



Man and Sin

Copyright First AG Leadership College 2008

17 Jalan Sayor, off Jalan Pudu
Kuala Lumpur, 55100 Malaysia
Phone: 03 21446773 Fax: 03 21424895
E-Mail firstaglc@hotmail.com

DOCTRINE OF MAN AND SIN

G.K. Chesterton once wrote, "We have all read in scientific books, and indeed in all romance, about the man who has forgotten his name. The man walks about the streets and can see and appreciate everything; only he cannot remember who he is. Well, every man is that man in the story. From a Christian point of view, the problem of man's identity is bound up with his relationship to God. Man is not sure who he is because he has lost contact with the one who gives him identity and meaning".

In this course we will study who man is in relationship to God, and what sin has done to corrupt this relationship. Sometimes the doctrines of man and sin are termed "Biblical Anthropology" and Hamartiology" (from the GK "anthropos" meaning "man" and GK "hamartia" meaning "sin".)

ORIGIN OF MAN

1. Genesis contains two accounts of God's creation of man.
 - a) Gen 1:26-27 simply records God's decision to make man and his implementing His decision. Nothing is said about the materials or method used. This account places more emphasis upon the purpose or reason for man's creation i.e. man was to be fruitful and multiply and have dominion over the earth.
 - b) In Gen 2:7 the emphasis is upon the way in which God created man. The first account is cosmic and comprehensive. The second is detailed. The one speaks in terms of heaven and earth, a firmament, vegetation, a sun and moon, sea animals and birds, land animals, and finally of mankind in general. The second tells of a garden planted by God, of an individual man, "formed" by God and placed in the garden to till it, of the test of obedience imposed on the man and its penalty, and of the unique way in which the man was provided with a wife. The one account is a panorama of creation as a whole; the other is a "close-up" of man, the climax of that creation. In the first account man is the cap-stone; in the second he is the centre.

H.D. McDonald writes:

"The impression conveyed by the account in Genesis is that when God came to the creation of man, He entered upon something different and distinctive. At the end of each stage in the world's creation God stopped and contemplated what He had wrought and pronounced the satisfying verdict that it was good (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). Then He set about creating a being worthy of all He had made. So God brought man into existence to have lordship over the world: man with whom He could walk and talk.

This idea of the creation of man as something special is brought out by the use of the adverb 'then' at the beginning of verse 26 (RSV). All the previous acts of

God are presented more in the nature of a continuous series by the recurring use of the conjunction 'and' (1,3,6,9,14,20,24). 'Then God said, Let us make man'. 'Then' - when? When the cosmic order of creation was finished, when the earth was ready to sustain man. When the waters had brought forth their aqueous life (1:20) and the earth its vegetation (11) and the living creatures reproduced according to their kind (24), then the Lord uttered His intention of making man". McDonald 1981:32

2. Important particulars follow from the declaration that God made man:

a) Man is dependent on God.

His being is from God and his very life continues only because of God. Even in man's original state, any possibility of living forever depended on God. Only God is inherently eternal; all else dies. Therefore man must recognize himself in the position of creature before his Creator.

b) Man exists to give glory to God.

Since we would not be alive but for God, everything we have and are derives from Him. We are therefore stewards of all that God gives to us. However stewardship does not mean giving God a part of what is ours, some of our time or some of our money. All of our life is rightfully His, by virtue of our origin and His continued ownership of us. It has been entrusted to us for our use, but it still belongs to God and must be used to serve and glorify Him.

Erickson writes:

"This means that man is not the ultimate value. Man's value is derived from, and conferred upon him by a higher value, God. Thus the essential question in evaluating anything is not whether it contributes to man's pleasure and comfort, but whether it contributes to God's glory and the fulfilment of His plan. Man is not at the centre of the universe. He exists only because someone far greater brought him into being". Erickson 1983:488.

c) Man is distinct from God.

Man has a temporal beginning, but God IS. He is God and not man (Hos 11:9). Man was made in God's image. God is therefore like the man he has made, but vastly grander. But more particularly is He to be understood in relation to what man is not. God, for example, is not man that He should lie (Num 23:19). Throughout the Old Testament there is emphasis on God's otherness from man; a contrast set up between Him as Creator and man as creature. We must therefore be careful never to accept a type of adulation which God alone deserves. Herod accepted the adulation of the crowd ("the voice of a god, and not of man!").

Because he failed to give God the glory, he was struck dead (Acts 12:20-23).

Adam and Eve's fall consisted at least in part of an aspiration to become like God (Gen 3:4-6), to know what God knows. There is indication that a similar aspiration underlay the fall of the evil angels (Jude 6).

d) All men are brothers.

Erickson writes:

"One of the great theological debates of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries concerned the extent of the fatherhood of God and hence the extent of the brotherhood of men. Liberals insisted that there is a universal brotherhood among men, and conservatives equally emphatically maintain that only those who are in Christ are spiritual brothers. Actually, both are correct. The doctrine of creation and of the descent of the entire human race from one original pair means that we are all related to one another. In a sense, each of us is a distant cousin to everyone on this earth. We are not totally unrelated. The negative side of our common descent is that in the natural state all persons are rebellious children of the heavenly Father, and thus are estranged from Him and from one another. We are all like the prodigal son.

The truth of universal brotherhood, if fully understood and acted upon, should produce a concern and empathy for our fellow men. We have a tendency to feel more strongly the needs and hurts of our close friends and relatives. The hardships of strangers do not grip us so fully. We are able to be fairly blasé about murders, fatal auto accidents, and the like as long as no one we know is involved. If, however, we discover that one of our loved ones died in the incident, we feel deep grief. But the doctrine of the brotherhood of all men tells us that all human beings are our relatives. We are not to see them primarily as our rivals but as fellow humans. We are one with them in the most basic sense - our origin. We therefore ought to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep, even if they are not fellow Christians". Erickson 1983:480, 490.

John Stott writes:

"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it' (Psalm 24:1). The earth belongs to God and those who live in it belong to Him too. For God has created a single people (the human race) and placed us in a single habitat (the planet earth). We are one people inhabiting one planet. Moreover, these two unities (planet and people) are closely related to one another. For God said, 'Be fruitful, and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it' (Gen 1:28). Thus the one people were to populate and tame the one earth, in order to harness its resources to their service. There was no limit at the beginning of the partitioning of the earth or of rivalry between nations. No,

the whole earth was to be developed by the whole people for the common good. All were to share in its God-given riches. This principle of 'distributive justice' still applies today.

But this divine purpose has been frustrated by the rise of competitive nations who have carved up the earth's surface and now jealously guard its mineral deposits and fossil fuels for themselves. Of course the Bible (realistic book that it is) recognizes the existence of nations, indicates that their developing histories and territorial frontiers are ultimately under God's sovereign control, welcomes the cultural diversity (though not all the cultural practices) they have created, and warns us that 'nation will rise against nation' to the end. But it does not acquiesce in this international rivalry. On the contrary, it tells us that the multiplicity of mutually hostile nations with mutually incomprehensible languages is a consequence of God's judgment on man's disobedience and pride (Gen 11). The Bible also indicates that one of God's major purposes in redemption will be to overcome the enmity which separates nations and to reunite the human race in Christ. So, immediately after the Tower of Babel episode, God promised through Abraham's posterity to bless all the peoples of the earth (Gen 12:1-3); He predicted through the prophets that all nations would one day 'flow' like rivers to Jerusalem (e.g. Isa 2:2); the risen Jesus told His followers to go and make disciples of all the nations (Matt 28:19); the Holy Spirit came upon 'all flesh', the nineteen national groups Luke mentions representing the known world (Acts 2:5-11,17). Paul describes the accomplishment of Christ's cross in terms both of the abolition of the dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile and of the creation out of the two of 'one new man' or a single new humanity (Eph 2:14-15); and the vision of the redeeming before God's throne is of a countless multitude 'from every nation, tribe, people and language' (Rev 7:9). It would be impossible to miss this strand of internationalism which appears right through the biblical revelation". Stott 1984:128-129.

e) Man has a unique place in the creation. The rest of creation are all said to be made "according to their kind". He, on the other hand, is described as made in the image and likeness of God. He is placed over the rest of the creation, to have dominion over it. In God's eyes therefore, man has infinite worth.

McDonald writes:

"Jesus discovered the ordinary persons and gave significance to the single individual. In Israel, even in the Judaism of his own time, the strong desire for the continuity of the nation meant that the individual tended to be lost in the community. The value of the person was often obscured; the scribes and Pharisees spoke disparagingly of the 'people of the land', the common people who heard Jesus gladly (Mark 12:37). They were judged accursed, not knowing the law (John 7:49). Beyond Israel the individual person counted for little and was of no worth in and of himself. The canker at the heart of paganism was the absence of certainty that life had any final meaning or permanent value. For

Jesus, man was not a creature of passing time, a bearer of borrowed values, a worthless thing whose failures bring no reason for shame or destruction and no occasion for regret.

In a series of comparisons Jesus gave the clearest expression to His regard for man as a creature of the highest value. He contrasted man with the most cherished institutions of his day. There was no custom so firmly established and so fiercely defended at the time of Jesus than that of Sabbath-keeping. That which had been designed for man's good had become his master, its gracious purpose lost and its pleasure gone. Christ sought to shake man free from the shackles of custom and to teach him that no institution has the worth of the human life for which it was instituted. The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27); cf Matt 12:10f). All customs, whether of human or divine origin, are dangerous and deadly if not subordinated to the eternal spirit of man under God (cf Matt 12:1- 21; Mark 2:23-28).

Man's value is declared by Jesus to exceed that of the whole created universe. It is no profit to a man to gain the whole world and to forfeit his life (cf Mark 8:37; Matt 16:26, Luke 9:25). To lose one's true selfhood is to lose what no worldly price can buy back. The whole material universe is nothing compared with the spiritual possibilities of one life (cf Mark 8:36-37). The single individual is of more value than the sheep of the fields and the birds of the air (Matt 10:31; Luke 14:5).

Christ's parables likewise indicate the same high view of man.

However 'lost' man is, it is clear in the teaching of Jesus that he is not unloved or unsought. The story of the prodigal in Luke 15 accentuated this estimate of man. The heart of the father is stirred to its profoundest depths at the return of the lad. Such is the value that Jesus puts upon the moral outcast. The significance of the lost coin in the same chapter is just this; while lost, the coin is out of circulation and is of no value in general exchange. So like-wise is natural human personhood until it is found and its worth restored. The same high regard for man is shown in Jesus' attitudes. He made friends of tax gatherers and sinners, not because He got pleasure from their society, but because He found among them a more ready acceptance of His gospel of repentance and new life. He openly took the side of the outcast and the downcast; and He made it His special concern to care for those for whom no one else cared.

Yet it is evident that, from the perspective of the kingly rule of God, Jesus ascribed equal value to the Pharisee and the tax- collector, the rich and the poor. Although He often well on behalf of the poor, He did not deliberately avoid the rich. Some of them, in fact, were reckoned among His followers. He saw beyond the acquisitions of the Pharisee and the rich man - beyond the 'goodness' of the former, and the 'goods' of the latter - to the real person. He insisted that it is not what a man has, but what he is, that is of ethical

consequence and eternal significance. The humblest and most helpless of human beings, the little children, are not to be despised (cf Matt 18:10f). The sick He must heal and the leper He must cleanse, for His miracles, acted parables, likewise illustrate His view of man as a being of worth". McDonald 1981:3.

THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN

The Bible represents man's original condition by the phrase, "in the image and likeness of God" (Gen 1:26f; 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor 11:7; James 3:9). There does not seem to be any significant difference between the Hebrew words for "image" and "likeness". Rather, this is simply an instance of the common Hebrew practice of parallelism. The phrases "in the image" and "after our likeness" are saying the same thing, the second term merely repeating, or possibly defining more closely the image, to show that a spiritual meaning is intended.

This, according to Genesis, is the difference between man and other creatures. In the command, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen 1:26), we have described the beginning of a new creative act and a wholly different relationship between Creator and creature. Man alone is made in the image of God.

We now need to define what is meant by this term.

1. Whatever the "image of God" is, it remains in man even after the Fall (Gen 9:6).

All aspects of the image of God in man have been corrupted; what is left is a relic or remnant of the image. Fragments, as it were, of all of what constituted the likeness of God remain, but they are only a small portion of the original. However this image or likeness has not been destroyed completely.

The presence of the image and likeness in the non-Christian is assumed.

2. Some have considered the image of God to be an aspect of our physical or bodily make-up, i.e. that God has a body and we are made in His bodily likeness. Although this form of the view has never been widespread, it has persisted even to this day. The Mormons are probably the most prominent current advocates of this theory. However Jesus stated that God is spirit by nature (John 4:24). Also the transcendence of God prohibits this interpretation.

3. The Second Person of the Trinity was the original and unique image of God (Col 1:13,15) in the capacity of His being God's unique Son. Being God's image and Son, He is the revelation of God. This He has done throughout eternity, but He became God's special revelation to man at His incarnation (John 1:14,18).

4. Man made in the image of God implies that men too were made to be sons of God by revealing God's glorious nature. Man was made to have a warm and intimate

relationship with God; a relationship so special that no other creature shares it. It is a Father - son relationship which, like all relationships, needs constant fellowship and open contact if it is going to mature into the loving and responsive associations between God and man.

Erickson writes:

"Man alone, of all the creatures, knows and is consciously related to God. The portrayals of man in the Garden of Eden suggest that God and man customarily communed together. It is apparent that man was not created merely to be a work of art, a statue displaying God's creativity and wisdom. Man was brought into being to fulfil God's special intention for him. It is significant that both in the Old Testament law (the Ten Commandments in Exod 20) and in Jesus' statement of the two great commandments (Matt 22: 36-40; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:26-27), the thrust of God's will for man (which presumably embodies or expresses His intention for man) concerns relationship to God and to man". Erickson 1983:510,511.

Man was created for sonship. This was his original status before God. Luke 3:38 declares Adam to be "son of God".

This does not mean that all mankind now are sons of God in the full, redemptive sense of the term. Man has defaced, rejected and sinned away his sonship. However sinful man still has the potential for a true sonship with God. It is on this basis that the gospel is preached. It is in response to Christ, as Son of God, that man has his sonship restored.

Man is reconciled to God by the death of God's Son (Rom 5:10) into sonship (Heb 2:10,11; Rom 8:14,16; cf John 1:12; Eph 1:5).

Carey writes:

"But however much the 'image' idea speak of an internal relationship with God and the promises that follow from this, it also speaks of failure, because this creative process, so potentially great for man, has been interrupted by man's sin that has resulted in an inability to fulfil his nature and commission. Man, called into partnership with God, fails again and again to fulfil the hopes that God has pinned on him. Certainly the image of God is in all men, but it is marred by sin and tarnished by lives lived away from His presence. To expand on Chesterton's illustration with which we began this chapter; it is like the man with the lost memory who, let us imagine, has been for years away from home. Anxious to discover his identity, he ransacks his clothes feverishly. He finds clues that describe him but nothing that discloses his true self; a suit from Burtons, a Van Heusen shirt, a few cigarette stubs and coins. The only hope for a man in such a predicament is that a relative might find him, reclaim him and take him back where he belongs. This is exactly what God did in Christ, and that is why the image idea can never be fully understood from the Old Testament alone - it is only from the side of redemption that the idea of man made in God's image becomes part of

experience. In Christ the promise becomes fulfilment; and men find what it means to be children of God". Carey 1977:40.

5. Christ is what Adam was intended to be. He is the exact representation of what man was created to be - destined for sonship and glory.

McDonald writes:

"As man was created to enjoy a filial relationship with God in the obedience of love, his forfeiture of that sonship only underscores the fullness of the filial response of the only begotten Son of God's love to the Father". McDonald 1981:40

Erickson writes:

"Jesus was the perfect example of what human nature is intended to be:

1. *Jesus had perfect fellowship with the Father. While on earth He communed with and frequently spoke to the Father: their fellowship is most clearly seen in the high-priestly prayer in John 17. Jesus spoke of how He and the Father are one (vv 21-22). He had glorified and would glorify the Father (vv 1,4,5) and the Father had glorified and would glorify Him (vv 1,5,22,24).*

2. *Jesus obeyed the Father's will perfectly. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). Indeed, throughout His ministry His own will was subordinate: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me" (John 4:34); "I seek not my own will but the will of Him who sent me" (John 5:30); "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me" (John 6:38).*

3. *Jesus always displayed a strong love for humans. Note, for example, His concern for the lost sheep of Israel (Matt 9:36; 10:6), His compassion for the sick (Mk 1:41), and the sorrowing (Luke 7:13), His patience with and forgiveness for those who failed.*

It is God's intention that a similar sense of fellowship, obedience, and love characterise man's relationship to God, and that humans be bound together with one another in love. We are completely human only when manifesting these characteristics". Erickson 1983:514,515.

6. McDonald writes:

"The terms 'image', 'glory', 'sonship', are inter-related; almost interchangeable. Man's chief end is to glorify God. Such was God's intention for the man He made. But man could only respond to the divine desire in so far as he reflected God's glory. And it was in him so to do because he was created in the image of God with the gift of sonship. In Romans 3:23 sin is described as a falling short of the glory of

God. 'By this', says Cairns, 'is clearly meant the glory of the image of God; the glory of man being able to reflect God's glory; and sin being the condition wherein this image is not reflected. By keeping in mind the relation between image and sonship it can with equal truth be said that sin is a condition wherein this sonship is not reflected. It is not reflected because it has been repudiated. Only in the adoption unto sonship can the image of glory be restored to man.

We may then express the doctrine of the image like this; Christ is the image of God by reason of His unique sonship. Believers are the image of God by reason of an adopted sonship. All men are in the image of God because of an original creative sonship through Adam. In Genesis 5 we read that Adam became 'the father of a son in his own likeness after his image' (1:3). The image and likeness is what characterised his sonship. Seth was a son because he was of the father; he was born into the status of sonship because he was in the likeness and after the image of Adam. He was also of God, being brought forth by him who is called 'son of God' (Luke 3:38)...

When therefore it is said that God created man in his own image we must, in the light of the New Testament, see this as the image of His Son. Even at the creation, Christ as eternal Son with whom the Father was well-pleased was the image in which God created man. In redemption it will be the Son's delight to bring 'many sons to glory' (Heb 2:10), conformed to His own image of sonship (Rom 8:29; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10; 2 Cor 3:18). McDonald 1981:40, 41.

7. Implications of the doctrine are:

- a) We experience full humanity only when we are properly related to God.

Erickson writes:

"No matter how cultured and genteel, no one is fully human unless a redeemed disciple of God. This is man's end", that for which he was created." Erickson 1983:515,516.

- b) The human is valuable.

Erickson writes:

"The sacredness of human life is an extremely important principle in God's scheme of things. Even after the Fall, murder was prohibited; the reason given was that man was made in the image of God (Gen 9:6). While the passage in question does not explicitly say that man was in the image of God, but only that God had so created him, it is clear that man, even as a sinner, still possessed it. For if he had not, God would not have cited the image as the grounds of His prohibition of murder". Erickson 1983:516.