
DOCTRINE OF HUMANITY

I. INTRODUCTION

A. WHO WE ARE

This answers one of the most critical questions as human beings: who are we? What is it to be a human being? Are we the byproduct of chance, of genetic mutations that have come into existence this complex reality called human existence? Are we here by design? Is that design meant to have something to do with God? What is the reason for our existence? Who are we? Why are we here? It is one the most fundamental questions we can ask as human beings. What is our purpose? If you don't have a handle on this question, think about coming to the end of life and not knowing what it is about. Think about whether you have been living in a way that would advance the purpose of your being here or not. What a tragedy when you think about failing to live in accord with our created purpose, if in fact there is one.

B. OUR PLACE IN RELATION GOD

It helps us to understand our place in relation to God. You might remember that Calvin begins his "Institutes" by saying there are two things that theology concerns itself with. One is who God is and the second is who we are as human beings. There is an order to that. You must study who God is to understand who we are as made in the image of God. It is not only that we are images of God that makes it important to understand who God is and then who we are, but rather that we are in fact his creatures. We recognize in our existence as human beings that we belong to him; we are created by him; we are owned by him; we are dependent upon him; we owe everything to him. To think of ourselves and to study anthropology divorced from God is idolatry. It is to think that we, in ourselves, can understand who we are, make sense of our lives, and make life meaningful apart from God. That is idolatry. This is exactly what Paul said in Romans 1.

Rom 1:21a For even though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him. Instead they focused on the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever.

When we come to studying anthropology, one of the purposes is to understand better who we are in relationship to God. We don't leave God in the dust as we move on to us. We, rather, are very much aware that our understanding of who we are has everything to do with who God is and our relationship to him, our dependence upon him and his purposes for us.

C. OUR PLACE IN RELATION OTHER HUMANS

One of the great lessons of Genesis 2 is that isolated man is not the ideal. It is amazing that when you read in Genesis 1 God said it was good.

Genesis 1:31 God saw all that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Then you come to chapter 2 about Adam; he has cultivated the garden, and he is naming the animals and God says, "It is not good." This is the first time you hear "not good" and there is no sin yet. This is not Genesis 3, this is Genesis 2, there is no sin. And God says, "It is not good that man should be alone" (Gen 2:18). He makes a helper suitable for him and brings her to him, and he names her "ishshah" (woman) because she was taken from "ish"

(man). You get this sense that the purpose of God at the very beginning is to indicate that ideal human existence is social, not individual autonomous man unrelated to other persons but rather social existence.

We have to understand that ideal human existence is not isolated human existence but social human existence. That lesson comes right from the very beginning of the Bible. Even Jesus was in community. In the Garden of Gethsemane when he called Peter, James and John to come pray with him? He says, pray with me; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Here you certainly have the "Lone Ranger;" here you have "Superman" who doesn't need anyone else. Did Jesus actually crave and have a felt need for the community of his friends, for these disciples who would join him in praying fervently for this hour of testing and they failed? Was it a genuine longing on his part? Absolutely.

D. OUR PLACE IN RELATION CREATION

There is a lot about who we are in relation to creation that is very important in this doctrine. We are stewards of this world God has made. We were created by God to rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the creeping, crawling things on the face of the earth. This means that we have dominion, but that doesn't translate into a kind of exploitation. Having dominion means we have a responsibility to care; we are caretakers of the world God has made. There ought to be a much more vibrant Christian environmentalism that isn't the kind of radical environmentalism that is so prominent today making monkeys more important than humans.

In Genesis 9 after the flood, God told Noah, you can kill animals and eat them, but you can't kill human beings because they are made in my image. We must acknowledge the supremacy of the human race in the world by God's design, but the responsibility that the human race has in the world as caretaker to treat with respect and care and responsibility what God has made. That comes right from the very beginning in our creation.

Looking at who we are, and who we are in all of these relationships, with God, with one another, and with the environment, this doctrine is huge and important. It answers some of the most fundamental questions that we have as human beings, and it is critical.

II. HUMANITY'S ORIGIN

A. GOD THE CREATOR

1. CREATOR OF ALL

Truly it is true, as you look at Scripture, that God has created everything that is. Wouldn't it do, then, in talking about humanity's origin, simply to say we are part of the creation of God? No, we need to say that we are in a very special way the creation of God. God made all; that is absolutely clear. Genesis 1 outlines everything that happened at the end of it; God says that everything he had made was very good. We know that everything that God made was good, and God made everything that was made.

Secondly, we need to say that in creation it is also clear that God wants us to see that the place of humanity is special. It is not just like anything else out there. There is a special place for the formation of humanity specifically. This is even clear in Genesis one and two. As you read through those chapters it is hard to miss the fact that the author is intending us to see the special place of humanity in creation. What indicators are there in Genesis one and two that we are meant to see the formation of humanity as special? What are some of the things that are evident to us in those two chapters? It is man who is to name the animals. So obviously there is a sense in which man is over the animals. We are not just like the others; we name them. What does naming indicate? There is an authority that is invested in you, Adam, by which you can name the animals; you name that over which you have authority. Adam does that. This is really a remarkable. Who made those animals? Did Adam make them? No, God brought to Adam the animals he had made. Who has the rights to name them? God does, but he says, Adam, you

name them. Whatever name you give them that will be its name. I can imagine God up there going, "Hippopotamus? Are you sure about that?" Well ok. Whatever Adam named it that is its name. That is what the text says. Adam has prerogative of rulership.

What other indicators are there that humanity has a special place in creation? We are created in the image of God. In Genesis 1:26-27 there is emphasis on this that whatever it means, it obviously means that we are different; we are special. There is something about the formation of humanity that is highlighted by this.

Gen 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." Gen 1:27 God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

That humanity is made in the image of God is a clear indicator that there is something special.

There is so much more detail on the creation of man compared to the rest of creation. You have six days in Genesis 1 of creation; of those six days, the last half of the sixth day is the creation of man. Only one of those days is given a sort of a movie presentation. You have these pictures, snapshots throughout Genesis 1 of all these different elements of creation and then you have a movie. And the movie is of what? The man and then the woman formed. It is very clear that God puts special emphasis on the formation of man, of male and female as his image.

Another indicator of his rulership is he plants the garden and puts man in it and says, you tend the garden. It is my garden my earth, my world; I made it, you tend it.

With humanity, there is a relationship with God that is not true of the other aspects of creation. God comes to man and he gives a moral command.

Gen 2:16 The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; Gen 2:17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

Here is a special kind of relationship because it includes a moral relationship. There is a moral bond between God and the man at that point. He has a moral obligation before God. There is no hint of that with the animals. Nor is there a hint of that today. If your dog jumps the fence and goes out and bites somebody and they die, you may shoot the dog, but what you won't do is take that dog to a court of law and hold it accountable for moral wrongdoing. But if a human being does that, you will take them to court. We are moral agents before God. That is clear in the command, in the moral relationship with God.

He blesses them and in a special sense wants them to be productive, reproduce, to fill the earth and rule over that earth. The tree of Life was something only the man could have. You can eat of all these trees, including the Tree of Life is presumed in that. The promise of redemption for the man that comes in chapter 3.

In Genesis 1:26 the language changes in how this is introduced. Up until then all of the previous points of creating are introduced with the phrase "then God said let there be..." Notice the difference in verse 26.

Gen 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness;"

There is a sense of deliberation. I take this as a preliminary indicator of the Triune God. Jewish commentators have a hard time explaining (because they are unitarian, monotheists) the plural here. Some have insisted that it must be God deliberating with the angels. The problem is that we are not made in the image of the angels. This can't be God saying let us, the angels and me, create man in our image. This is not going to work. This is likely the Trinity, the deliberation of the Trinity. He says, "Let us make man," so there is deliberation; there is intentionality and purpose that is stated as the reason for this creation, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule over..."

One other thing that I want to point out to you is terms that are used for the formation of humanity. The term "asah" is used. The normal ordinary Hebrew word is used, "asah", which means to make something.

Gen 1:26a Then God said, "Let us make man in our image,

In Genesis 1:1 the word "bara" is used. This is a much more significant term.

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

"bareshith bara elohim" indicates a kind of creating work only God can do. "bBara" is also used in Genesis 1:27.

Gen 1:27 God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

"Bara" is used three times. This threefold use of "bara" indicates an emphasis of creation of human beings. Only God could do this; could make this particular creation of man, male and female in his image. In Genesis 2:7 the term "yatsar" is used. This is a term that is used for a potter shaping the clay into the kind of pot that he wants. It has this notion of both design and artistry.

Gen 2:7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

It is like God formed man of dust from the ground like a potter would take the clay and shape it into the man that he intended. It has this notion of intentionality, purpose, design that is attached to it. Similarly, in the creation of the woman in Genesis 2:22 the term "banah" is used.

Gen 2:22 The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which he had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

It could be translated "built into a woman" or "fashioned into a woman." It has the notion of building something. It is like the term you would use in a construction project. You make this into what you have designed it to be.

2. SPECIAL PLACE FOR THE FORMATION OF HUMANITY IN PARTICULAR

We have seen that God has created all that there is. But it won't do to stop there and say that is sufficient for explaining us, to merely say we are creatures. That makes it look as though there is no difference between a frog and a human being. That is not true. There is clearly in the text reason for holding that God views human beings in a very special place in his creation.

3. BRIEF THEOLOGY OF HUMANITY'S CREATION BY GOD

This is a list of some things that flow out of this notion of the fact that we are created by God and have this special place before him.

A. *GOD IS ULTIMATE, WHILE ALL OF HUMANITY IS DEPENDENT ON GOD*

At the most basic level this is one of lessons that we must take away from the doctrine of creation, the creation of us as human beings. That is that God is ultimate, and we are not. He is creator; we are creature. He is the owner; we are owned. We are dependent upon him for absolutely everything. Paul says it in Acts 17.

Acts 17:25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all people life and breath and all things.

We are dependent upon God for absolutely everything.

B. *HUMANITY OWES GOD OBEDIENCE, LOYALTY, WORSHIP (WE WERE MADE TO GLORIFY GOD)*

By virtue of God being creator, we owe to him our obedience, loyalty, and worship. This is owed to him; this is not something from a moral stand point as optional. When God commands that we worship the LORD our God and worship him only, what he is commanding is that we do what is right and obligatory for us because he is God. *He is God.* He demands what he deserves: our obedience, our loyalty, our worship. This is not an optional thing. Just as for children it is not an optional thing for them to obey their parents or not. They may think it is. They may behave like it is, but it isn't. It is not an option. Even more so is this the case with creator and creature. We owe to God our absolute obedience. It is a travesty of moral justice for us to disobey. This is why Hell is what it is. Most people don't have a clue why Hell is what it is. They don't have a clue who God is and what his demands are upon us because of his rights as creator. We really are made to glorify God. Our inherent designed purpose is to bring glory to God through our obedience to him, our love for him, our adoration for him, our loyalty to him. When we do that, we fulfill part of that which we were created for.

C. *HUMANITY, AS CREATED BY GOD, WAS ENTIRELY GOOD (BODY AND SOUL)*

We are separating the doctrines of humanity and sin. That is done intentionally, not that you and I are not sinful humans. Those two things do go together; we are sinful humans, but we dare not think that humanity is sinful. But we do think that way. I can remember times when I hear someone who has been involved in some immoral relationship, and the comment will be made, "Well they are just human." Or somebody is involved in some other kind of scandal, and they yield to the temptation that was in front of them and we say, "Well, they were just human." What are you saying by that? *Wasn't Christ human?* He was tempted in every way yet was without sin. Who was more human in the way he lived his life, him or us? The answer is him, Christ. He lived a more authentically human life than we do. So here is the difference: two cars are in the parking lot, both BMWs, same year, same vintage, same horsepower. This one is bright and shiny and tuned up and absolutely runs great. The other one right next to it is dented and rusted, three spark plugs are out, and the thing hasn't been maintained at all. Which one is the more authentic BMW? Christ is the first one, and we are the second one; we are the marred expression of humanity. Humanity as created by God is good. We will be human one day in our glorified state, and we will never sin. We will be more fully human than we are now. It is just like if you took that beat up BMW and

put a lot of money into it and fixed it and got it back to what it is suppose be. It is a whole more BMW than it was before. That is what God is doing. This reclamation project is to take a marred, dented demolished humanity and make it what it ought to be.

We also need to consider the aspect of body and soul, of human sexuality. God thought it up. He invented it. Everything that goes into human sexuality, he made it. He drew the blueprints for it. He made the genetics for it. It is an incredible thing. I have often wondered why God made human sexuality to be just what it is. I will tell you my hunch. What happens with sexual expression between a man and a woman? What is connected to that? Reproduction. Have you ever noticed this, in Genesis 5 when Seth is born, it says,

Gen 5:3 When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.

How is Seth in the image of God? By being in the image of Adam who is the image of God. Instead of creating a billion people at one time the way he did with angels who don't reproduce, he makes a couple, one pair. He says that he is going to give them a piece in his role in creation. You become creators; procreation procreates. You become creators, and just to show you what a great thing it is to create in the image of God, I am going to make this experience like nothing else in life. That is what it is about. It is meant to express the joy, the pleasure, the exuberance God has in creating us as his image. Love creates.

There is a proportionality principle that you can see on just about everything in life. The greater the potential for good, think of technology or nuclear capabilities, the greater the potential for evil goes with it. If all you've got is a paintball gun, you have that much potential for good that can be done and that much potential for evil. Up the scale you go in terms of technology. Sexuality is one of the most powerful aspects of life that God has given to human beings; there is no doubt about it. There is great potential for good in marriage with a husband and wife who love each other for life. When it is done right, it is absolutely glorious. When it is done wrong it is devastating. Look around at the devastation and how Satan works to make the devastation look nonetheless attractive.

Augustine bequeathed a lot of good to the church, but not everything that he left to the church in his wake was good. One of the clearest examples was his view of sexuality. Augustine came to Christ out of a very licentious immoral lifestyle, and his mother Monica prayed for him. He finally came to Christ and was saved out of this but because of the way of life he lived before he was a Christian he was convinced that sexuality was evil, that it was inherently evil. Therefore, the only justification for a sexual relationship was procreation. Hence the Roman Catholic view against any kind of birth control and the Roman Catholic view that unless you are able to procreate then sexuality is wrong, unjustified. Furthermore, if you can avoid sexuality altogether, even better. Celibacy is this highest ideal before God. The problem with this is 99% of us were not made by God to have the gift. I believe God gives the gift to some. He says this in 1 Corinthians 7. He gives to some the gift of celibacy, and praise God for single people.

D. HUMANITY INVESTED WITH MORAL FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

God gives a moral command to the man in the garden; this is an amazing thing. We are morally responsible. When they sin, God comes to them and demands an accounting, as He will for every one of us. We will all stand before the bar of justice one day, every one of us. We have this enormous weight that none of the rest of the created order in this world carries. Angels are moral beings as well, but dogs and fishes and cats and octopuses don't have this burden of moral responsibility that is huge. There is no doubt it is part of what it means to be in the image of God, to love, to worship, to obey, to keep a promise. To keep a promise is godlike to do that. Your dog can never do that, can never keep a promise. When you do that you are godlike.

E. EQUALITY YET DIFFERENTIATION IN THE CREATION OF MAN AND WOMAN

Man and woman are equal in essence; both are made in the image of God; both are human; both before God are equal in importance, value, rights, dignity. But man is man not woman, woman is woman not man. The differences are to be respected just as the equality is to be respected. Currently we live in a culture that has set aside the differences and respects only the equality of men and women. What Scripture calls us to do is respect the equality and respect the difference. If we don't respect the differences among us we don't function right because the differences have so much to do with how we function as men and women. Are there differences in creation? Yes.