and purposes of God.⁴

The fact that man is a created person has implications for other aspects of our theology. First, what light does this concept shed on the question of the origin of sin? While granting that the reason man sinned will always remain an unfathomable mystery, we shall have to say that man could fall into sin precisely because he was a person, able to make choices—even choices that would be contrary to the will of God. Yet we shall also have to add that even in sinning the human being remains a creature, dependent on God. God, so to speak, had to furnish man with the strength with which he sinned; the magnitude of man's sin consists in the fact that he used God-given powers in the service of Satan. Because our first parents fell into sin as created persons, we speak of God's "permissive will" with respect to man's first sin, and affirm that this first sin did not come as a surprise to God, though he held those who committed it wholly responsible for it.

v Second} what light does the concept of the created person shed on the way in which God redeems man? The fact that man is a creature implies that after he has fallen into sin (through his own fault), he can be redeemed from sin and rescued from his fallen state only through God's sovereign intervention on his behalf. Since he is a creature, man can only be saved by grace—that is, in utter dependence on the mercy of God. But the fact that man is also a person implies that he or she has an important part to play in the process of being redeemed. Man is not saved like a robot whose activities have been programmed by some celestial computer, but like a person. Therefore human beings have a responsibility in the process of their salvation. They must choose freely, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, to repent of sin and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They cannot be saved apart from such personal choices (though exceptions must be made for cases in which the individuals involved are not capable of making personal choices).

4. "Man as Creature and Person," *Verdict* (Aug. 1978):21-22.

After a person has made such a choice, he or she must continue to live in fellowship with God and in the obedience of faith. The fact that we can live in this way only through God's strength does not take away our responsibility to live such a life.

As an illustration of this point, let us consider how regeneration is related to faith. Regeneration can be defined as that act of the Holy Spirit, not to be separated from the preaching of the Word, whereby he initially brings a person into living union with Christ and changes his heart so that he who was spiritually dead becomes spiritually alive. Such a radical change cannot be the work of man but must be the work of God. Those who are regenerate are described as having been "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13, RSV). Further, apart from regeneration man is spiritually dead (Eph. 2:5), and a dead person cannot make himself or herself alive. Since man has gotten himself into a state of spiritual deadness, and since he is a creature, he can receive new life only through a miraculous act of God—so miraculous that Paul can call a person so regenerated a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

Since man is a creature, God must regenerate him—give him new spiritual life. Since man is also a creature, however, he or she must also believe—that is, in response to the gospel, he or she must make a conscious, personal choice to accept Christ and follow him. These two, regeneration and faith, must always be seen together. It is significant that John in his Gospel keeps these two together. After Jesus told Nicodemus that unless one has been born again he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3), he also told him that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (v. 16). Regeneration, which is the work of the Holy Spirit, is absolutely necessary if one is to see the kingdom of God—but at the point where the gospel call makes its appeal to the hearer, it calls for faith, which involves a personal decision. God must regenerate and man must believe; these two must always be kept together.

As a further illustration of this point, let us look at the process of sanctification. Sanctification may be defined as that operation of the Holy Spirit, involving man's responsible participation, by which he renews man's nature and enables him to live to the praise of God. Sanctification, therefore, is both the work of God and the task of man. Since human beings are creatures, God in the person of the Holy Spirit must sanctify them; since they are also persons, they must themselves be responsibly involved in their sanctification, "perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" (2 Cor. 7:1).

In this connection, note Paul's striking words in Philippians

2:12-13j/'Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trefn-hlfng, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." The word translated t'work *oujL*, "fiatergazesthe, is commonly used in the papyri of the early Christian centuries to describe what a farmer does when he cultivates his land.⁵ "Work out your salvation," therefore, means: "cultivate" the salvation God has given you; "work out" what God has "worked in"; a^ggb/ the_salvation you have received to every area of your lives—wprk, recreation, fajnyly_ life, culture, art, science, and the like. In other words, Paul is telling fiis readers to take an active part in the advancement of their sanctification. "For," he goes on to say, "it is God who works in you to will and to ject." Willing and acting (or "working," ASV, RSV) designate everything we think or do. It is God, therefore, who is continually working in us the entire process of sanctification: both the willing of it and the doing of it. The harder we work, the more sure we may be that God is working in us. In sanctifying us God deals with us both as persons and as creatures^

Jlhe, same principle holds for the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Since we are creatures, God must preserve us and 'keepfus" true to him. The Bible clearly teaches this (see, e.g., John 10:27-28; Rom. 8:38-39; Heb. 7:25; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; Jude 24). But we must not lose sight of the other side of the paradox: believers must persevere in the faith (Matt. 10:22; 1 Cor. 16:13; Heb. 3:14; Rev. 3:11). It is not a question of preservation *or* perseverance. Because we are creatures, God must preserve us or we shall surely fall. But because we are also persons, God preserves us by enabling us to persevere.

There are yet more implications for our theology of the creature-person concept^ Scripture teaches that God saves man by placing him into a (govenant relationship^with him. Since God is the Creator and man is a creature^ it is obvious that God must take the initiative in placing hi^pe'dple into such a covenantal relationship—hence we say that the LCOvenant of grace is unilateral in its origin. But since man is a person,) he has responsibilities in this covenant, and must fulfill his covenant obligations—hence we say that the covenant of grace is bilateral in its fulfillment.

Further, the understanding of man as a created person helps us to answer the much-debated question of whether the covenant of grace is conditional or unconditional. Because man is a creature, the covenant is unconditional in its origin; God graciously establishes his covenant with his people apart from any conditions they must fulfill.

⁵J.H. Moulton and G. Milligan^T*The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from fte~~Papyri* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), pp. 335-36.

But since man is also a person, God requires that his people fulfill certain conditions in order to enjoy the blessings of the covenant. But people can only fulfill these conditions through the enabling power of God. In the covenant of grace, therefore, both God's sovereign grace and man's serious responsibility come into focus. Hence the Bible contains both covenant promises and covenant threats, and we must do full justice to both.

Another important theological concept is that of the image of God. In later chapters I will develop this concept in much greater detail. Here I can be brief. Because of his fall into sin, man has in one sense lost the image of God (some theologians call this the narrower or functional sense). Instead of serving and obeying God, man is now turned away from God; he is "man in revolt." In the work of redemption God graciously restores his image in man, making him once again like God in his love, faithfulness, and willingness to serve others. Because human beings are creatures, God must restore them to his image—this is a work of sovereign grace. But because they are also persons, they have a responsibility in this restoration—hence Paul can say to the Ephesians, "Be imitators of God" (5:1).

Enough has been said to show that the understanding of man as a created person is both important and relevant. Theologians like myself who stand in the Reformed or Calvinistic tradition have commonly emphasized the creaturely aspect of man (his total dependence on God), and therefore the ultimate sovereignty of God in every area of life, particularly in the work of saving his people from their sins. Arminian theologians, on the other hand, usually lay all the stress on man's personhood. Hence when they speak of the process of salvation they will emphasize the importance of man's voluntary decision and continuing faithfulness to God. Keeping in mind the paradox that man is both a creature and a person will help us do full justice to both the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Those of us who stand in the Reformed tradition must not neglect or deny the responsibility of man; those who stand in the Arminian tradition should not neglect or deny the ultimate sovereignty of God.

CHAPTER 3

The Image of God: Biblical Teaching

The most distinctive feature of the biblical understanding of man is the teaching that man has been created in the image of God. We will explore this concept in this and the following two chapters. Our first task is to examine the biblical teaching on the image of God, as found first in the Old Testament and then in the New Testament.

OLD TESTAMENT TEACHING

The Old Testament does not say much about the image of God. In fact, the concept is dealt with explicitly in only three passages, all of which are found in the Book of Genesis: 1:26-28; 5:1-3; and 9:6. One could also think of Psalm 8 as describing what man's creation in God's image means, but the phrase "image of God" is not found there. We will look at all four of these passages in turn.

Genesis 1:26-28 reads:

(26) Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." (27) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (28) And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (RSV)

The first chapter of Genesis teaches the uniqueness of the creation of man. Here we read that while God created each animal "according to his kind" (w. 21, 24, 25), only man was created in God's image and after God's likeness (w. 26-27): Herman Bavinck puts it this way:

The entire world is a revelation of God, a mirror of his virtues and perfections; every creature is in his own way and according to his own

measure an embodiment of a divine thought. But among all creatures only man is the image of God, the highest and richest revelation of God, and therefore head and crown of the entire creation.¹

The first thing that strikes us as we look at Genesis 1:26 is that the main verb is in the plural: "Then God said, 'Let(us)make man. . . .'" This indicates that the creation of man is in a class by itself, since this type of expression is used of no other creature.]Many scholars have attempted to explain this plural. Some call it a "plural of majesty," an unlikely possibility since such a plural is not found elsewhere in Scripture. Others have suggested that God is here addressing the angels. We must also reject this interpretation, since God is never said to take counsel with angels, who—themselves creatures—cannot create man, and since man is not made in the likeness of angels.⁷ Rather, we should interpret the plural as indicating that God does $n < k$ exist as a solitary being, but as a being in fellowship with "others." Though we cannot say that we have here clear teaching about the Trinity, we do learn that God exists as a "plurality." What is here merely hinted at is further developed in the New Testament into the doctrine of the Trinity.

It should also be noted that $ajd^{\wedge}ndnecounsel$ or deliberation preceded the creation of man: "Letjgg make man. . . ." This again brings out the uniqueness of man's creation. In connection with no other creature is such a divine counsel mentioned.

The word translated as *man* in these verses is the Hebrew word '*ddam*'. This word is sometimes used as a proper name, *Adam* (see, e.g., Gen. 5:1, "This is the book of the generations of Adam," RSV). The Hebrew word '*ddam*', however, may also mean *man* in the generic sense: Qiaj__as_a_human_being. In this sense, the word has the same meaning as the GerrriaiTword *Mensch*: not man in distinction from woman, but man in distinction.fromjiojn.hum^ that is, man as either male *or* female, or man as both male *and* female. It is in this sense that the word is used in Genesis 1:26 and 27. The word '*ddam*' may also occasionally mean *humankind* (see, e.g., Gen. 6:5, "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth," RSV). Since

1. Herman Bavinck, *Dogmatiek*, 2:566 [trans, mine].

2. Note, e.g., what is said about God in Isa. 40:14, "With whom took he counsel. . . ?" (ASV). Note, too, that Gen. 3:21 also refers to God in the plural, where angels are obviously excluded: "The rnanjiai now become like one of us." On this point see Calvin, *Cowm. on Geneva* > trans. John King (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), *ad loc.* j G. Ch. Aalders, *Genesis*, trans. W. Heynen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), *ad loc.* i^ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953), *ad loc.*; and L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* rev. and enl. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), p. 182.

the blessing found in Genesis 1:28 applies to all of humankind, we could even say that verses 26 and 27 describe the creation of humankind, but then we shall have to qualify the statement in some such way as this: God created the man and the woman from whom all humankind would descend.

We come now to the significant words: "in our image, after our likeness." The word translated as *image* (*i^{tselem}*) the word rendered as *likeness* (*i^{demutfij}*). In the Hebrew there is no conjunction between the two expressions; the text says simply "let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Both the Septuagint⁴ and the Vulgate⁵ insert an *and* between the two expressions, giving the impression that "image" and "likeness" refer to different things. The Hebrew text, however, makes it clear that there is no essential difference between the two: "after our likeness" is only a different way of saying "in our image." This is borne out by examining the usage of these words in this passage and in the two other passages in Genesis. In Genesis 1:26 both *image* and *likeness* are used; in 1:27 only *image* is used, while in 5:1 only the word *likeness* is used. In 5:3 the two words are used again but this time in a different order: *in his own likeness, after his image*. And again in 9:6 only the word *image* is used. If these words were intended to describe different aspects of the human being, they would not be used as we have seen them used, that is, almost interchangeably.

Although these words are used generally as synonyms, we may recognize a slight difference between the two. The Hebrew word for *image* (*ts^{lem}*) is derived from a root that means *'to carve' or 'to make like'*. It could therefore be used to describe a carved likeness of an animal or a person. When it is applied to the creation of man in Genesis 1, the word *ts^{lem}* indicates that man images God, that is, is a representation of God. The Hebrew word for *likeness* (*dem^{ut}*) comes from a root that means *'to be like.'*⁶ One could therefore say that the word *dem^{ut}* in Genesis 1 indicates that the image is also a likeness, "an image which is like us."⁷ The two words together tell us that man is a representation of God who is like God in certain respects. **A**

In what way man is like God "not specifically and explicitly

13'.¹ The Greek version of the Old Testament, produced in the third century BC.

4. The Latin translation of the Bible, produced by Jerome from 382 to 404 A.D.

5. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1907), p. 853.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 197-98.

7. Ascribed to Luther in Keil and Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1, *The Pentateuch*, trans. James Martin (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1861), p. 63.

stated in the creation account, although one may note that certain resemblances to God are implied there. For example, from Genesis 1:26 we may infer that dominion over the animals and over all the earth is one aspect of the image of God. In exercising this dominion man is like God, since God has supreme and ultimate dominion over the earth. Verse 27. We may infer that another aspect of the image of God is having been created male and female. Since God is spirit (John 4:24), we may not conclude that the resemblance to God in this instance is found in the physical difference between, men and women. Rather, the resemblance must be found in the fact that man complements the woman, that man complements woman. In this way human beings reflect God, who exists as a solitary being but as a fellowship that is described at a later stage of divine revelation as that between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. From the fact that God blessed human beings and gave them a mandate (v. 28), we may infer that humans also resemble God in that they are responsible beings, who can be addressed by God and who are ultimately responsible to God as Creator and Ruler. As God is here revealed as a person (later in the history of revelation this is expanded to three persons) who is able to make decisions and to rule.

Continuing our study of Genesis 1:26-28, we see in verse 28 God's blessing upon man (as v. 22 shows God's blessing on the animals). The last part of this blessing corresponds very closely to what was said about human beings in verse 26: "let them have dominion." Only now the verbs are in the second person plural and are addressed to our first parents. These words about man's dominion are preceded by the following words, not found in verse 26: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." The injunction to be fruitful and multiply implies the institution of marriage, the establishment of which is narrated in the second chapter of Genesis (vv. 18-24).

In giving his blessing, God promises to enable human beings to propagate and bring forth children who will fill the earth; he also promises to enable them to subdue the earth and to have dominion over the animals and over the earth itself. Though these words are filled a blessing, they also contain a commandment or a mandate. 'God commands man to be fruitful and to have dominion. This is commonly called the cultural mandate the command to rule the earth for God, and to develop a God-glorifying culture.

Before we move on to the next passage, one more thing should be noted. Verse 31 reads: "And God saw everything that he had made,

and behold, it was very good" (RSV).¹ "Everything that he had made* includes man. Man, therefore, as he came from the hands of the Creator, was not corrupt, depraved, or sinful; he was in a state of integrity, innocence, and holiness. Whatever in human beings today is evil is a perversion of what was not part of man's original creation. At the time of his creation man was very good.

The second passage that deals with the image of God, (Genesis 5:1-3) reads as follows:

(1) This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. (2) Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. (3) When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. (RSV)

We have in verse 1 a reminder that God made man in his likeness. Here only one of the two words used in Genesis 1:26 is employed, the word *likeness*. The omission of the word *image* is not particularly significant, though, for as we have seen, these words are used synonymously.

Some believe that at the time of man's fall into sin he lost the image of God, and can therefore no longer be called God's image-bearer. But there is no hint of this in Genesis 5:1. This statement, occurring after the narrative of the Fall (chap. 3), still speaks of Adam as someone who was made in the likeness of God. There would be no point in saying this if by this time the divine likeness had completely disappeared. We may indeed think of the image of God as having been tarnished through man's fall into sin, but to affirm that man had by this time completely lost the image of God is to affirm something that the sacred text does not say.

In verse 3 we read that Adam became the father of a son in his likeness, after his image. Here the same two words are used as in Genesis 1:26; only the order of the words is reversed and the words are modified by different prepositions—further proof that *image* and *likeness* are used synonymously. What strikes us here is that it is not said that Adam's son Seth was made in the image and likeness of God.² Rather, it is said that Adam became the father of a son in *his* likeness, after *his* image. But if Adam was still the image-bearer of God, as we saw, we may infer that Seth, his son, was also an image-bearer of God. Further, since the Bible teaches that Adam's nature was corrupted and polluted by the Fall,³ we may again infer that Adam transmitted this

8. See below, pp. 142-43, 149-54.

corruption and pollution to his son. But again, there is no hint here that the image of God has been lost.

(Genesis 9:6, the third passage dealing with the image of God, reads: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.")

First, note the setting of these verses. The waters of the flood have abated, and Noah and his family have left the ark. After Noah built an altar and brought an offering to the Lord, the Lord promised Noah that he would never again curse the ground because of man, and that he would preserve the earth for the purpose of carrying out his redemptive purpose for mankind (8:20-22).

The first seven verses of chapter 9 contain the ordinances God now instituted in order to preserve the earth and its inhabitants. "These ordinances refer to the propagation of life, the protection of life, from animals and men both, and the sustenance of life." The command to multiply and fill the earth is repeated (v. 1). It is further announced that the animals shall be afraid of human beings (v. 2). Man is now given explicit permission to eat the flesh of animals (v. 3), but the eating of flesh with blood in it is forbidden (v. 4). God will require the lifeblood of every animal that kills a man and of every human being who kills a man (v. 5). Within this context come the familiar words of verse 6.

What has been said in verse 5 about animals and human beings is now said specifically about man: whoever (that is, whatever man) sheds man's blood, by another man shall he be put to death ("shall his blood be shed"). These words do not say how this execution will take place, nor whether there are any exceptions to this rule. Neither is it specified who shall carry out such an execution. Many interpreters have suggested that these words point to the establishment of a governmental agency whereby such punishment can be carried out. Though this passage could be construed as implying the existence of such a governmental agency, the text says nothing about it.

The second-half of verse 6 gives the reason for this command: "for in the image of God made man." The reason that murder is here said to be such a heinous crime that it must be punished by death is that the man who has been murdered is someone who imaged God, reflected God, was like God, and represented God. Therefore, when one kills a human being, not only does he take that person's life, but he hurts God himself—the God who was reflected in that individual. To injure the image of God is to injure God himself; to kill the image of God is to do violence to God himself.

9. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), p. 64.

It seems clear, therefore, that according to this passage fallen man is still an image-bearer of God. That our first parents had fallen into sin had been recorded earlier in the Book of Genesis; that human nature had therefore become corrupt is clearly stated in the immediate context of the passage we are discussing: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from his childhood" (8:21). Though all this is true about man, in Genesis 9:6 murder is forbidden—because man was made in the image of God—that is, he still bears that image.

Not all theologians agree with this interpretation. The Dutch theologian Klaas Schilder, in his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, asserts that this passage teaches only that God made man in his image at the time of creation, but does not say that God permitted man to remain in his image after the Fall.¹⁰ Fallen man, so Schilder continues, no longer bears the image of God. It is possible, however, that in the future he may again bear that image:

Who knows what may still happen to this washed-out world? Who knows whether, perhaps, at some time in the future, the image of God will be seen again? So interpreted, this passage [Gen. 9:6] says everything about the *past* and probably much about the *future*, but nothing about what man is *at the present time*. These words only tell us what God intended with man when he created him, what he purposed when he formed him.¹¹

The trouble with this interpretation, however—an interpretation shared by G. C. Berkouwer¹²—is that it does violence to the meaning of Genesis 9:6. The reason you should not murder, the passage is saying, is that the person you are about to murder is someone who is in the image of God. If fallen man no longer bears the image of God apart from redemption, as Schilder and Berkouwer claim, these words lose their thrust. The passage would then be saying, you must not kill a man, for the man whom you are about to kill was *at one time* an image-bearer of God, though he no longer is that today. By his own sin man forfeited the privilege of remaining an image-bearer of God—so these theologians would argue—and yet, though he has lost that image, you must not put him to death. It is indeed possible that this man whom you are about to murder might, if his life were spared, at some time in the future again be an image-bearer of God, though we can never be sure of this; nevertheless you ought not to kill him. Man

10. *Heidelbergsche Catechismus*, vol. 1 (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1947), pp. 296-97.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 297-98 [trans, mine].

12. *Man*, pp. 56-59.

was the image-bearer of God in the past, at the time of his creation, and he may possibly be an image-bearer of God in the future, but he does not bear God's image now. And this is the reason why you ought not to kill him.

This kind of argumentation, however, fails to do justice to the text. The reason no human being may shed man's blood, the passage says, is that man has unique value, a value that is not to be attributed to any other of God's creatures: namely, that he is an image-bearer of God. Precisely because he *is* such an image-bearer, not *was* one in the past, or *might be* one in the future, is it so great a sin to kill him.

The Old Testament passages we have looked at so far teach that man was created in God's image, and still exists in that image. In fact, we ought to say not only that man *has* the image of God but that man *is* the image of God. From the Old Testament standpoint, to be human is to bear the image of God.¹³

Though the expression "image of God" is not found in Psalm 8,¹⁴ this psalm does picture man in a way that reaffirms his having been created in God's image. As Franz Delitzsch affirms, Psalm 8 is a "lyric echo" of Genesis 1:27-28.¹⁵ The main purpose of this psalm is to ascribe praise to God for the works of his hands, particularly for the starry heavens above and man below.

The psalmist's contemplation of the marvels of the starry heavens makes him realize, by comparison, the smallness and insignificance of man. Yet God has assigned to man an exalted position on the earth, having given him dominion over the rest of creation. And this is even more to be wondered at than the heavens themselves.

Verse 5 describes man's exalted state: "Yet thou [Lord] hast made him [man] little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor" (RSV). Translators and commentators differ on the question of how the word *'elohim* is to be rendered. Some translations, like the RSV just quoted, render this word as *God* (ASV, NASB, Amplified Bible, Today's English Version); other versions have *angels* (LXX, Vulgate, KJV), *heavenly beings* (NIV), or *a god* (NEB, JB). Though *'elohim* may sometimes mean "heavenly beings" or "angels," the most common meaning of the word is "God." I favor the rendering "God" in Psalm 8:5 for the following reasons: (1) it is the most common meaning of *'elohim*; (2) angels have not been given dominion over the works of God's hands, as human beings have; and (3) it is never said of angels that they have been created in the image of God; so why

13. Quoted in John Laidlaw, *The Bible Doctrine of Man* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1905), p. 147.

should they be thought of as higher than human beings, who have been created in God's image?''

Man, so says the inspired author of Psalm 8, was made only a little lower than God—a statement that strongly reminds us of the words of Genesis 1 about man's having been created in the image and likeness of God. Similarly echoing Genesis 1, verses 6-8 of the psalm affirm that God has given man dominion over the works of the Creator's hands and has put all things under man's feet.

The picture of man that emerges from this psalm is similar to that sketched in Genesis 1:27-28. Man is the highest creature God has made, an image-bearer of God, who is only a little lower than God, and under whose feet all of creation has been placed. All this is true despite man's fall into sin. Thus, according to the Old Testament fallen man still bears the image of God.

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING

What, now, is the teaching of the New Testament on the image of God? One passage clearly teaches that fallen man still bears the image of God and is, therefore, a New Testament echo of the Old Testament material we have just been examining. In James 3:9 we read: "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness." To understand what James is saying here, we should also take note of verses 10 through 12:

(10) Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. (11) Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? (12) My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

The setting for James 3:9 is a discussion of the sins of the tongue—an area in which we all stumble. Animals, James said in the preceding verses, can be tamed, but no man can tame the tongue, which "is a restless evil, full of deadly poison" (v. 8).

In verse 9 James points out the inconsistency of which people are guilty when they use the same tongue to praise God and to curse men. Why is this such an inconsistency? Because the human beings whom

14. Among commentators who favor the translation "God" are the following: Helmer Ringgren, "eldhim" in G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, trans. John T. Willis, vol. 1, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 282; and N. J. R. de Jong, *De Psalmen* in the *Korte Verklaring* series (Kampen: Kok, 1962), 1:123. T. A. Alexander, in his *Commentary on the Psalms* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1850), states: "And remove him a little from divinity—i.e., from a divine and heavenly, or at least a superhuman state" (p. 60).

we curse—note James's use of the first person—are creatures who have been made in the likeness of God. Therefore, to curse men means, in effect, to curse God in whose likeness they have been made. The following verse underscores this inconsistency: "Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be."

What is particularly significant here for our purpose is the tense of the verb translated as "have been made." The Greek verb is *gegonotas*, the perfect participle of the verb *ginomai*, meaning "to become" or "to be made." The force of the perfect tense in Greek is to describe "past action with abiding result." Thus, the thrust of the Greek expression *kath' homoiosin theou gegonotas* is this: human beings as here described have at some time in the past been made according to the likeness of God and are still bearers of that likeness. For this reason it is inconsistent to praise God and curse men with the same tongue, since the human creatures whom we curse still bear the likeness of God. For this reason God is offended when we curse men.

Someone might conceivably reply, But is not James writing this epistle to believers? And is he therefore not speaking of people who have been restored to the likeness of God by the renewing power of the Holy Spirit as those who still possess that likeness? The answer to the second question is No. James does not say, "with the tongue we curse brothers, fellow believers, who have been made (or remade) in God's likeness." What he says is this: "with the tongue we curse men" (*anthropous*)—a term designating human persons in general, whether they are believers or not. James certainly is not suggesting that cursing is a sin only when it is directed toward fellow believers. He is saying that it dishonors God when we curse any man or woman who may cross our paths. Whoever that person may be, God is displeased when we curse him, since God has made him in his own likeness—a likeness that man still reflects.

This passage does not tell us exactly in what the likeness to God consists. Neither does it tell us what man's fall into sin has done to that likeness or what happens to that likeness when God by his Spirit recreates us in his image. But what the passage does say with the utmost clarity is that whatever the Fall has done to the image of God in man, it has not totally obliterated that image. The passage would be a telling pointless fallen man were a man important sense, a being who bears a likeness to God—a being who is still, in distinction from all other creatures, an image-bearer of God.

God made man in his image—this is clear from both Old and New Testaments. But the Bible also teaches us that Jesus Christ is the perfect man—the unsurpassed example of what God wants us to be like. It is therefore exciting to see that in the New Testament Christ

is called the perfect image of God. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 Paul writes about those who cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God? The word translated here as "image" is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *y/qtoq selem*. • What is meant by the identification of Christ as the image of God is further elaborated in verse 6: "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." God's glory, in other words, is revealed in the face of Christ; when we see Christ, we see the glory of God.

To the same effect are Paul's words in Colossians 1:15: "He, [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation." So, though God is invisible, in Christ the invisible God becomes visible; one who looks at Christ is actually looking at God.

According to John's Gospel, Christ himself made the same point when he walked on this earth. When Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father," Jesus replied, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:8-9). Jesus' words come down to this: "If you look carefully at me, you will have seen the Father, since I am the Father's perfect image."

A remarkable passage containing a similar thought is found in Hebrews 1:3, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." The glory that Christ the Son radiates, according to the author of Hebrews, is not his own but is the glory of God the Father. The word translated here as "exact representation" (*charakter*) is a very interesting one. According to W. E. Vine, it denotes "a stamp or impress, as on a coin or a seal, in which case the seal or die which makes an impression bears the image produced by it, and, *vice versa*, all the features of the image correspond respectively with those of the instrument producing it." As one can tell by looking at a coin exactly what the original die that stamped out the coin looked like, so one can tell by looking at the Son exactly what the Father is like. It is hard to imagine a stronger figure to convey the thought that Christ is a perfect reproduction of the Father. Every trait, every characteristic, every quality found in the Father is also found in the Son, who is the Father's *exact representation*.

When we reflect on the fact that Christ is the perfect image of

15. To the same effect are the following words from the Prologue of John's Gospel: "No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made him known" (1:18).

16. *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1940; reprint 1966), under "Image," p. 247.

God, we see an important relationship between the image of God and the Incarnation. Would it have been possible for the Second Person of the Trinity to assume the nature of an animal? This does not seem likely. The Incarnation means that the Word who was God became flesh—that is, assumed the nature of man (John 1:14). That God could become flesh is the greatest of all mysteries, which will always transcend our finite human understanding. But, presumably, it was only because man had been created in the image of God that the Second Person of the Trinity could assume human nature. That Second Person, it would seem, could not have assumed a nature that had no resemblance whatever to God. In other words, the Incarnation confirms the doctrine of the image of God.

Since Christ was totally without sin (Heb. 4:15), in Christ we see the image of God in its perfection. As a skillful teacher uses visual aids to help his or her pupils understand what is being taught, so God the Father has given us in Jesus Christ a visual example of what the image of God is. There is no better way of seeing the image of God than to look at Jesus Christ. What we see and hear in Christ is what God intended for man.

If this is so, then the best way to learn what the image of God is is not to contrast man with animals as has often been done, and then to find the divine image to consist in those qualities, abilities, and gifts that man has in distinction from the animals. Rather, we must learn to know what the image of God is by looking at Jesus Christ. What must therefore be at the center of the image of God is not characteristics like the ability to reason or the ability to make decisions (important as such abilities may be for the proper functioning of the image of God), but rather that which was central in the life of Christ: love for God and love for man. If it is true that Christ perfectly images God, then the heart of the image of God must be love. For no man ever loved as Christ loved.¹⁷

A number of New Testament passages teach that there is a sense in which the image of God be restored I have in mind those

17. One could perhaps counter that other virtues graced the life of Christ as well as love (which is, of course, true). Yet love, which is called in the New Testament the fulfillment of the law (Rom. 13:10; Gal. 5:14), and is described in Col. 3:14 as that excellence which binds all the other virtues together, was revealed in the life of Christ in a way that has never been surpassed. We think, for example, of such passages as John 15:9 ("As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you") and 1 John 3:16 ("This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us"). That love is central in the image of God is, further, clearly implied in Eph. 5:1-2, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us."

passages which describe the moral and spiritual renewal of man as a process in which he is being conformed more and more to the image of God. If human beings need so to be conformed (or reconformed) in a process that continues throughout this life, the image of God in which they were created must in some sense have been corrupted by the Fall.

We look first of all at Romans 8:29>" For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness [or image, RSV] of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." The passage speaks about certain ones who were predestined or foreordained (*prodrisen*) to be conformed to or made like (*symmorphous*) the image (*eikdn*) of God's Son, so that the Son might become the firstborn or preeminent one (*protokon*) among many brothers.

Before God's people had come into existence, or before the foundation of the world (see Eph. 1:4), God foreknew (in the sense of foreloved)¹⁸ his chosen people. Those he foreknew he foreordained or predestined to be made like the image of his Son. Since the Son, as we have just seen, is the perfect image of God the Father, we will not do violence to the text if we interpret the expression "image of his Son" as being equivalent to "image of God." According to this passage, therefore, something has happened to the image of God. That image has apparently been so corrupted or spoiled through man's fall into sin that he needs once again to be conformed to that image. Conformity to the image of the Son—and therefore to the image of God—is described here as the purpose or goal for which God has predestined his chosen people. That purpose, though it is beginning to be carried out here and now, will not be fully realized until the life to come, at which time we shall be perfectly like Christ (1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2).

Another passage that speaks of the renewing of the image of God in man is 2 Corinthians 3:18, "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." In the old dispensation of the covenant of grace, Paul is saying here, Moses had to cover his face with a veil when he spoke to the Israelites after having been in the presence of God. In the present era, however, the era of the new covenant, God's people do not need to cover or veil their faces after they have communed with God. We all now reflect the glory of the Lord—that is, the glory of Christ—with unveiled faces. Though the KJV translated the word *katoptrizomenoi* with "be-

18. Cf. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), *ad loc.*; Herman Ridderbos, *Aan de Romeinen* (Kampen: Kok, 1959), *ad loc.*

holding," most modern versions, like the NIV, render the word as "reflecting."¹⁹ The Greek word is derived from *katoptron*, which means "mirror." Literally, therefore, *katoptrizomenoi* means "mirroring." The word could mean either "beholding as in a mirror" or "reflecting like a mirror." I prefer the second meaning, since it fits so well into the context. Moses' face was reflecting the glory of God after he had been in face-to-face communion with him. Since this glory was too bright for the Israelites to look at, and since this radiance was one that would soon fade away (v. 13), Moses had to veil his face. But today, Paul indicates, we may reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ with unveiled faces. In this way we see the superiority of the new covenant to the old.

The tense of the participle *katoptrizomenoi* is present, suggesting that we who are God's people today are continually reflecting the glory of the Lord. As we are reflecting that glory, however, we are also being transformed into the same image (*ten auten eikona*)—that is, into the image of Christ—from one degree of glory to another (*apo doxes eis doxan*). Since the verb translated "are being transformed" (*metamorphoumetha*) is in the present tense, this process of transformation is also said to be a continuing one. As we continually reflect the glory of the Lord, we are continually being transformed into the image of the one whose glory we are reflecting. This transformation, Paul goes on to say, comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Both Romans 8:29 and 2 Corinthians 3:18 teach that the goal of the redemption of God's people is that they shall be fully conformed to the image of Christ. But whereas in the Romans text this conformity to the image of Christ is treated as the goal for which God predestined us, in the passage from 2 Corinthians the emphasis falls on the progressive character of this transformation throughout the present life ("from one degree of glory to another," RSV) and on the fact that this transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit. Both passages, however, clearly assert that we who are victims of the Fall need to be more and more conformed to or transformed into the image of Christ, who is the perfect image of God.

The thought that Christians need continually to grow in being conformed to the image of God is also found in two New Testament passages that speak of putting off the "old man" and putting on the "new man." Recent translations of the Bible render these expressions as "old nature" and "new nature" or "old self" and "new self." But the original Greek used the words "old man" (*palaios anthropos*) and

19. Both the ASV and the RSV have "beholding" in the text and "reflecting" in the margin.

"new man" (*kainos* or *neos anthropos*)—though we should point out that the Greek word for man used here means "human being" and not "male human being." _____

The first of these two passages, (Colossians 3:9-10) reads as follows:

(9) Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices (10) and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

At the beginning of chapter 3 Paul addresses his Colossian readers as those who have been raised with Christ, and must therefore set their hearts on things above rather than on earthly things (w. 1-2). He then urges his readers to put to death whatever belongs to their earthly nature, and goes on to utter a number of prohibitions. In verse 9 Paul tells the Colossian Christians not to lie to each other, "since you have taken off your old self with its practices. . . ."

What does Paul mean here by "old self" or "old man"? According to John Murray, "'Old man' is a designation of the person in his unity as dominated by the flesh and sin."²⁰ The old self, in other words, is what we are by nature: slaves to sin. However, Paul says to the believers at Colossae, since you have become one with Christ you are no longer slaves to sin, for you have taken off the old man or old self that was enslaved to sin and have put on the new self (*neos anthropos*). After the analogy of what has just been said about the old man, we conclude that the new man or new self must mean the person in his unity ruled by the Holy Spirit. You ought not to lie, Paul is saying, because lying does not comport with the new self you have put on.

But even the new self is not yet perfect, for, as Paul goes on to say, it "is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (v. 10). If something needs to be renewed it is not yet perfect. It is interesting to note the tenses of the Greek verbs used in this passage. The two main verbs, "have taken off" (*apekdusamenoi*) and "have put on" (*endusamenoi*) are in the aorist tense, suggesting momentary or snapshot action. The participle translated as "being renewed" (*anakainoumenon*) is in the present tense, which describes action in progress or continuing action. In this passage, therefore, Paul looks upon believers as those who have once and for all taken off or put off their old selves and have once and for all put on their new selves—new selves, however, that are being continually and progressively renewed. In other words, in the light of this passage believers should not look upon themselves as slaves to sin or as "old selves," nor as being partly "old selves" and partly "new selves," but as those who are new persons

20. *Principles of Conduct* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), p. 218.

in Christ. Yet the new selves believers have put on are not yet perfect or sinless, since these new selves must still be progressively renewed by the Holy Spirit. Christians should therefore see themselves as people who are *genuinely* new, though not yet *totally* new.²¹

This new self that the believer has put on is being "renewed in knowledge." The word used here for knowledge, *epignosis*, suggests a rich and full knowledge, a knowledge that involves not only the mind but also the heart. The object of this knowledge is the will of God. As the believer grows in his understanding of God's will, he will trust God more and serve him better.

This new self is being renewed in knowledge "in the image of its Creator"—literally, according to the image (*kaf eikona*) of the one who created him. Here once again we find an echo of the words of Genesis 1:27, which tell us that God created man in his own image. The fact that the new self is said to be progressively renewed after the image of its Creator implies that man through his fall into sin has so corrupted the original image that it must be restored in the process of redemption. But the goal of redemption is to raise man to a higher level than he was before the Fall—a level in which sin or unbelief will be impossible.²² The goal of redemption is that, in knowledge as well as in other aspects of their lives, God's people will be totally and flawlessly image-bearers of God.

The second New Testament passage that speaks of putting off the "old man" and putting on the "new man" is [Ephesians 4:22-24]:

(22) You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; (23) to be made new in the attitude of your minds; (24) and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

This passage contains three infinitives, both in the translation and in the Greek: "to put off" (*apothesthai*, aorist tense); "to be made new" (*ananeousthai*, present tense); and "to put on" (*endusasthai*, aorist tense). Many English translations render these infinitives as if they were imperatives, as if the apostle were saying: You *must* put off the old self, you *must* be renewed, and you *must* put on the new self. Though occasionally Greek infinitives may be used as imperatives (as, e.g., in Rom. 12:15), it is not necessary to interpret them as such

21. Cf. Donald MacLeod, "Paul's Use of the Term 'The Old Man,'" in *The Banner of Truth* (London), no. 92 (May 1971):13-19. On the implications of this teaching for the Christian's self-image, see my *The Christian Looks at Himself*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977).

22. On this point, see below, pp. 82-83, 92.

here. I prefer, with John Murray,²³ to think of these forms as infinitives of result or as explanatory infinitives, depending on the verb "you were taught" (*edidachthete*, from v. 21 in the Greek), and giving the content of that teaching. This is, in fact, the way in which the NIV renders the passage (see above).²⁴

Since you have come to know Christ, Paul is saying to the believers in Ephesus,²⁵ you have been taught once and for all to put off your old self (or "old man," *palaion anthrdpon*), to be continually made new in the attitude of your minds, and once and for all to put on the new self (or "new man," *kainon anthrdpon*). In words reminiscent of Colossians 3:9-10, Paul says that a Christian is a person who has decisively and irrevocably put off the old self and put on the new self, and who must continually and progressively be renewed (*ananeousthai*, present tense) in the spirit or attitude of his or her mind. A once-for-all change of direction is to be accompanied by daily, progressive renewal. The Christian is a new person, but he or she still has a lot of growing to do.

Notice now what is said about the new self the believer has put on: this new self has been "created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." Though the expression "image of God" does not occur in this text, we do have the expression "created in accordance with God" (*kata theon ktisthenta*). As God was the Creator of man in the beginning, so God is also the Creator of the new self or the new man believers have put on. As man was created in the image of God to begin with, so the new self that God has created for us is "in accordance with" God, or like God. Since the believer is not yet perfect but must be progressively renewed (v. 23), we conclude that this renewal consists of a growing and ever-increasing likeness to God. Here again we see that the purpose of redemption is to restore the image of God in man.

The new self as described here is said to have been created to be "like God in true righteousness and holiness" (lit., in "righteousness and holiness of the truth".)²⁶ There is an obvious contrast here be-

23. *Conduct*, pp. 214-19.

24. This understanding of the verse would make its teaching parallel to that found in a twin epistle, Col. 3:9-10, which we have just examined. Taking off the old self and putting on the new self are not actions the believer must still be exhorted to do, but actions he or she has already done.

25. Or to believers in general, if one follows manuscripts that omit "in Ephesus" in v. 1.

26. The three words used in Col. 3:9-10 and Eph. 4:24 to describe aspects of the new self (knowledge, righteousness, and holiness) are often used to indicate what is meant by the image of God in the so-called narrower sense—the sense in which it has been lost because of the Fall and is being restored in the process of redemption. The Hei-

tween the righteousness and holiness that characterize the new self and the "deceitful desires" or "lusts of deceit" (v. 22) that mark the old self. Sinful lusts deceive us, never providing the good things they seem to promise, but the righteousness and holiness we pursue as new selves will never deceive us.

In sum, the four passages we have just looked at (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:9-10; Eph. 4:22-24) teach that the goal of our redemption in Christ is to make us more and more like God, or more and more like Christ who is the perfect image of God. The fact that the image of God must be restored in us implies that there is a sense in which that image has been distorted. Though, as we have seen, some Bible passages teach that there is a sense in which even fallen man is still an image-bearer of God, these texts clearly imply that there is a sense in which we no longer image God properly because of our sin, and that therefore we need to be restored to that image. The image of God in this sense is not static but dynamic. It is the pattern according to which our lives are being renewed by the Holy Spirit, and the eschatological goal toward which we are moving. We should think of the image of God in this sense, therefore, not as a noun but as a verb: we no longer *image* God as we should; we are now being enabled by the Spirit to *image* God more and more adequately; some day we shall *image* God perfectly.

Not only is our renewal into greater likeness to God something that the Holy Spirit works in us in the process of redemption; it is also pictured in the New Testament as something that involves our own efforts. To be sure, this renewal is primarily the work of God—he who sanctifies us through his Spirit. But some New Testament passages indicate that renewal into greater conformity to God is also, at the same time, the responsibility of man. Renewal in the image of God, in other words, is not just an indigabte; it is also an imitative

Let us look, for example, at Ephesians 5:1: "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children." To be imitators of God means to continue to be like God (the Greek verb is in the present tense). There are, of course, many ways in which we cannot be like God—such as in his omniscience, omnipresence, or omnipotence. But in other ways we can be like God, if not perfectly, at least in principle. Paul specifies two of these ways in the verses immediately preceding and immediately following this passage. In the verse preceding (4:32), Paul tells

delberg Catechism uses the words in this sense in Answer 6: "God created man good and in his own image, that is, in true righteousness and holiness, so that he might truly know God his creator, love him with all his heart, and live with him in eternal happiness for his praise and glory" (1975 trans., Christian Reformed Church). We will develop this point further in Chap. 5.

his readers that they should forgive one another "as in Christ God forgave" them. And in the verse following (5:2), Paul continues, "And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us." We must therefore continually seek to forgive as God forgave us, and to love as Christ loved us. Since forgiving others is an aspect of love, we see here again that the heart of the image of God is love. As in the verses previously considered, imaging God is presented here as a process in which we must continue to be engaged. But here the process is one in which we must not be passive but active. _____

In a similar passage (1 Cor. 11:1), Paul writes: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (RSV). This is not the only place in his letters where Paul urges his readers to imitate him (see also 1 Cor. 4:16 and 2 Thess. 3:9); but what is striking about this passage is that Paul here urges his readers to be (or become, *ginesthe*) imitators of him as he, in turn, is an imitator of Christ (cf. 1 Thess. 1:6). The Corinthians are told to be more and more like Paul, while Paul tries more and more to pattern himself after Christ. Since Christ is the perfect image of God, Paul is trying more and more to be like God, who is perfectly represented in Christ; for this reason he asks his readers to be more and more like himself. As his readers become more like Paul, they will also become more like God. Imaging God is again presented here as an activity in which both Paul and his readers must continually engage! _____

In 1 Corinthians 2:5-11 Paul urges his readers to "have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus" (v. 5, RSV), and then goes on to describe this so-called mind of Christ: to be willing, like Christ, to humble yourselves, even, if necessary, to the point of death. Clearly, we cannot be like Christ in every respect. But we can be like him in his humiliation, in his willingness to humble himself for the sake of his brothers and sisters. We must be ready and willing to imitate Christ, who is the perfect image of God.

Christ himself, in fact, called for such imitation of himself when he was still on earth. After he had washed the disciples' feet—a menial task that none of the disciples had offered to do—Jesus said to them, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" (John 13:14-15, RSV). When Jesus said these words, he was not instituting a ritual of ecclesiastical footwashing. But he was directing his disciples, and thus all believers, to follow his example of lowly service. All of us, therefore,

27. Cf. Willis P. De Boer, *The Imitation of Paul: An Exegetical Study* (Kampen: Kok, 1962).

who are Christians must imitate Christ in this respect, and to imitate Christ is to imitate God.

What we learn from these four passages is that all Christians are called increasingly to imitate God and Christ, who is the perfect image of God. This is Our task, our responsibility—a responsibility we can fulfill only as God enables us to do so, but our responsibility nonetheless. The very fact, however, that we are called to this task indicates that there is a sense in which the image of God has been marred by sin.

A final point. In the New Testament the image of God is sometimes described from an eschatological perspective. The final goal of our sanctification is that we shall be totally like God, that we shall perfectly image God. This is usually described in New Testament writings in terms of our becoming completely like Christ, who is the perfect image of God.

An example of this is 1st Corinthians 15th 49: "Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven" (RSV). In the immediate context the contrast intended is between the first and last Adam. The first Adam was "from the earth, a man of dust" (v. 47, RSV); the second man, or the last Adam, is from heaven. The last Adam is obviously Christ. As we have borne the image of the man of dust or of the earthly man (*choikou*), so Paul here teaches, we shall bear the image (*eikona*) of the man of heaven (or heavenly man, *epouraniou*). In keeping with the theme of this chapter, the primary reference here is to the resurrection body. During this present life we have been—and still are—bearing the image of Adam, the earthly man, the man of dust; but in the life to come we shall fully bear the image of Christ, the man from heaven. Our future existence will be glorious, because we shall then be perfectly like Christ. Though Paul is speaking primarily about the body, we shall do no violence to the text if we understand it to refer not only to the body but to our entire existence.²⁸

The same thought is found in a passage that constitutes the eschatological highlight of John's first epistle: "Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (RSV). After having expressed his amazement at the marvel of the divine love that has made us children of God (v. 1), John goes on to tell us that he does not know what we shall be like

28. As far as the future of the body is concerned, note also Phil. 3:21: "Who . . . will transform our lowly bodies [lit., the body of our humiliation] so that they will be like his glorious body [lit., the body of his glory]."

in the future. But of one thing he is sure: "we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." In other words, at the time of Christ's return, those who are in him will share his glory.²⁹

When John says that we shall be *like him*, he is referring to Christ. There are two ways of understanding the last part of verse 2. One could understand John as saying that we shall be like Christ *because* we shall see him as he is. The thought then would be that our seeing Christ as he is results in our becoming perfectly like him.³⁰ Another possible interpretation, however, is that John is saying: "We shall be like Christ and *therefore* we shall see him as he is."³¹ The latter interpretation seems to deserve the preference. So, then, the blessing promised to us at Christ's return is perfect and total likeness to him, a likeness that will enable us to do what we cannot do as long as we remain in our present, unglorified state: namely, to see him in his dazzling glory, face to face. Since Christ is God's perfect image, likeness to Christ will also mean likeness to God. This perfect likeness to Christ and to God is the ultimate goal of our sanctification. Whereas the image of God is now being progressively restored in those who are children of God, in the life to come that image will be totally and finally restored. We shall then be perfectly like God.

Summarizing, now, what we have learned from the Bible about the image of God, we note that from the Old Testament passages cited and from James 3:9 it is clear that there is a very important sense in which man today, fallen man, is still a bearer of the image of God, and must therefore still be so viewed. From the other New Testament passages consulted, however, we have learned that there is a sense in which fallen man needs more and more to be restored to the image of God—a restoration that is now in progress but will some day be completed. In other words, there is also a sense in which human beings no longer properly bear the image of God, and therefore need to be renewed in that image. We could say that in this latter sense the image of God in man has been marred and corrupted by sin. We must still see fallen man as an image-bearer of God, but as one who by nature, apart from the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, images God in a distorted way. In the process of redemption that

29. Note Paul's testimony to this happy future expectation in Col. 3:4: "When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

30. Cf. I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), *ad loc.*; John R. W. Stott, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), *ad loc.*

31. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of John* (trans. T. H. L. Parker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), *ad loc.*; S. Greijdanus, *Commentary on the Epistles of John and III Johannes* (Kampen: Kok, 1952), *ad loc.*

distortion is progressively taken away until, in the life to come, we shall again perfectly image God.

So, to be faithful to the biblical evidence, our understanding of the image of God must include these two senses: (1) The image of God as such is an unlosable aspect of man, a part of his essence and existence, something that man cannot lose without ceasing to be man. (2) The image of God, however, must also be understood as that likeness to God which was perverted when man fell into sin, and is being restored and renewed in the process of sanctification.

CHAPTER 4

The Image of God: Historical Survey

Clearly, according to the Scriptures man was created in the image of God. It is also clear that, in distinction from other creatures, only man has been made in God's image. What is not so clear, however, is the answer to the question "In what does the image of God consist?" This question involves three other questions: (1) What effect did man's fall into sin have on the image of God? (2) How does the moral and spiritual renewal of man in the process of redemption affect the image of God? (3) What is the final destiny of the image of God in the life to come?

Throughout the history of the church there have been various answers to these questions. In this chapter we shall look at some representative answers given by Christian theologians from the second century A.D. to the present time. By reflecting upon and evaluating these answers, we should arrive at a better understanding of what the image of God in man means.

IRENÆUS

Irenaeus (c. 130-c. 200) was born in Asia Minor and in 177 became Bishop of Lyons in what is now southern France. In 185 he wrote his chief work, *Against Heresies*, in which he gave a strong refutation of the doctrinal errors of Gnosticism. In the beginning, Irenaeus taught, God created man in his image and after his likeness. Man's likeness to God, however, was lost in the Fall, whereas the image of God still remained. However, the lost likeness to God is being restored in believers in the process of redemption.¹

Let us listen to Irenaeus's own words:

1. David Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*, rev. ed. (London: Collins, 1973), p. 80. I am indebted to Cairns for the main lines of the sketch of Irenaeus that follows.

CHAPTER 5

The Image of God: A Theological Summary

The purpose of this chapter will be to give a summarizing theological description of the meaning and significance of the doctrine of the image of God. As we have seen, it is said only about man—not about any other creature—that he or she has been created in the image of God. To be in the image of God, therefore, must be an indication of what is unique about humankind. The concept of the image of God is the heart of Christian anthropology.

When the Bible says that God created man in his own image, it certainly intends to say that man at the time of his creation was obedient to God and loved God with all his heart (note, e.g., Gen. 1:31, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good," RSV). But the statement "God created man in his own image" (v. 27) obviously intends to do more than just describe man's spiritual and moral integrity. That is, it sets man apart from the rest of God's creation, by indicating that he was formed in a unique way. The statement does not merely tell us in what direction man was living his life in the beginning (namely, in obedience to God); it describes him in the totality of his existence. Man, these words tell us, is a being whose entire constitution images and reflects God.

In our earlier discussion of Berkouwer's view of the image of God, I quoted Herman Bavinck, who said that according to the Bible man does not just *bear* or *have* the image of God but *is* the image of God, and that the image of God extends to man in his entirety.¹ All this implies that the image of God is not something accidental to man, which he can lose without ceasing to be man, but is essential to his existence.

The basic thought underlying the word *image* (*tselem* and *demuth*

1. See above, p. 65. Cf. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), p. 184: "He [man] would not be man if he were not the image of God. He is the image of God in the fact that he is man."

in Hebrew) is that of likeness; these words tell us that man as he was created was *like God*. Genesis 1:26-28, which describes man's creation in the image of God, does not tell us precisely in what this likeness to God consists. More will be said later on this matter. But we should note at the outset that the concept of man as the *image* or *likeness* of God tells us that man as he was created was to *mirror* God and to *represent* God.

First, he was to *mirror* God. As a mirror reflects, so man should reflect God. When one looks at a human being, one ought to see in him or her a certain reflection of God. Another way of putting this is to say that in man God is to become visible on earth. To be sure, other creatures, and even the heavens, declare the glory of God, but only in man does God become visible. Reformed theologians speak of God's general revelation, in which he reveals his presence, power, and divinity through the works of his hands. But in the creation of man God revealed himself in a unique way, by making someone who was a kind of mirror image of himself. No higher honor could have been given to man than the privilege of being an image of the God who made him.

This fact is tied in with the prohibition of image making found in the second commandment of the Decalogue: "You shall not make for yourself a graven image" (Ex. 20:4, RSV). God does not want his creatures to make images of him, since he has already created an image of himself: a living, walking, talking image.² If you wish to see what I am like, God is saying, look at my most distinguished creature: man. This means that when man is what he ought to be, others should be able to look at him and see something of God in him: something of God's love, God's kindness, and God's goodness.

Second, man also *represents* God. Man was created in such a way that he was able to do this. If it is true that when one looks at man he should see something of God in him, it follows that man represents God on earth. Ancient rulers often set up images of themselves in distant parts of their realms; an image of this sort then represented the ruler, stood for his authority, and reminded his subjects that he was indeed their king. In Daniel 3, for example, we read that King Nebuchadnezzar set up an image on the plain of Dura, commanding his subjects to fall down in worship before it. Though the biblical text does not specifically say so, we may presume that the image was a likeness of Nebuchadnezzar himself, and thus represented the king.

Man, then, was created in God's image so that he or she might represent God, like an ambassador from a foreign country. As an am-

2. On this point, see Berkouwer, *Man*, pp. 81-82.

bassador represents his country's authority, so man (both male and female) must represent the authority of God. As an ambassador is concerned to advance the best interests of his country, so man must seek to advance God's program for this world. As God's representatives, we should support and defend what God stands for, and should promote what God promotes. As God's representatives, we must not do what we like, but what God desires. Through us God works out his purposes on this earth. In us people should be able to encounter God, to hear his word, and to experience his love. Man is God's representative.³

If it is true that the whole person is the image of God, we must also include the body as part of the image. Unfortunately, theologians have often denied this. J. Gresham Machen, for example, put it this way: "The 'image of God' cannot well refer to man's body, because God is a spirit; it must therefore refer to man's soul."⁴ Calvin, as we have seen, was not quite so one-sided; though he found the primary seat of the image of God to be in the soul, he admitted that "there was no part of man, not even the body itself, in which some sparks [of the image] did not glow."⁵ Herman Bavinck, however, clearly affirmed that man's body is included in the image:

Man's body also belongs to the image of God.... The body is not a tomb but a wondrous masterpiece of God, constituting the essence of man as fully as the soul... it belongs so essentially to man that, though through sin it is violently torn away from the soul [in death], it is nevertheless again united with the soul in the resurrection.⁶

When we think of man in connection with the various relationships in which he functions, we are confirmed in the conclusion that the image of God in man does not concern only a part of him (the "soul" or the "spiritual" aspect) but the entire person.

STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL ASPECTS

In our discussion of Berkouwer's views, I raised the question of the distinction between the broader and narrower aspects of the image of God. In this connection, I cited Louis Berkhof as a proponent of the view that the image of God has these two aspects, and we dis-

3. The above sketch of man as one who mirrors and represents God describes human beings as they were originally created, before they fell into sin. One could say that what has been pictured here describes God's intention for man.

4. *The Christian View of Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), p. 169.

5. *Inst.*, 1.15.3.

6. *Dogmatiek*, 2:601 [trans, mine]. Cf. Berkouwer, *Man*, pp. 75-77, 229-32.

cussed his understanding of what is included in each of these aspects. According to this view, the image of God in the narrower sense was totally lost through man's fall into sin; the image in the broader sense, however, was not lost but was corrupted and perverted.

This distinction concerns the question of the relation between what could be called the structural and the functional aspects of man. The problem is this: Must we think of the image of God in man as involving only what man is and not what he does, or only what he does and not what he is, or both what he is and what he does? Is "image of God" only a description of the way in which the human being functions, or is it also a description of the kind of being he or she is? Some theologians lay most of their emphasis here on the structural aspect (what kind of being man is), whereas other theologians lay most of their emphasis on the functional aspect (what man does).

It is my conviction that we need to maintain both aspects. Since the image of God includes the whole person, it must include both man's structure and man's functioning. One cannot function without a certain structure. An eagle, for example, propels itself through the air by flying—this is one of its functions. The eagle would be unable to fly, however, unless it had wings—one of its structures. Similarly, human beings were created to function in certain ways: to worship God, to love the neighbor, to rule over nature, and so on. But they cannot function in these ways unless they have been endowed by God with the structural capacities that enable them to do so. So structure and function are both involved when we think of man as the image of God.

On this question a certain shift has taken place in Christian theology. Earlier theologians said that the image of God in man was to be found primarily in his structural capacities (his possession of reason, morality, and the like),⁷ whereas his functioning was thought of as a kind of appendix to his structure. More recent theologians, however, have affirmed that the functioning of man (his worshiping, serving, loving, ruling, etc.) constitute the essence of the image of God.⁸ The danger involved in the latter view is the temptation to think of the image *only* in terms of function—a conception just as one-sided as that which sees image only in terms of structure.⁹

The image of God involves both structure and function. Various terms have been used to describe these two aspects: broader and nar-

7. See Chap. 4 above, noting particularly the views of Irenaeus and Aquinas.

8. Note here the views of Barth and Berkouwer.

9. For the reasons given above (pp. 64-65) I believe that Berkouwer's view of the image tends in the direction of this one-sidedness.

rower image (H. Bavinck,¹⁰ L. Berkhof), formal and material image (Brunner), substance and relationships (Hendrikus Berkhof),¹¹ endowment and creativity (David Cairns).¹² But both are essential facets of the image of God. Herman Bavinck put it this way:

By means of their distinction between the image of God in the broader and narrower sense Reformed theologians have most clearly maintained the connection between substance and quality, nature and grace, creation and redemption.¹³

But, one may ask, what belongs to the image of God in the broader, formal, or structural aspect? Theologians have given various answers to this question. Early in the history of Christian theology, as we have seen, man's intellectual and rational powers were singled out as one of the most important, if not *the* most important, features of the image of God in this broader sense. Certainly included in the image here is man's moral sensitivity (his ability to distinguish between right and wrong) and his conscience. Included also is the capacity for religious worship (what Calvin called the *sensus divinitatis* or "awareness of divinity"). An important human quality frequently mentioned by recent theologians is that of responsibility: man's ability to respond to God and to his fellowmen, and his being held responsible for the way in which he makes these responses.

We could mention a great many other capacities or qualities, such as, for example, man's volitional powers, or his ability to make decisions.¹⁴ Another quality is man's aesthetic sense, whereby human beings not only can appreciate the beauty that God has lavished on his creation, but also can create artistic beauty of their own—in painting, sculpture, poetry, and music. In fact, the gifts of speech and of song are also qualities of man that belong to this aspect. Indeed, we could make this list much longer. In sum, then, we may say that by the image of God in the broader or structural sense we mean the entire

10. *Dogmatiek*, 2:590-94.

11. *De Mens Onderweg* (The Hague: Boekencentrum, 1962), pp. 46-47.

12. *The Image of God in Man*, rev. ed. (London: Collins, 1973), p. 199.

13. *Dogmatiek*, 2:594 [trans. mine]. Though Brunner by his distinction between the formal and material image of God does not mean exactly the same thing as is intended by the traditional Reformed distinction between the broader and the narrower image, his discussion of the image of God (see pp. 52-57 above) confirms the point that both aspects of the image are essential.

14. Leonard Verduin puts it this way: "In the Christian view man is a creature of options, one who is constantly confronted with alternatives between which he chooses, saying yes to the one and no to the other" (*Somewhat less than God* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970], p. 84). For a fuller development of this thought, see the entire chapter (pp. 84-108).

endowment of gifts and capacities that enable man to function as he should in his various relationships and callings.

The question may be asked, Why should the gifts and capacities just mentioned be thought of as belonging to the image of God? The answer is that in all of these capacities man is like God, and therefore images him. Man's rational powers, for example, reflect God's reason, and enable man now, in a sense, to think God's thoughts after him. Man's moral sensitivity reflects something of the moral nature of God, who is the supreme determiner of right and wrong. Our capacity for fellowshiping with God in worship reflects the fellowship that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have with each other. Our ability to respond to God and to fellow human beings imitates God's ability and willingness to respond to us when we pray to him. Our ability to make decisions reflects in a small way the supreme directing power of him "who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will" (Eph. 1:11). Our sense of beauty is a feeble reflection of the God who scatters beauty profusely over snow-crowned peaks, lake-jeweled valleys, and awe-inspiring sunsets. Our gift of speech is an imitation of him who constantly speaks to us, both in his world and in his word. And our gift of song echoes the God who rejoices over us with singing (Zeph.3:17).

What, now, do we mean by the image of God in the narrower, material, or functional sense? Traditionally, Reformed theologians have described the image of God in this sense as consisting in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.¹⁵ They derived this description in part from two Scripture passages: Colossians 3:10 ("... and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator") and Ephesians 4:24 ("... and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness"). Various theologians have described this aspect of the image in several ways: as man's giving the right answer to God (Brunner);¹⁶ as man's living in love toward God and toward his neighbor (Otto Weber);¹⁷ as man's living in the right relationship to God, the neighbor, and creation (Hendrikus Berkhof);¹⁸ or as "concretely visible sanctification"

15. See H. Bavinck, *Dogmatiek*, 2:599; J. G. Machen, *The Christian View of Man*, pp. 174-77; and L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, rev. & enl. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), p. 207. Cf. also Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 6; Westminster Confession, IV.2; Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 10.

16. *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), p. 58.

17. *Foundations of Dogmatics*, vol. 1, trans. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), p. 574.

18. *De Mens Onderweg*, pp. 31-41.

(G. C. Berkouwer).¹⁹ Thus, the image of God in the narrower sense means man's proper functioning in harmony with God's will for him.

These two aspects of the image of God (broader and narrower, structural and functional, or formal and material) can never be separated. Whenever we look at the human person, both aspects must always be taken into account. Man's fall into sin, however, has done damage to the way he images God. Whereas before the Fall we imaged God in the proper way, after the Fall we are no longer able to do so in our own strength, since we are now living in a state of rebellion against God.

This being so, one might conceivably think that man after the Fall is no longer an image-bearer of God (and, as we have seen, some theologians have indeed taught this). From the scriptural data we examined earlier, however, it is clear that we ought not to say this. According to the biblical evidence (as we noted in Chap. 3), fallen man is still considered to be an image-bearer of God, although other evidence shows that he no longer images God properly, and therefore must again be restored to the image of God. Thus, there is a sense in which fallen man is still an image-bearer of God but also a sense in which he must be renewed in that image. We ought not therefore to say that the image of God has been totally lost through man's fall into sin; we ought rather to say that the image has been perverted or distorted by the Fall. Yet the image is still there. What makes sin so serious is precisely the fact that man is now using God-given and God-imaging powers and gifts to do things that are an affront to his Maker.

The distinction between the structural and the functional aspects of the image of God helps us to verbalize man's pre-Fall and post-Fall condition. When man was created, he possessed the image of God in the structural or broader sense, and at the same time imaged God properly in the functional or narrower sense, since he lived in perfect obedience to God. After man had fallen into sin, however, he retained the image of God in the structural or broader sense but lost it in the functional or narrower sense. That is to say, fallen human beings still possess the gifts and capacities with which God has endowed them, but they now use these gifts in sinful and disobedient ways.²⁰ In the process of redemption God by his Spirit renews the image in fallen human beings—that is, enables them once again to use their God-reflecting gifts in such a way as to image God properly—at least in

19. *Man*, p. 112.

20. Brunner puts it this way: "The loss of the *Imago* in the material sense presupposes the *Imago* in the formal sense" (*Doctrine of Creation*, p. 60).

principle. After the resurrection of the body, on the new earth, redeemed humanity will once again be able to image God perfectly.

The image of God in man must therefore be seen as involving both the structure of man (his gifts, capacities, and endowments) and the functioning of man (his actions, his relationships to God and to others, and the way he uses his gifts). To stress either of these at the expense of the other is to be one-sided. We must see both, but we need to see the structure of man as secondary and his functioning as primary. God has created us in his image so that we may carry out a task, fulfill a mission, pursue a calling. To enable us to perform that task, God has endowed us with many gifts—gifts that reflect something of his greatness and glory. To see man as the image of God is to see both the task and the gifts. But the task is primary; the gifts are secondary. The gifts are the means for fulfilling the task.

CHRIST AS THE TRUE IMAGE OF GOD

As we continue to ask what we must understand by the image of God, we are reminded of the fact that in the New Testament Christ is called the image of God par excellence; he is the "image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15). If, therefore, we wish to know what the image of God in man is really like, we must first look at Christ. This means, among other things, that what is central in the image of God is not such matters as reason or intelligence but rather love, since what stands out more than anything else in the life of Christ is his amazing love. In Christ, in other words, we see clearly what is hidden in Genesis 1: namely, what man as the perfect image of God should be like.

When we look at Jesus Christ, we realize that there is a twofold strangeness about him. There is, first, the strangeness of his deity. He is the God-man, the one who is bold enough to say that he and the Father are one—a statement that made the Jews accuse him of blasphemy (John 10:31-33). He is the one who forgives sins—something only God is supposed to do. He is the one who even dares to say, "Before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58).

But there is also the strangeness of his humanity. Though genuinely human, he is unique in his humanity. He is totally sinless. His obedience to the Father is perfect, his prayer life is unexcelled, his love for people is fathomless. And then we realize that this strangeness makes us ashamed, because it tells us what we all should be like. The strangeness of the human Jesus holds a mirror before us; it is an exemplary strangeness, for it tells us what God's intentions are for each of us.

When we look more closely at the life of Christ we see that he

was, first of all, *wholly directed toward God*. At the beginning of his ministry, though sorely tempted by the devil, Jesus resisted temptation, in obedience to the Father. He often spent whole nights in prayer to the Father. He once said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). At the end of his earthly life, when he was facing the terrible suffering he would have to undergo as the Savior of his people, he prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39).

Second, we note that Christ is *wholly directed toward the neighbor*. When people came to him in need, whether that need was for healing, food, or forgiveness, he was always ready to help them. When, tired out from a walking tour, Jesus was resting at a well, he was willing to forget his own fatigue in order to minister to a Samaritan woman. To Zacchaeus he said, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). At another time Jesus said to his disciples, "For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Once Jesus indicated what is the greatest love one can show to another: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). This is the kind of love Jesus himself revealed: he laid down *his* life for his friends.

Third, Christ *rules over nature*. With a word of command Jesus stilled the tempest that threatened the lives of his disciples on the Lake of Galilee. Later he walked on the water to show his mastery over nature. He was able to bring about a miraculous catch of fish. He multiplied the loaves and changed water into wine. He healed many diseases, drove out many demons, made the deaf hear, the blind see, the lame walk, and even raised the dead.

Were these miraculous deeds evidence of Christ's deity or revelations of what Christ could do in his humanity in dependence upon his Father in heaven? We cannot separate Christ's human and divine, natures; as the Council of Chalcedon put it, these two natures are always together without mixture, change, division, or separation. Yet certain biblical statements suggest that Jesus performed these miracles in his perfect humanity, in dependence on divine power: "But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28); "'Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know'" (from Peter's Pentecost sermon, Acts 2:22).

One cannot be dogmatic about this, however. Jesus was the God-man, and therefore whatever he did, he did as one who was both divine

and human. Obviously we cannot perform miracles as Jesus did; we cannot still the storm or raise the dead. But we do learn from Christ's life that rulership over nature is an essential aspect of the functioning of the image of God—one that we must now find our own ways of implementing.

In sum, from looking at Jesus Christ, the perfect image of God, we learn that the proper functioning of the image includes being directed toward God, being directed toward the neighbor, and ruling over nature.²¹

MAN IN HIS THREEFOLD RELATIONSHIP

Just as Christ, the true image of God, functioned in three relationships, so also must man. Genesis 1:26-28, describing man's creation in God's image, says,

(26) Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." (27) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (28) And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (RSV)

God has placed man into a threefold relationship: between man and God, between man and his fellowmen, and between man and nature. The references to God's creation of man, to God's blessing of man, and to the mandate given him by God indicate the primary relationship in which man stands: his relationship to God. Man's relationship to his fellowmen is indicated in the words "male and female he created them." Our relationship to nature is alluded to in God's giving us dominion over the earth.

Let us now look at each of these relationships in greater detail. As we do so, we shall discover what is God's purpose with us, how God intends us to live.

7b be a human being is to be directed toward God. Man is a creature who owes his existence to God, is completely dependent on God, and is primarily responsible to God. This is his or her first and most important relationship. All of man's other relationships are to be seen as dominated and regulated by this one.

21. For this discussion of the image of God as seen in the life and work of Christ, I am indebted to Hendrikus Berkhof, *De Mens Onderweg*, pp. 19-26.

To be a human being in the truest sense, therefore, means to love God above all, to trust him and obey him, to pray to him and to thank him. Since man's relatedness to God is his primary relationship, all of his life is to be lived *coram Deo*—as before the face of God. Man is bound to God as a fish is bound to water. When a fish seeks to be free from the water, it loses both its freedom and its life. When we seek to be "free" from God, we become slaves of sin.

This vertical relationship of man to God is basic to a Christian anthropology, and all anthropologies that deny this relationship must be considered not only un-Christian but anti-Christian. All views of man that do not take their starting-point in the doctrine of creation and that therefore look upon him as an autonomous being who can arrive at what is true and right wholly apart from God or from God's revelation in Scripture are to be rejected as false.

Many years ago Augustine put it this way: "Thou [God] hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee."²² Calvin expressed a similar thought when he wrote, "All men are born to live to the end that they may know God."²³ G. C. Berkouwer has similarly emphasized man's inescapable relatedness to God: "Scripture is concerned with man in his relation to God, in which he can never be seen as man-in-himself."²⁴

This means, further, that we are completely responsible to God in all that we do. Man has been created as a self, as a person, capable of self-consciousness and self-determination,²⁵ capable therefore of responding to God, of answering God, of fellowshiping with God, and of loving God. This has implications not only for our worship but for our entire life. God's intention with man is that he might do whatever he does in obedience to God and for the glory of God, so that he uses all his powers, gifts, and capacities in God's service.

To be a human being is to be directed toward one's fellowmen. Again we go back to Genesis 1. Note the close juxtaposition, in verse 27, of "in the image of God he created him" and "male and female he created them." More than sexual differentiation is involved here, since this is found also in animals, and the Bible does not say that animals have been created in the image of God. What is being said in this verse is that the human person is not an isolated being who is complete in himself or herself, but that he or she is a being who needs the fellowship of others, who is not complete apart from others.

22. *Confessions*, 1.1.

23. *Inst.*, 1.3.3.

24. *Man*, pp. 59-60.

25. By self-determination I mean the ability to choose one's acts without external compulsion. I am not implying that fallen man is able in his own strength to change his basic preference for sin to love for God.

This point is made even more vividly in Genesis 2, which describes the creation of Eve: "The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him'" (v. 18). The Hebrew expression rendered "a helper suitable for him" is *'ezer knegdd. Neged* (the word translated as "suitable for him") means "corresponding to" or "answering to." Literally, therefore, the expression means "a help answering to him." The words imply that woman complements man, supplements him, completes him, is strong where he may be weak, supplies his deficiencies and fills his needs. Man is therefore incomplete without woman. This holds for the woman as well as for the man. Woman, too, is incomplete without the man; man supplements woman, complements her, fills her needs, is strong where she is weak.

What has just been said, however, must not be interpreted as implying that only a married person can experience what it means to be truly and fully human. Marriage, to be sure, reveals and illustrates more fully than any other human institution the polarity and interdependence of the man-woman relationship. But it does not do so in an exclusive sense. For Jesus himself, the ideal man, was never married. And in the life to come, when humanity will be totally perfected, there will be no marriage (Matt. 22:30).

The man-woman relationship, therefore, implies the need for fellowship between human beings. But what is said in Genesis 1 and 2 about this relationship has implications also for our relationship to our fellowmen in general. Not only is man incomplete without woman and woman incomplete without man; man is also incomplete without other men and woman is also incomplete without other women. Men and women cannot attain to true humanity in isolation; they need the fellowship and stimulation of others. We are social beings. The very fact that man is told to love his neighbor as himself implies that man needs his neighbor.

Man cannot be truly human apart from others. This is true even in a psychological and social sense. Near the end of the eighteenth century, in the region near the French town of Aveyron, a small boy was apparently abandoned by his parents and left to fend for himself in the forest of Lacaune. Years later the boy was found. He resembled an animal more than a human being. He ate nuts, acorns, and wild fruits. His speech consisted of grunts; he never did learn to talk coherently.²⁶ It would appear that apart from contact and fellowship with other human beings a person cannot develop into normal manhood or womanhood.

26. For the story of this boy and his later history, see Harlan Lane, *The Wild Boy of Aveyron* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976).

The fact that we can only be complete human beings through encounters with fellow human beings is true in other ways as well. It is only through contacts with others that we come to know who we are and what our strengths and weaknesses are. It is only in fellowship with others that we grow and mature. It is only in partnership with others that we can fully develop our potentialities. This holds for all the human relationships in which we find ourselves: family, school, church, vocation or profession, recreational organizations, and the like.

We enrich each other. This holds true even in a collective sense. We are enriched by people of different races, different backgrounds, different levels and types of education, different callings and professions than our own. It is not good for a person to have social fellowship only with others "of his own kind."

Man's relatedness to others means that every human being should not view his or her gifts and talents as an avenue for personal aggrandizement, but as a means whereby he or she can enrich the lives of others. It means that we should be eager to help others, heal their hurts, supply their needs, bear their burdens, and share their joys. It means that we should love others as ourselves. It means that every human being has a right to be accepted by others, to belong to others, and to be loved by others. It means that man's acceptance of and love for others is an essential aspect of his humanness.²⁷

To be a human being is to rule over nature. Genesis 1:26-28 also describes man as one who rules over or has dominion over nature. Man is given dominion over the earth and all that is in the earth. Theologians, however, have differed over the significance of this ruling. Some have thought of this dominion as only a side effect of man's having been created in the image of God, not as an essential aspect of the image.²⁸ Most interpreters, however, have believed—and rightly so—that man's having been given dominion over the earth is an essential aspect of the image of God.²⁹ As God is revealed in Genr

27. One could add that acceptance of others requires a proper acceptance of oneself. There is a wrong love of self, as Augustine said long ago, but there is also a right or healthy love of self, which is both a result of and a support for our service to God and others. More will be said about the question of man's self-image in Chap. 6.

28. E.g., J. Skinner, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (New York: Scribner, 1910), p. 32; H. Gunkel, *Genesis* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1902), p. 99; Berkouwer, *Man*, pp. 70-72. Calvin's cautious opinion on this point has been quoted above: "Man's having dominion over the earth comprises some portion, though small, of the image of God" (above, p. 43).

29. Luther, *Lectures on Genesis* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958), p. 64; John Laidlaw, *The Bible Doctrine of Man* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1905), p. 163; Bavinck, *Dogmatiek*, 2:569-70, 603; L. Vander Zanden, *De Mens als Beeld Gods* (Kampen: Kok, 1939),

esis 1 as ruling over the whole creation, so man is pictured here as God's vicegerent, who rules over nature as God's representative. Having dominion over the earth, therefore, is essential to man's existence. He is not to be thought of apart from this dominion, any more than he should be thought of apart from his relationship to God or to his fellow human beings.

Two words are used in Genesis 1:28 to describe this relationship of man to nature: *subdue* and *have dominion*. The verb rendered *subdue* is a form of the Hebrew verb *kdbash*, which means "to subdue" or "bring into bondage." This verb tells us that man is to explore the resources of the earth, to cultivate its land, to mine its buried treasures. Yet we must not think simply about land, plants, and animals; we must also think about human existence itself insofar as it is an aspect of God's good creation. Man is called by God to develop all the potentialities found in nature and in humankind as a whole. He must seek to develop not only agriculture, horticulture, and animal husbandry, but also science, technology, and art. In other words, we have here what is often called the *cultural mandate*: the command to develop a God-glorifying culture. Though these words occur as part of God's blessing upon man, the blessing implies a mandate.

The other word used in Genesis 1:28 to describe this relationship is translated as "have dominion," a form of the Hebrew verb *rdddh*, meaning "to rule" or "to dominate." It is specifically said that humankind shall have dominion over the animals. Note in this connection also Genesis 9:2, in which God says to Noah, as the representative of postflood humanity, "The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth . . . they are given into your hands." Psalm 8 not only echoes this thought but expands upon it:

*Thou [God] hast made him [man] little less than God,
and dost crown him with glory and honor.
Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands;
thou hast put all things under his feet. (vv. 5-6, RSV)*

It is important, however, to note that the proper relationship of man to nature is not simply that of ruling over it. When we go from Genesis 1 to Genesis 2, we find that Adam was given a specific task to perform: to work (*'abad*) and to take care of (*shdmar*) the Garden of Eden in which he had been placed (v. 15). The Hebrew word *'dbad* literally means "to serve." The word *shdmar* means "to guard, watch

pp. 51-54; L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 205; H. Berkhof, *De Mens Onderweg*, pp. 37-41; L. Verduin, *Less than God*, pp. 27-48; and Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*, p. 28.

over, preserve, or care for." Adam, in other words, was not only told to rule over nature; he was also told to cultivate and care for that portion of the earth in which he had been placed. If human beings had been commanded only to *rule* over the earth, this command might easily have been misconstrued as an open invitation to irresponsible exploitation of the earth's resources. But the injunction to *work* and *take care of* the Garden of Eden implies that we are to serve and preserve the earth as well as to rule over it.³⁰

This third relationship into which man has been placed by God means that man, while standing below God, stands above nature as its ruler, as the one who is summoned to admire its beauties, discover its secrets, and explore its resources. But man—that is, *we* — must rule over nature in such a way as to be its servant as well. We must be concerned to conserve natural resources and to make the best possible use of them. We must be concerned to prevent the erosion of the soil, the wanton destruction of forests, the irresponsible use of energy, the pollution of rivers and lakes, and the pollution of the air we breathe. We must be concerned to be stewards of the earth and of all that is in it, and to promote whatever will preserve its usefulness and beauty to the glory of God.

How are these three relationships (to God, to each other, and to nature) related to each other? Do they stand loosely next to each other without any connection, or is there a close connection between them? Is one of these more prominent than the other two? These are significant questions. For centuries the Christian church has maintained that only the first of these three is really important, and that the other two relationships are important only as means for fulfilling the first one. Perhaps we could call this first one the *vertical* relationship. In recent years, however, there has arisen a kind of *horizontalizing* version of Christianity. Many have taught that the most important relationship is the second one, and that the relationship to God can only find expression in man's relationship with his neighbor. To this must be added the fact that in our technological age the third relationship seems to be eclipsing the other two. In the industrial nations at least it seems that most of our energy is being devoted to this third relationship—to the maintenance and improvement of technology. Some now feel that this third relationship is so dominating our lives that modern man is fast becoming a slave of the machine and of the computer.

30. For a further elaboration of this point, see chaps. 13-15 (esp. pp. 208-11) of *Earth-keeping*, ed. Loren Wilkinson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

In point of fact, however, God has placed man into all three of these relationships. Each one is as important and as indispensable as are the other two; we can neither exist nor function properly without any one of them. Further, they are interrelated. Man is inescapably related to God; this is indeed the prior and most important relationship. But this relationship does not exist without the other two, and is not realized apart from the other two. Our relationship to the neighbor is a form in which our relationship to God realizes itself; as the Bible often teaches, we show our love for God by means of our love for the neighbor. A person who does not love his neighbor is a liar if he says that he loves God (1 John 4:20). Our love for God and for the neighbor, further, should also reveal itself in our rule over and care for God's creation. When we love the neighbor and when we work responsibly with God's creation, we are at the same time serving God.³¹

We ought now to observe that no other creature lives in precisely the same threefold relationship. When we say that human beings are responsible to God and that their lives must be consciously directed toward him, we ascribe to man a relationship to God found in no other creatures except the angels. When we say that human beings are capable of conscious fellowship with their fellowmen and that their lives are to be directed toward their neighbors, we ascribe to man a relationship found in no other creatures, probably not even the angels, who are not bound to each other in the same way that human beings are. And when we say that human beings have been appointed by God to rule over and to care for the earth, we ascribe to man a relationship found in no other creatures, not even the angels.

Each of these three relationships, further, is a reflection of God's own being. Man's responsibility to God and conscious fellowship with God is a reflection of God's fellowship with and love for man. Man's fellowship with his fellowmen is a reflection of the inter-Trinitarian fellowship within the Godhead (cf. John 17:24, "Because you [Father] loved me [the Son] before the creation of the world"). And man's dominion over the earth reflects the supreme dominion of God the Creator over all that he has made—so much so that the author of Psalm 8 can say, in connection with man's rule over the works of God's hands, "Thou hast made him [man] little less than God" (v. 5, RSV).

Since this threefold relationship is unique to man, and since he images God in each of these relationships, we may conclude, as we did when we looked at Christ as the true image of God, that the proper functioning of the image of God is to be channeled through these

31. For these insights into man's three relationships and their interconnections, I am again indebted to Hendrikus Berkhof, *De Mens Ondervieg*, pp. 41-44.

three relationships: to God, to the neighbor, and to nature. Man has been endowed by God with the qualities and gifts whereby he is able to function in these relationships. The image of God is to be seen, however, not just in these capacities, important though they are, but primarily in the way man functions in these relationships.

THE ORIGINAL IMAGE

This leads us to a fuller consideration of something mentioned earlier: namely, that to understand the image of God in its full biblical content, we must see it in the light of creation, fall, and redemption. What we see at the beginning, before man fell into sin, was *the original image*. Though we do not know exactly how the image of God revealed itself at that stage of man's history,³² we may assume that the original human pair imaged God sinlessly and obediently. Man was then, to quote Augustine, "able not to sin."³³ We may therefore also assume that at this stage Adam and Eve functioned sinlessly and obediently in all three of the relationships we have just discussed: in worshiping and serving God, in loving and serving each other, and in ruling over and caring for that area of creation where God had placed them.

A further comment needs to be made, however. Though the first human pair were sinless, living in what earlier theologians used to call "the state of integrity," they were not yet at the end of the road. They were not yet fully developed image-bearers of God; they should have advanced to a higher stage where their sinlessness would have been unlosable. At the stage where they existed, there was still the possibility of sin. Bavinck puts it this way:

Adam thus stood not at the end but at the beginning of the road; his condition was a provisional and temporary one, which could not remain this way, and which had to pass over either into a state of higher glory or into a fall into sin and death.³⁴

Bavinck goes on to suggest that the fact that Adam and Eve still had to live with the possibility of sinning was, so to speak, the *boundary* of the image of God:

Adam . . . had the *posse non peccare* [able not to sin] but not yet the *non posse peccare* [not able to sin]. He still lived in the possibility of sin . . . ; he did not yet have the perfect, unchangeable love which excludes all

32. As is evident from this statement, the position taken in this book is that the Fall recorded in Genesis 3 was a historical event. This point will be taken up in greater detail in Chap. 7.

33. *On Correction and Grace*, 33. In the original Latin, "*posse non peccare*."

34. *Dogmatiek*, 2:606 [trans, mine].

fear. Reformed theologians therefore correctly affirmed that this possibility, this changeableness, this still being able to sin ... was not an aspect of or the content of the image of God, but rather the boundary, limitation, or edge of the image of God.³⁵

This much is clear: the integrity in which Adam and Eve existed before the Fall was not a state of consummate and unchangeable perfection. Man, to be sure, was created in the image of God at the beginning, but he was not yet a "finished product." He still needed to grow and to be tested. God wished to determine whether man would be obedient to him freely and voluntarily, in the face of an actual possibility of disobedience. For this reason God gave Adam a "probationary command": "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17). If Adam and Eve had kept that command, who knows what the further history of the human race would have been like. But, sad to say, they disobeyed the command, and thereby plunged themselves, and the human race that was to follow them, into a sinful state.

THE PERVERTED IMAGE

After man's fall into sin, the image of God was not annihilated but perverted. The image in its structural sense was still there—man's gifts, endowments, and capacities were not destroyed by the Fall—but man now began to use these gifts in ways that were contrary to God's will. What changed, in other words, was not the structure of man but the way in which he functioned, the direction in which he was going. Again Bavinck has put it well:

Man through the fall . . . has not become a devil who, incapable of redemption, can no longer reveal the features of the image of God. But while he has remained really and substantially man and has still preserved all his human faculties, capacities, and powers, the form, nature, disposition, and direction of all these powers have been so changed that now instead of doing the will of God they fulfill the law of the flesh.³⁶

Because of the Fall, therefore, the image of God in man, though not destroyed, has been seriously corrupted. Calvin, it will be recalled, described this image as deformed, vitiated, mutilated, maimed, disease-ridden, and disfigured.³⁷ Herman Bavinck at one time even

35. *Ibid.*, p. 617 [trans, mine]. Cf. also Wm. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 2 (1888; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), pp. 150-52.

36. *Dogmatiek*, 3:137 [trans, mine].

37. See above, pp. 43-45.

used the word *devastated* (*verwoestte*) to depict what sin has done to the image of God in man³⁸ (though he would not deny that fallen man still retains the image of God in a sense).

How has this perversion of the image affected man's functioning in the three relationships into which God has placed him? Man was created, as we have seen, in order to be properly directed toward God; he is inescapably related to God. But fallen man, instead of worshipping the true God, worships idols. In the first chapter of Romans Paul indicates the inexcusableness of this perversion of the God-man relationship:

So they [men who by their wickedness suppress the truth] are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles, (vv. 20-23, RSV)

Whereas primitive man made idols out of wood and stone, modern man, seeking something to worship, makes idols of a more subtle type: himself, human society, the state, money, fame, possessions, or pleasure. All such idolatries are perversions of man's capacity for worshipping God.

We could go on to say that instead of using his reason as a means for praising God, fallen man now uses it as a means for praising himself or human accomplishments. The moral sense with which man has been endowed he or she now uses in a perverted way, calling wrong right and right wrong. The gift of speech is used for cursing God instead of praising him. Instead of living in obedience to God, man is now "man in revolt," living in defiance of God and of God's laws.

The perversion of the image has also affected the second of man's three relationships. Instead of using his capacity for fellowship to enrich the lives of others, fallen man now uses this gift to manipulate others as tools for his selfish purposes. He uses the gift of speech to tell lies instead of the truth, to hurt his neighbor instead of helping him. Artistic abilities are often prostituted in the service of lust, and God-given sexual powers are used for perverse and debasing goals. Pornography and drugs have become big businesses; their purpose is not to help others but to exploit them. The motto of many in today's world seems to be, "Every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost." Man is still inescapably related to others, but instead of loving others he is inclined to hate them.

38. *Dogmatiek*, 2:595.

In contemporary society this tendency to hate others often takes the form of indifference or alienation. Indifference toward others is a common phenomenon in our growing urban civilization, where many people hardly know their next-door neighbors and, what is worse, do not care to know them. Alienation in its extreme form is well expressed in Jean-Paul Sartre's famous dictum, "Hell is other people."³⁹ One sees this alienation at its worst in the criminal who so totally hates his neighbor that he will steal, brutalize, or murder in order to obtain what he wants.

Perversion has also occurred in the third relationship, that between man and nature. Instead of ruling the earth in obedience to God, man now uses the earth and its resources for his own selfish purposes. Having forgotten that he was given dominion over the earth in order to glorify God and to benefit his fellowmen, man now exercises this dominion in sinful ways. He exploits natural resources without regard for the future: stripping forests without reforestation, growing crops without crop rotation, failing to take measures to prevent soil erosion. His factories pollute rivers and lakes, and his chimneys pollute the air—and nobody seems to care. His discovery of the secret of nuclear fission, instead of being a boon to humankind, has become a bone-chilling threat that hangs over our heads like a sword of Damocles. And in his cultural achievements—his literature, his art, his science, his technology—man's goal is to magnify himself instead of praising his God.

In all these ways, therefore, the image of God in man has been perverted after the Fall. The image is now malfunctioning—and yet it is still there. The loss of the image of God in the functional sense presupposes the retention of the image in the structural sense. To be a sinner one must be an image-bearer of God—one must be able to reason, to will, to make decisions; a dog, which does not possess the image of God, cannot sin. Man sins with God-imaging gifts.

In fact, the very greatness of man's sin consists in the fact that he is still an image-bearer of God. What makes sin so heinous is that man is prostituting such splendid gifts. *Corruptio optimi pessimal* the corruption of the best is the worst.

THE RENEWED IMAGE

Since the image of God has been perverted through man's fall into sin, it needs to be renewed. This renewal or restoration of the image is what takes place in the redemptive process. Does this restoration

39. *No Exit*, in *No Exit and Three Other Plays* (New York: Vintage Books, 1949), p. 47.

mean that an image that was utterly and totally lost is now given back? No; it is better to say that the image of God that has become perverted, though not totally lost, is being rectified, is being set straight again. What happens in the redemptive process is that man who was using his God-imaging powers in wrong ways is now again enabled to use these powers in right ways.

In Chapter 3 we noted the New Testament teaching about the restoration of the image of God in the process of redemption.⁴⁰ This restoration begins in regeneration, sometimes called "being born again"—an event that could be defined as "that act of the Holy Spirit, not to be separated from the preaching and teaching of the Word, whereby he initially brings a person into living union with Christ and changes his or her heart so that he or she who was spiritually dead becomes spiritually alive, now ready and willing to believe the gospel and to serve the Lord." The renewal of the image is continued in what the Bible calls the work of sanctification—which can be defined as "that gracious and continuing operation of the Holy Spirit, involving man's responsible participation, by which the Spirit progressively delivers the regenerated person from the pollution of sin, and enables him or her to live to the praise of God."

We should therefore note that the renewal of the image of God in man is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit. Since man, because of his fall into sin, is now spiritually dead, the Spirit must first give him new spiritual life in regeneration.⁴¹ Since fallen man now uses his God-imaging gifts in perverse ways, the Spirit must enable him to use these gifts in a God-glorifying way; this is what happens in the process of sanctification. Sanctification, therefore, ought to be understood as the progressive renewal of man in the image of God. This renewal, further, does not take place apart from the influence, through preaching, teaching, or study, of the word of God found in the Bible; by means of this word the Spirit instructs God's people on how they are to live in a new obedience, and enables them to live in this way.

In this renewal of the image we are once again enabled to live in love, in three directions: toward God, toward the neighbor, and toward nature. In other words, the renewal or restoration of the image of God means that man is once again empowered to function properly in his threefold relationship.

The renewal of the image, therefore, means first of all that man is now enabled to be properly directed toward God. This includes

40. See above, pp. 22-28.

41. Cf. Eph. 2:4-5, "But because of his great love for us, God . . . made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions."

worshiping God in the right way, praying to God for all his needs, and thanking God for all his blessings. It includes loving God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength (Mark 12:30). Since our most basic relationship is to God, the renewal of the image means that we are given strength to do whatever we do in obedience to God and for the glory of God. This includes using our rational powers in God-glorifying ways: to think God's thoughts after him, to discern behind the orderliness of nature the planning of an all-wise God, and to admire the wisdom with which the Creator has fashioned the universe. It includes using our volitional powers to will what God wants us to will, and to will nothing contrary to God's will. It includes using our aesthetic sense to appreciate the beauty God has lavished on his creation, and to praise the author of that beauty. It includes using our gift of speech in a God-glorifying way. It includes the ability to function in our relationship to our neighbors and in our relationship to nature in obedience and praise to God.

The renewal of the image means, in the second place, that man is now enabled to be properly directed toward the neighbor. This includes loving our neighbors as ourselves. It includes a readiness to forgive others when they sin against us. It includes praying for the neighbor, and being deeply concerned for his or her welfare. It means being concerned for social justice, for human rights, and for meeting the needs of the poor and destitute. It even includes loving our enemies, since, as Jesus said, this is an activity in which we are uniquely imaging God (Matt. 5:44-45). It implies loving the neighbor not because we find him so lovable, but because God loved him first.

The restoration of the image in this second relationship means that man is enabled to live for others rather than for himself or herself. It includes using all his gifts in the service of his fellowmen. This means using his rational and volitional powers to help him do what is for the neighbor's best interest. This means giving herself to her neighbor: sharing her joys and sorrows, helping her in time of need. It includes using the gift of speech not to run down the neighbor or ruin his reputation, but to maintain the neighbor's good name and to encourage him. It means resisting the temptation to look down upon a person because of the color of his or her skin, and being ready and eager to accept and respect people of different races and nationalities as fellow image-bearers of God. It includes using his or her creative and artistic abilities to create beauty in various artistic media, so that the lives of others might be enriched. As God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, we must so love our neighbors that we give ourselves to them.

The renewal of the image means, in the third place, that man is now enabled properly to rule over and care for God's creation. That is to say, he is now empowered to exercise dominion over the earth and over nature in a responsible, obedient, and unselfish way. This means that man is now enabled to look upon himself as a steward of the earth and all that is in it, rather than an overlord with absolute and completely arbitrary power. This includes holding property, tilling the soil, growing fruit trees, mining coal, and drilling for oil not for personal aggrandizement but in a responsible way, for the benefit and welfare of one's fellowmen. In our present world this also includes concern for the conservation of natural resources, and opposition to all wasteful or thoughtless exploitation of those resources. It includes concern for the preservation of the environment and for the prevention of whatever hurts that environment: erosion, wanton destruction of animal species, pollution of air and water. It includes concern for adequate distribution of food, the prevention of famine, and the improvement of sanitation. It also embraces the advancement of scientific investigation, research, and experimentation, including the continuing conquest of space, in such a way as to honor God's commands and to give him the praise.

This further includes concern for the development of a Christian culture, as the proper fulfillment of the so-called cultural mandate. In other words, we should attempt to do philosophical, scientific, historical, and literary work in a uniquely Christian way. This also includes concern for the development of a Christian world-and-life view, which will influence all that man thinks, says, and does.

The renewal of the image of God, therefore, involves a broad, comprehensive vision of the Christian view of man. The process of sanctification affects every aspect of life: man's relationship to God, to others, and to the entire creation. The restoration of the image does not concern only religious piety in the narrow sense, or witnessing to people about Christ, or "soul-saving" activities; in its fullest sense it involves the redirection of all of life.

The renewal of the image of God is described in the New Testament in various ways. One of these we have already looked at: the "taking off" of the old self and the "putting on" of the new self.⁴² Other figures, however, are also used. This new life means holding fast the word in an honest and good heart, bringing forth fruit with patience (cf. Luke 8:15, RSV). The new life means being transformed by the renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2). It means living by the Spirit and producing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 22). It means

42. See above, pp. 24-28.

living a life of love (Eph. 5:2), walking in the truth (2 John 4), living not for self but for Christ (2 Cor. 5:15).

Being renewed in the image of God means, further, that we become more and more like God, that God becomes more and more visible in our words and deeds. Since God is love (1 John 4:16), our living in love is an imitation of God.

Because Christ is the perfect image of God, becoming more like God also means becoming more like Christ. This means following Christ's example, trying to live as he lived. But there is more to say about this. Galatians 3:27 calls the putting on of the new self or the new person putting on or clothing ourselves with Christ (cf. Rom. 13:14). To put on Christ means new existence as a member of Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:12-13); the believer therefore images God as one who belongs to the body of that Christ who is uniquely God's image.⁴³

This suggests that the renewal of the image has an ecclesiastical aspect. It does not concern individuals in isolation; it has to do with believers as members of Christ, and therefore with the church that Christ is sanctifying (Eph. 5:26). This means that the image of God today is seen in its richest form in Christ together with his church, or in the church as the body of Christ.⁴⁴ But this also implies that the restoration of the image of God in man takes place in the church, through the fellowship of Christians with each other. Believers learn what Christ-likeness is by observing it in fellow Christians. We see the love of Christ reflected in the lives of our fellow believers; we are enriched by Christ through our contact with them; we hear Christ speaking to us through them. Believers are inspired by the examples of their fellow Christians, sustained by their prayers, corrected by their loving admonitions, and encouraged by their support.

So far we have been speaking about the renewal of the image of God as the result of God's enablement, as a fruit of the Holy Spirit's work in the hearts and lives of believers. It is important to remember, however, that the renewal of the image involves both the Spirit's gracious working within and the responsibility of man. In other words, this renewal is both God's gift and our task.

We have touched on this point already. In Chapter 2 I pointed out that because man is a creature, God in his sovereign grace must restore the divine image in him, but because man is also a person he has a responsibility in this restoration. In Chapter 3 we examined

43. Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John R. De Witt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 225. Cf. F. W. Eltester, *Eikon im Neuen Testament* (Berlin: Topelmann, 1958), p. 159.

44. Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, 1:578.

scriptural evidence which showed that our being transformed into the image of God in the process of sanctification is both the work of the Holy Spirit and something that involves our own efforts.⁴⁵

Without repeating what was said before, we may note some other ways in which the Bible emphasizes both facets of this truth. In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 Paul expresses the following wish for his believing readers: "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through." But in another letter, written to the Corinthians, he writes, "Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" (2 Cor. 7:1). The interesting thing about this passage is that the last clause literally reads "bringing holiness to its goal" (*epitelountes*, from the word *telos*, meaning "goal"). Although usually we think of God as the one who will bring our holiness to its goal, here believers are enjoined to do exactly that. Whereas in Romans 6:6 Paul says, "We know that our old self was crucified with him [Christ]," in Colossians 3:9 he says, "Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices." The first passage states that the crucifixion or putting to death of our old self is something that was done for us when Christ died on the cross, but the second passage tells us that the putting off of our old self is something we have done. Further, while Paul assures his readers that "neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God" (Rom. 8:38-39), the writer of the Epistle of Jude enjoins his believing readers to "keep yourselves in God's love" (v. 21).

Perfecting holiness, taking off the old self, and keeping ourselves in the love of God are all ways in which the renewal of the image of God takes place. Other New Testament injunctions to live the new life similarly underscore the believer's responsibility in this renewal: "Let your light . . . shine before men" (Matt. 5:16); "Live a life worthy, of the calling you have received" (Eph. 4:1); "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). The passage that sums it all up has already been quoted: "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children" (Eph. 5:1).

From passages of this sort emerges a view of the image of God that is not static but dynamic. The image of God in the New Testament is not like a museum piece that is there simply to be admired; rather, it is more like a living example that we are urged to follow—the example of Christ. New Testament teachings about the image are

45. See above, pp. 8-10, 28-30.

not so much like a professor's lecture that we are trying to copy into a notebook; they are more like the words of a coach who is trying to help us play a better game. The image of God and its renewal challenge us to a new way of thinking, talking, and living. At the heart of this renewal is a summons to love as God loves.

The renewal of the image of God, therefore, is not an experience in which we remain passive, but one in which we must take an active part. But—and this deserves emphasis—this renewal is still *primarily* the work of the Holy Spirit. We are not able to renew ourselves in our own strength. The image of God can be restored in us only as we remain in union with Christ. Christ himself put this very clearly: "If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit [another figure for the renewal of the image]; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

This renewal of the image, as we observed before,⁴⁶ is not completed during a person's lifetime. It is a process that continues as long as one lives. We must never forget that while they are in this present life believers are *genuinely* new but not yet *totally* new. They are incomplete new persons.

This implies that we do not yet see the image of God in its fullest sense on this side of the final resurrection. To be sure, we see that image fully in Jesus Christ as he is revealed to us on the pages of Holy Writ. But Christ no longer walks the earth. And on this earth, even in those who are being renewed, we see the image of God only as "through a glass, darkly." What we see now are only hints and intimations of what the renewed image of God will be like. Only in the life to come will the full richness of the image finally come into view; only then shall we see God imaged perfectly and scintillatingly by a glorified humankind. To that perfection of the image we now turn.

THE PERFECTED IMAGE

It is not until the time of the final glorification of man that the renewal of the image of God will be brought to completion. This final perfection of the image will be the culmination of God's plan for his redeemed people. We are reminded again of Romans 8:29, "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son"—totally conformed, we may be sure. And the likeness of God's Son is nothing less than the perfected image of God.

In order to see the Christian view of man in its total brilliance, therefore, we must not just go back to man as he was originally cre-

46. See above, pp. 30-31.

ated; rather, we must go forward to man as he will some day be. We must see man in the light of his final destiny. For, as was mentioned earlier, Christ through his redemptive work brings us higher than Adam was before the Fall. Adam could still lose his sinlessness and blessedness, but the glorified saints will no longer be able to do so. Adam was "able not to sin and die" (*posse non peccare et mori*), but the saints in glory will "not be able to sin and die" (*non posse peccare et mori*). This unlosable perfection is what man is destined for—and nothing less!

One may ask, however, How do we know that the final state of redeemed man is one in which he will "not be able to sin and die"? Scripture clearly teaches that there will be no death in the life to come: "He [God] will swallow up death forever" (Isa. 25:8); "The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable" (1 Cor. 15:42); "When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory' " (1 Cor. 15:54); "There will be no more death" (Rev. 21:4).

Further, a number of New Testament passages teach that glorified saints will be sinless in the life to come. In Ephesians 5:27 Paul affirms that Christ's ultimate purpose for the church is "to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." The author of Hebrews tells his readers, with an obvious reference to deceased believers who are now in heaven awaiting the resurrection, "You have come [as those who are members of 'the church of the firstborn'] to the spirits of righteous men made perfect" (Heb. 12:23). John sees the Holy City or the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, and describes it as being "prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband"—a reference to the final perfection of the glorified church (Rev. 21:3). This perfected church, John says further, will be permitted to go through the gates into the city of God's glorified people on the new earth, whereas those who have not been perfected will have no part in it: "Outside are . . . the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood" (Rev. 22:14-15).

The perfection of the image of God in man is intimately connected with the glorification of Christ. Since Christ and his people are one, his people will also share in his glorification. The final perfection of the image, therefore, will not only be brought about by Christ; it will also be patterned after Christ. In the life to come we shall "bear the likeness of the man of heaven" (1 Cor. 15:49). In the resurrection our "lowly bodies" (lit., "the bodies of our humiliation") will be transformed so that they will be like "his glorious body" (lit.,

"the body of his glory"; Phil. 3:21). So we shall be totally like the glorified Christ, not only in our spirits but even in our bodies. The apostle John sums it all up: "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he [presumably Christ] appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

As we continue to reflect on the future perfection of the image, we realize that it is impossible for us to visualize in an exact or precise way what that perfected image will be like. We may, to be sure, find analogies between our present life and our future existence. But they will be only analogies and no more. How can we know exactly what it will be like to be glorified—to have what Paul calls a "spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44)? We shall only be able to speak about that future existence in figurative language, as the Bible does, particularly in the Book of Revelation. But insofar as this figurative language can be translated into anthropological concepts, it gives us a picture of man in which his functioning in the previously mentioned threefold relationship is brought to its final perfection.

This perfection will concern, first and most importantly, our relation to God. Man will then be wholly directed toward God. We shall then worship, obey, and serve God faultlessly, without any imperfection. Praise and adoration of God will then be as natural and constant as breathing is now. The Book of Revelation suggests what some of those praises may sound like: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty" (15:3);⁴⁷ "Hallelujah! for our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!" (19:6-7). The nations (here, presumably, the glorified saints) will walk by God's light (Rev. 21:24), and no longer by their own understanding. The servants of God will serve him (Rev. 22:3)—no longer fragmentarily, inadequately, and sinfully, but perfectly.

The perfection of the image will also concern our relation to our neighbors. Man will then love and serve his fellowmen perfectly; whatever hindrances to such loving now exist will then be gone. There will then be perfect fellowship in a perfect society. All the barriers that now separate people will be gone—national, racial, linguistic, cultural, or religious. There will then be only one church, of which Christ will be the head. There will then be only one "nation," of which Christ will be the king. All dwellers on the new earth will be members of the family of God, bound to each other with intimate and

47. When my wife and I were traveling in Switzerland some years ago, we were thrilled to find these words on a plaque erected at the spot from which one could see the majestic Matter horn!

unbreakable ties. Yet in the midst of this oneness there will still be many differences. Glorified believers will not all be alike, as peas in a pod. They will retain their unique talents and gifts, purged of all imperfection—talents that will be used for the enrichment of all. As a symphony orchestra produces a unified sound from many different instruments, so the fellowship of the life to come will be marked by unity in the midst of great but harmonious diversity.

In the third place, the perfection of the image will concern our relationship to nature. In the beginning man was given the so-called cultural mandate—the command to rule over the earth and to develop a God-glorifying culture. Because of man's fall into sin, not even believers have carried out that cultural mandate in the way God intended it to be done. Only on the new earth will that mandate be perfectly and sinlessly fulfilled.

One of the promises given to believers is that they shall some day reign with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12). In Revelation 22:5 we are even told that glorified believers will reign forever. And in the song of redemption in the same book the point is specifically made that this reigning will take place on the earth (Rev. 5:10).

How are we to understand this? The Heidelberg Catechism, perhaps the best-known Reformation creed, gives us the clue: it will be a reigning by glorified believers *over all creation*.** In the life to come resurrected and glorified saints will not be flitting from cloud to cloud somewhere off in space, but will be living on a renewed earth.⁴⁸ Then for the first time man will rule over and care for nature in the way God intended him to do. Human beings will then be stewards, not exploiters, of the earth, exploring its resources and admiring its beauties in a way that will bring unending praise to God.⁴⁹ We shall then reign perfectly over all creation, with and under Christ.

Revelation 21:24-26 tells us that "the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it [the holy city that will be found on the new earth]," and that "the glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it." These fascinating words suggest that the best contributions of each nation will enrich life on the new earth, and that whatever potentialities and gifts have been of value in this present life will somehow, in some way, be retained and enriched in the life to come. This implies that there will be continuity as well as discontinuity between the present life and the life to come, and that therefore our

48. Heidelberg Catechism, Answer 32: "and afterward to reign with Christ over all creation for all eternity" (1975 trans., Christian Reformed Church).

49. For a fuller statement of biblical teaching on the new earth, see my *The Bible and the Future*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), chap. 20.

50. Cf. the so-called song of creation in Rev. 4:11.

cultural, scientific, educational, and political endeavors today help us to prepare for a fuller and richer life on the new earth.⁵¹

The possibilities that now rise before us boggle the mind. Will there be "better Beethoven in heaven," as one author has suggested?⁵² Shall we see better Rembrandts, better Raphaels, better Constables? Shall we read better poetry, better drama, and better prose? Will scientists continue to advance in technological achievement, will geologists continue to explore the treasures of the earth, and will architects continue to build imposing and attractive structures? We do not know. But what we do know is that man's dominion over nature shall then be perfect. God will then be magnified by our culture in ways that will surpass our most fantastic dreams.

In the life to come, therefore, the threefold relationship for which man was created will be maintained, deepened, and infinitely enriched. We shall then love God above all, love our neighbors as ourselves, and rule over creation in a totally God-glorifying way. The image of God in man will then have been perfected.

It might be helpful at this point to summarize briefly in what the image of God consists, as a brief synopsis of this chapter. The image of God, we found, describes not just something that man *has*, but something man *is*. It means that human beings both mirror and represent God. Thus, there is a sense in which the image includes the physical body. The image of God, we found further, includes both a structural and a functional aspect (sometimes called the broader and narrower image), though we must remember that in the biblical view structure is secondary, while function is primary. The image must be seen in man's threefold relationship: toward God, toward others, and toward nature. When originally created, humans imaged God sinlessly in all three relationships. After the Fall the image of God was not annihilated but perverted, so that human beings now function wrongly in each of the three relationships. In the process of redemption, however, the image is being renewed, so that man is now enabled to be properly directed toward God, others, and nature. The renewal of the image of God is seen in its richest form in the church. The image is therefore not static but dynamic—a constant challenge to God-glorifying living. In the life to come the image of God will be perfected; glorified human beings will then live perfectly in all three relationships. After the resurrection, redeemed man will be in a higher state

51. Cf. Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christ the Meaning of History*, trans. L. Buurman (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), pp. 188-92. For a fuller treatment of this point, see Richard Mouw, *When the Kings Come Marching In* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

52. Edwin H. Palmer, "Better Beethoven in Heaven?", *Christianity Today*, Feb. 16, 1979, p. 29.

than man before the Fall, since he will then no longer be able either to sin or to die.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

A few concluding observations about the image of God may still be made. First, *we must always see man in the light of his destiny*. This is an important point to remember. As we think about man we must see him not just as he is now but also as he may some day become. So far we have dealt with the future of the image of God only in terms of those who are believers. The Bible clearly teaches that the future of the person who is in Christ is everlasting life in a glorified resurrection body—the perfected image. But that same Bible also teaches that the future of the person who rejects Christ and continues to live in rebellion against God without repentance or faith is eternal perdition.⁵³ We must therefore live with ourselves and with each other in the light of that future destiny.

The possibility of future perdition for those who are not in Christ should constrain us to cut off the offending hand or to pluck out the offending eye, as Jesus counseled us to do, rather than to spend eternity in hell. The thought of such a future destiny for people whom our lives touch should be a strong incentive for us to witness to them about Christ and his salvation. At the same time the prospect of "the glory that will be revealed in us" should help us to bear "our present sufferings" with patience (Rom. 8:18), and encourage us to "press on toward the goal" (Phil. 3:14). And the thought that our brothers and sisters in Christ are likewise on their way to ultimate perfection should help us to think of them not just as poor, stumbling sinners who have many irksome faults but rather as those who shall some day shine as the sun.

C. S. Lewis expresses this thought vividly and concretely:

It is a serious thing . . . to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. . . .

53. See, e.g., Matt. 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 18:8-9; 25:46; Mark 9:43; John 3:36; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rom. 2:5, 8-9; Heb. 10:28-29, 31; 2 Pet. 2:17; Jude 7, 13; Rev. 14:10-11; 21:8. For a discussion of these passages, see *The Bible and the Future*, chap. 19.

It is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.⁵⁴

A second observation is this: *Man and woman together are the image of God.* We have already made the point, in Chapter 3, that man's having been created male and female is an essential aspect of the image of God. Karl Barth, as we saw, lays great stress on this point: man's existence as male and female is not something secondary to the image, but is at the very heart of the image of God. This is so not just because of the difference in sex between man and woman—since this distinction is found also among the animals—but because of far-reaching differences in personality between the two. Man's existence as male and female means that man as a masculine being has been created for partnership with another being who is essentially like him but yet mysteriously unlike him. It means that woman is the completion of man's own humanity, and that man is wholly himself only in his relationship with woman.⁵⁵

This implies that man is not the image of God by himself, and that woman cannot be the image of God by herself. Man and woman can only image God through fellowship with each other—a fellowship that is an analogy of the fellowship God has within himself. The New Testament teaches that God exists as a Trinity of "Persons"—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁵⁶ Human fellowship, as between man and woman, reflects or images the fellowship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And yet there is a difference. For persons as we know them are separate beings or entities, whereas God is three "Persons" in one Divine Being. Human fellowship, therefore, is only a partial analogy of divine fellowship—yet it is an analogy.⁵⁷

It is therefore unfortunate that the English language has no word like the German *Mensch* or the Dutch word *mens*, both of which mean "human being, whether male or female." The English word *man* has to serve a double purpose: it may mean either (1) "male or female human being" (the generic sense) or (2) "male human being." This double use of the word *man* seems to betray a typical masculine kind of arrogance, as if the male is the carrier of all that is involved in being human. But man can only be fully human in fellowship and partnership with woman; woman complements and completes man, as man complements and completes woman.⁵⁸ When we use the word *man* in

54. C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), pp. 14-15.

55. Cf. Paul Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 38-39.

56. Cf. Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14.

57. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, p. 45.

58. H. Berkhof, *De Mens Ondenog*, pp. 34-35.

the generic sense, therefore (as is often done in this book), we must always keep this in mind.

The fact that man and woman together image God will still be true in the life to come. Jesus once said, "When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven" (Mark 12:25). The similarity to angels, however, means only that there will be no marriage at that time; it does not mean that the differences between men and women will no longer exist. In the final resurrection we shall not lose our individuality; that individuality will be not only retained but enriched, and our maleness or femaleness is of the essence of that individual existence.⁵⁹

In the life to come, therefore, not only shall we continue to image God as men and women together, but we shall then be able to do this perfectly. We do not know how such fellowship and partnership between men and women will be carried out in a situation where there will be no marriage. But we do know this: Only then shall we see what the relationship between men and women can be like in its richest, fullest, and most beautiful sense.

Third, *the doctrine of the image of God has important implications for the evangelistic task of the church.* Though, as we have seen, the Bible teaches that man's fall into sin has seriously perverted the image of God in him, it also teaches that fallen man is still to be regarded as an image-bearer of God.⁶⁰ This fact implies that we must look upon every person, whoever he or she may be, of whatever nationality or race, of whatever social or economic status, whether Christian or non-Christian, as a person who is in the image of God. This is what is unique about human beings; this is what gives them dignity and worth. Even a person who is living a disreputable life, who has become an outcast from society, who has not a friend in the world—even such a person still bears God's image, and that image we must honor. Because everyone whom we meet is an image-bearer of God, we may not curse him or her (James 3:9), but we must love that person and do him or her good.

John Calvin, who was as deeply aware of the sinfulness and unworthiness of man as anyone has ever been, expressed this same thought in a striking way:

We are not to consider that men merit of themselves but to look upon the image of God in all men, to which we owe all honor and love. . . . Therefore, whatever man you meet who needs your aid, you have no reason to refuse to help him. . . . Say, "he is contemptible and worthless";

59. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, pp. 40-43.

60. See above, pp. 15-20.

but the Lord shows him to be one to whom he has deigned to give the beauty of his image. ... Say that he does not deserve even your least effort for his sake; but the image of God, which recommends him to you, is worthy of your giving yourself and all your possessions."

As the church does its evangelistic or missionary work, it must keep alive the conviction that every person on this earth is an image-bearer of God. Every person whom we encounter as we seek to bring the gospel is someone who bears God's image. He or she is therefore a person in whom we should respect and recognize that image. If this person is outside of Christ, he or she has been using God-imaging gifts in the service of sin. Though this person is now, because of his or her sinful life-style, unworthy in God's sight, he or she is not worthless. God can still use that person in his service. God can by his transforming power enable him to use his God-reflecting talents to the praise of his Creator. Because she has been created in the image of God, there are tremendous potentialities in this person. Therefore we now bring the gospel, urging him or her to be reconciled to God in the hope that these potentialities may yet bear fruit for God's kingdom. Our concern, then, in evangelizing people is not just to "save people's souls," but to restore the image of God to its proper functioning in all of life, to the greater glory of God.

In the life to come the fruits of the church's evangelistic and missionary work will be fully revealed. Then God will be honored in the final gathering together of those whom Christ has purchased by his blood out of every tribe and nation. Then the gifts and talents of all those blood-bought saints will be used everlastingly to God's praise. Our evangelistic and missionary work should be done with a view to that great future.

A fourth and final observation is this: *the image of God in its totality can only be seen in humankind as a whole*. Herman Bavinck has effectively stated this point:

Not the individual man, and not even man and woman together, but mankind as a whole is the fully developed image of God. ... The image of God is far too rich to be completely represented by a single human being, no matter how gifted he might be. That image can only be disclosed in its depth and riches in the whole of humanity with its millions of members. As the traces of God [*vestigia Dei*] are spread out over many works of God, both in space and time, so the image of God can only be seen in its totality in a humanity whose members exist both after and next to each other. ... To that humanity belong its development, its history, its expanding mastery of the earth, its advancement in knowledge and an, and its dominion over all other creatures. All of this is an un-

folding of the image and likeness of God according to which man was created. Just as God has not revealed himself only at the time of creation but continues and enlarges that revelation from day to day and from age to age, so it is also with the image of God: it is no unchangeable magnitude but one which unfolds and develops itself in the forms of space and time.⁶²

To this may be added a recent comment by Richard Mouw:

One of the more fascinating proposals which has been made in theological discussions of the biblical notion of "the image of God" is that this image has a "corporate" dimension. That is, there is no one human individual or group who can fully bear or manifest all that is involved in the image of God, so that there is a sense in which that image is collectively possessed. The image of God is, as it were, parceled out among the peoples of the earth. By looking at different individuals and groups we get glimpses of different aspects of the full image of God.⁶³

This implies that we can only see the full riches of the image of God as we take into account all of human history and all of man's diverse cultural contributions. Whatever great artists, scientists, philosophers, and the like have added to our store of knowledge, art, and technological achievements reflects the greatness of the God who has endowed humankind with all these gifts. We could even put it this way: whatever is in God—his virtues, his wisdom, his perfections—finds its analogy and likeness in man, though in a finite and limited form. Of all of God's creatures, the human person is the highest and most complete revelation of God.⁶⁴ "The proper study of mankind is man," said Alexander Pope; but when we study man we are also learning about the majesty of God.

This means that we must not look down upon the contributions of different groups of people from various nationalities and races; rather, we must welcome these contributions as adding to our enrichment. A proper appreciation of the doctrine of the image of God, therefore, should rule out all racism—all denigration of races other than our own, as if they were inferior to us. God made all human beings in his image, and all of them can enlighten and enrich us. "The idea of man as made in the image of God demands . . . today a deliberate transcending of national and class barriers."⁶⁵

Even those who live in rebellion against God and who do their cultural work without consciously praising God reflect God through

62. *Dogmatiek*, 2:621-22 [trans, mine].

63. *When the Kings*, p. 47.

64. Bavinck, *Dogmatiek*, 2:603-4.

65. Jiirgen Moltmann, *Man*, trans. John Sturdy (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 111.

the gifts he has given them—gifts for which we may thank the Lord. But those in whom the image of God is being renewed reveal that image voluntarily and self-consciously. In this renewal of the lives of God's people we see the image of God far more fully than we do in the contributions of non-Christians. We see God's image in its greater richness and wider splendor only as we look at the Christian community throughout the ages and throughout the world—in other words, in the universal church.⁶⁶ When we look at great saints of the past and of the present—the apostle Paul, Francis of Assisi, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Mother Teresa, and Billy Graham, to mention just a few—we see what God is like. And when we taste the joys of Christian fellowship in a group of believers where there is "total acceptance, honest sharing, and genuine loving,"⁶⁷ we see a reflection of God's love for us.

In the life to come we shall see the image of God not only in its perfection but also in its completion. All of God's people, from every age and every place, resurrected and glorified, will then be present on the new earth, with all the God-reflecting gifts that have been given them. And all of these gifts, now completely purged of sin and imperfection, will be used by man for the first time in a perfect way. Then, throughout eternity, God will be glorified by the worship, service, and praise of his image-bearers in a scintillating and totally flawless reflection of his own marvelous virtues. And the purpose for which he created humankind will have been accomplished.

66. Note in this connection Calvin's comment on John 13:34, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." Calvin says: "Love is, indeed, extended to those outside, for we are all of the same flesh and are all created in the image of God. But because the image of God shines more brightly in the regenerate, it is proper that the bond of love should be much closer among the disciples of Christ" (*Comm. on John*, Parker trans. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979], *ad loc*).

67. Marion Leach Jacobsen, *Saints and Snobs* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1972), pp. 28-29.