

HUMANITY

“in the image of God”

Key question

What does it mean to be a human being made in God’s image?

Key text

Genesis 1:26-27

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the earth, 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.’ so God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Key Definition

Humanity

Man is a unique, living, physical being created in the spiritual image of God for the purpose of glorifying God as a caretaker of the creation and as an eternal participant in heaven with Christ.

Introduction

1. In Psalm 8 the question is asked, “What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him?” The answer is that “he is made a little lower than God.” It is significant that man is defined in reference to God not in reference to lower forms of animal life over which he is to have dominion.
2. There are three basic philosophical questions that have long puzzled man.
 - a. Who am I?
 - b. Why am I here?
 - c. What does it mean to be fully human?
3. What do the following statements suggest about the nature of man?
 - “I’ll see it when I believe it.”
 - “You have nothing to fear but fear itself.”
 - “You can be whatever you choose to be.”

- “We are all victims of our environment and biology.”
- 4. One of the first issues addressed in the Bible is the nature of man.
- 5. In this section we need to understand three things.
 - a. Humanity is complex.
 - b. Humanity is blessed with a unique dignity - the image of God.
 - c. Humanity suffers from depravity - every part of the human being is flawed.
- 6. The basic phenomena that the various theories about the nature of man seek to explain can be summarized under these headings.
 - a. Man is linked biologically to non-human forms of life.
 - b. Man suffers pain.
 - c. Man aspires to eternal life and has a God consciousness.
 - d. Man is capable of complex communication and moral reasoning.
 - e. Man affects and is affected by his environment.
- 7. “Both the ancient Hebrews and the ancient Greeks saw the distance between man and the divine, but they described it in very different ways. The Greeks lowered their deities by ascribing to them human passions and failings. The Hebrews articulated an elevated view of man, as a sharing, to some extent, in the powers of a transcendent, omnipotent, and benevolent God.” Robert George associate editor of *Touchstone*.

A. The study of humanity is a logical starting point for any search for truth.

1. Five reasons to study humanity.
 - a. When Jesus was tested with a coin that bore the image of Caesar and was asked, “Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar?” He replied, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” (Matt.22:17). The implication being that we who bear the image of God in our nature belong to God just as the coin belongs to Caesar in that it bears his image.
 - b. “Self” is the starting point of all normal inquiry and the Biblical story is addressed to the dilemma of human nature.
 - c. Understanding and solving social problems requires an understanding of human nature.
 - d. Ministry to people’s needs requires an understanding of human nature.
 - e. If God could take on human form (as He did), it is significant to our understanding of humanity.
2. Human nature has been understood in several different contexts.

Principle	Valid observation	Erroneous extension
Man as animal	Genetics play a role in human behavior.	Man differs from animals only in degree - behaviorist psychology.
Man as machine	Creativity and productivity are important parts of our identity.	Man is a tool in the hands of society to make money - Marx.
Man as free agent	Free agency is fundamental to ethics.	Humans can determine their fate simply by willing the right thing.
Man as product of society	Our environment influences us all.	Contingency is comprehensive.

Man as spirit being	We have a spiritual source bigger than ourselves.	Pantheism - we are one spirit with nature.
---------------------	---	--

SECULAR HUMANISM is defining reality and living your life as though God doesn't exist. Liberal-humanism is the belief that the world is other than it should be and that humans have the power (in reason and action) to change the world so that the inner potential of all human beings can be more fully realized.

3. What is it that gives us our worth?
 - a. God created us in His image with unique qualities not shared by animals.
 1. Self Awareness
 2. Moral Conscience
 3. Creative Imagination
 4. Autonomous Will to act
 - b. God commissioned us to have dominion over creation.
 1. The reformers called this the "cultural mandate."
 2. This commission involved the right to consume as well as conserve.
 3. This also became the basis of modern science including medical technology. Man was to understand, develop, and use the creation.
 - c. God became one with us.
 1. The incarnation provided a model of perfect humanity.
 2. The incarnation showed us that God could relate to us on a personal level.
 - d. God sacrificed His Son for our redemption.
 - e. God made us temples of His Spirit.
 - f. God's image in us will be expressed in lives that are:
 1. **Reliable** – they will tell the truth and honor their word.
 2. **Relational** – they will interact with others in a mutually edifying way.
 3. **Realistic** – they will live in touch with the real world.
 4. **Respectable** – they will be highly regarded by those who know them.
 5. **Responsible** – they will have proper boundaries in their lives.
 6. **Resourceful** – they will be able to creatively face life's problems.
 7. **Relaxed** – they will be at peace with themselves and others.
 8. **Reasonable** – they will be logical and full of common sense.
 9. **Responsive** – they will care for the needs of others.

B. A correct understanding of the origin of humanity is important in that it sets the stage for all other understanding of mankind.

1. The references to Adam in Rom.5:12-21 and I Cor. 15:21-22 seem to suggest that the historicity of Adam is important.
 - a. This is supported by the inclusion of Adam in Biblical genealogies along with Moses, Jesus, etc.
 - b. Biological science has uncovered evidence that suggests a single source (an Eve) of all human DNA.

2. Five popular views of human origin.
 - a. **Naturalistic evolution** - Immanent processes within nature have produced man and all else that exists.
 - b. **Fiat Creationism** - God, by a direct act, brought into being virtually instantaneously everything that is.
 - c. **Deistic evolution** - God began or programmed the process of evolution.
 - d. **Theistic evolution** - God guided the evolutionary process.
 - e. **Progressive creationism** - God supernaturally created the major kinds of life forms from which related forms evolved. This is the view that seems most plausible.
3. If we identify humans with sophisticated language, then Adam probably lived 30,000 years ago (if we follow modern dating methods).
4. What is the meaning of human creation?
 - a. Man has no independent existence. He exists in context. He should be asking the question, why am I here?
 - b. Man is a part of creation. He is a part of the web of life.
 - c. Man has a unique place in the creation. He is above other forms of animal life and has responsibility for conserving the creation.
 - d. There is a brotherhood among humans.
 - e. There are definite limitations upon man because he is a mortal creature.
 - f. Humanity is capable of sharing fellowship with God.

C. **The image of God in man is what gives humanity its great dignity.**

1. Biblical references
 - **Gen.1:26-27** “then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the earth, 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.’ so god created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”
 - **Gen.9:6** “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image.”
 - **I Cor.11:7** “For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man.”
 - **Jas.3:9** “With (the tongue) we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God.”
 - **Acts 17:28** “In him we live and move and have our being; as even some of your poets have said, ‘For we are indeed his offspring.’”
 - **Rom.8:29** “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren.”
 - **II Cor.3:18** “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”
2. What is the meaning of “the image of God?”
 - a. Four views

1. **Substantive view** - The image of God consists in a definite physical, psychological, and/or spiritual characteristic within the nature of man.

The Mormon church teaches that God has a physical body. Thomas Aquinas believed that the image of God was reason. Irenaeus taught that the “image” of God had to do with reason and free will while “likeness” had to do with the later sanctification of the Spirit. Luther and Calvin believed that the image and likeness was marred by the fall.

2. **Relational view** - Only when we have faith in Jesus Christ do we fully possess the image of God.

We experience the image of God when we are in relationship with God and others. This was the view of Brunner and Barth.

3. **Reformed view** - the image of God in man is man’s conscious propensities and man’s true knowledge.

Part of the image of God in man is obscured, but not destroyed by sin; and part of God’s “moral image” is lost to man as the result of sin but is restored by Christ.

4. **Functional view** - The image of God consists in what man does.

The image of God has to do with the cultural mandate to rule over the creation.

b. Basic observations

1. “*Image*” (Hebrew - TSELEM) - exact copy or physical representation.

2. “*likeness*” (Hebrew - DEMUT) - resemblance or spiritual similarity .

Note: It has been suggested that we were created in God’s image and through Christ are being sanctified or conformed to his likeness.

3. The first thing that is said about mankind is that he is a spiritual being - distinct from the rest of created life.
4. What makes mankind unique from all lower forms of animal life is his religious nature and capacity for a covenant relationship with God. (Not that he is a bipedal, tool-maker with language and a certain brain size.)
5. The image is substantive or structural.
6. The image is related to the fulfillment of human destiny.
7. The image is the ability to commune with God (fellowship, obedience, love).
8. The image is universal among humans.
9. The fall did not remove the image of God.
10. The image is not greater in one person over another.
11. The image is not to be correlated with certain activity - dominion, reason, etc.
12. Male and Female together bear God’s image. There is something in the drama, role, and dynamic of husband and wife that reflects the character and relationship of God and the church (Eph.5).

c. Implication of the doctrine

1. We belong to God.
2. Jesus is our model for bearing the image of God.
3. We experience full humanity only when we are related to God.
4. Reason (learning) and work (dominion) are good.
5. Humanity is sacred.
6. All humans bear God’s image.

D. **The constitutional nature of mankind can be understood in three ways.**

1. **Trichotomism** - Humans are composed of three elements.
 - a. **A physical body** - this is similar to that of animals.
NOTE: Aquinas spoke of three levels of human biological nature
 1. The **Generic** – instinctual impulses that we share with animals
 2. The **Specific** - rational ability to step outside ourselves and make free moral choices
 3. The **Temperamental** – our unique human temperaments or style preferences.
 - b. **A soul** - psychological element, basis of reason, emotion, and social inter relatedness. Animals have a rudimentary soul.
 - c. **A spirit** - the ability to respond to spiritual stimuli. It makes us uniquely image bearers of God's nature.
 - d. Scriptural support
 - **I Thess.5:23** “May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”
 - I Cor.2:14-3:4; Heb.4:12.
2. **Dichotomism** - Humans are composed of two elements. (This view is the closest to reality in my judgment.)
 - a. A **material** part - the physical body.
 - b. An **immaterial** part - the soul or the spirit.
 - c. Scripture seems to use the terms “soul” and “spirit” to refer to the same entity.
 1. Dichotomy is expressed in -
 - **Matt.10:28** “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”
 - **Jas.2:26** “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”
 - Matt.6:25, Eccl.12:7, I Cor.5:3,5.
 2. Eccl.3:21 refers to the spirit of the beast suggesting that the term is not unique to humans.
 3. Lk.1:46-47 “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” (parallelism)
 - d. The immaterial elements of humanity.
 1. **Soul** - The Hebrew word for soul (nephesh) means “life.” The Greek word (psyche) is used to describe the whole person (Acts 2:41) or just the immaterial part of a person (Matt.10:28). It seems to be the principal focus of redemption (Heb.10:39). “Man is a living soul.”
 2. **Spirit** - The Hebrew and Greek words for spirit (ruach & pnuma) refer only to the immaterial part of humans. Paul gives the spirit of humanity a prominent part in the spiritual life. “Man has a spirit.”
 3. **Heart** - In both testaments the word is used to describe, not so much the physical organ, but the core of one's inner life.
 4. **Conscience** - This is a witness within humans telling them what they ought to do based on what they have learned. The conscience can be a good guide or a bad guide depending on how it has developed.

4. **Monism** - Humanity is one unit that cannot be easily dissected without doing violence to human nature. This was the pattern of Hebrew thought where the concept of soul, body, etc. are often interchangeable. Today this view is associated with a materialistic philosophy that tends to reduce everything to brain, chemistry, atoms, space, and energy.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948

On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights the full text of which appears in the following pages. Following this historic act the Assembly called upon all Member countries to publicize the text of the Declaration and "to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions, without distinction based on the political status of countries or territories."

PREAMBLE

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts, which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2.

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of

any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3.

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4.

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5.

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6.

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7.

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8.

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10.

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11.

(1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.

(2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13.

- (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
- (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14.

- (1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
- (2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15.

- (1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.
- (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16.

- (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
- (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
- (3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17.

- (1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
- (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18.

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20.

- (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
- (2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21.

- (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
- (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22.

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23.

(1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

(2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

(3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

(4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24.

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25.

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26.

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27.

(1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

(2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28.

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29.

(1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his

personality is possible.

(2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

(3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30.

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

Pastoral advice

Is there a place for Christian humanism?

1. The Christian doctrine of man is fundamental to true humanism in that it explains both the dignity and depravity of man. Christians should be Biblical humanists.
2. Secular humanism tends to ignore the immaterial part of man and the image bearing nature of man. It should be challenged on that level.
3. Our love for God will be seen in our ability to see the image bearing quality in all humanity. We should stand in awe of our fellowman and not just be overwhelmed by the depravity of sinners.

Questions that you should be able to answer.

1. **Specific facts you should know.**
 - a. What Biblical text best describes man's nature?
 - b. What is the basis of man's worth?
 - c. What is fundamental to our faith with respect to our understanding of man?
2. **Issues that you should be able to discuss.**
 - a. How is man to be understood outside the Christian framework and what is valid and invalid in these perspectives?
 - b. Why should we study humanity?
3. **Questions you should wrestle with.**
 - a. Is man best understood as consisting of two (material, immaterial) or three (body, soul, spirit) parts?
 - b. What constitutes the image of God in man?