

The Creation of Man

Genesis 1 :26-31

After Divine Deliberation

As the last act of creation the Scriptures mention the creation of man. First God has drawn up the dwelling place of this world with an atmosphere as a factor necessary for life. He upholstered it with green and multicoloured tapestry and had trees shoot up with nourishing food. He hung the lamps from the ceiling for the illumination of the day and the night. He also filled it with a wealth of animal life, which in its mobility and innumerable variety adds sociability, and makes possible enjoyment of life's beauty. Everything was efficiently furnished, and displayed the glory of the Creator, Who is the supreme Builder and Artist. And *then* God created man, in whom all of that earthly creation as well as the lights of heaven have their destiny.

Genesis 2 relates the *manner* of the creation of man and woman in connection with the beginning of the history of the human race. In Genesis 1 the fact of the creation of man is made known along with his character in his relation to all other creatures who have their immediate purpose in him.

Scripture clearly shows how eminently superior man is in value and significance above all other creatures. Indeed, he is not called forth by God's powerful Word out of water, earth, or sky, as the animals, but he is formed by God's hand. And this happened after *Divine deliberation*. For God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," or: "as our image, after our likeness" (Translation *Korte Verklaring*). "Our" refers to the plurality of God, the three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. ("It is true, He does not say how many persons there are, but that which appears to be somewhat obscure in the Old Testament is

very plain in the New.” Belgic Confession, Art. 9.) Then follows: “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.”

Man as Image of God

“In (as) our image, after our likeness,” means: as an image that gives a precise resemblance. This applies not only to the soul or spirit, but to the total man. He is not created as image-*bearer*, but as image himself. He displayed God’s image, so that God, as it were, displayed Himself in man as in a mirror.

How that image of God is to be understood is told in the Scriptures in other places; in Ephesians 4:24 where it says of the re-created man: “created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness;” and in Colossians 3:10: “which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

Righteousness indicates the right relationship toward God and creature. *Holiness* is the dedication to God and the inner purity. *Knowledge* refers to the pure insight into what God makes known by His words and deeds.

Man as God’s Representative

The dominion over all the animals and over the whole earth is mentioned as being the purpose of the creation of man in God’s image. In all that work of service, man had to act according to God’s will, while He would also know the Creator through the creatures, and for that glorify his God. Strictly speaking, this dominion does not belong to the image of God, yet it is in close connection with it, for man as image of God is established as God’s representative, God’s lieutenant on earth. This does not apply to the angels, who are God’s heavenly *servants*. Man is created as *son* of God, who had to have dominion in freely exercising his responsibility.

According to the Divine deliberation, “God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

The Blessing of Creation

When God had created Adam and his wife, He addressed them both with words of blessing; He gave His blessing *over* the animals, but He *addressed* the people. “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. Chronologically, this blessing therefore followed the first marital union. Yet it is not mentioned in Genesis 2, but the author has included it in the history of creation of Genesis 1. This is not a mistake, but since we believe the literal inspiration through the Holy Spirit, this location where we would not expect it has its significance. It is clear that we have to see this blessing as a *blessing of creation*, not as a marital blessing, although as such it would do well, nor as a mandate of the covenant which God had put upon Adam. It was intended for Adam and his wife in *their capacity as creatures*, and as such, similarly for all people of all times, *not* because they came forth from these first parents or are included in the covenant with Adam, but because they are God’s creatures, who are set in a special relation to all of natural life. This blessing is therefore maintained regardless of the fall into sin, as is also obvious from Genesis 9:1-7.

It is remarkable that this blessing is called a blessing, although it is given in the form of a commandment. We do not read: God *commanded* them, but He blessed them. We do find a few commandments here, but they place man, according to God’s counsel, in the place of honour of representing God, which is not given to the angels; and above all, this blessing also contains the *promise* of succeeding.

The Ordering of the Life of Creation

When we consider the contents of this blessing of creation, we find that it deals with *fertility, numerousness, and replenishing of the earth* (as is also mentioned with relation to the animals, namely, the fish and the fowl), but, distinguished from the animals, it deals with subjecting and having dominion.

Concerning the first three points, the word of blessing contains the promise of the acting and driving power of God, through which fertility,

numerousness, and replenishing of the earth also *shall* be, but at the same time He allows for the exercise of men's responsibility, so that they willingly receive and use these gifts. God wants to see His earth full of people! Has He not created and prepared an earth, far and wide, extremely rich in resources, sources of energy, minerals, fertility, and nourishing capacities, enough to feed even all of mankind if there had been no sin and death? Let us only look at a small country such as The Netherlands, where the earth hides a wealth of riches, which no one could have imagined only a few decades ago!

God furthermore in blessing orders the subduing of the earth. He demands human labour to search it, cultivate it and draw out all the powers and possibilities which God has put in nature, in other words, He ordered the all-embracing cultural task—for the service of man, but, above all, that out of God's works man should know his Creator and praise Him for His greatness, wisdom, and goodness. And according to His counsel, God also subjected all animals to man, whom He set up as ruler.

This all was the prescribed *service of office-bearer*, which by far exceeded the work of the angels, although these, according to Psalm 8, are as yet more glorious in their heavenly dwelling. In that service man would show himself in continuing power and glory as image of God. Truly, he received a place of honour as God's lieutenant, who, in freely exercising his mandate according to God's will and intention, would have to fill the centuries of the temporal dispensation by continuing to labour at God's completed work of creation. And for this all of mankind is required. The object of labour offers room for all God's labourers for all time!

Meanwhile, there is little use asking what has become of it, now that sin has made the breach, with its destroying action in nature and mankind, and now that the image of God has been destroyed. Of that image only the small remnants, as splinters of a shattered vase, remind us of what man once was.

Even though God keeps the way open for the continuation of the service of *office-bearing*, how terribly is that office being wasted, now that man uses whatever is yet being done for self-glorification. From the oldest ages

onward how has fertility not been allowed to wither because of sins, which broke the people's power and even undermined world empires! What a deliberate curtailing of population growth there is in our western world—without God! What a desire there is for concentration of population since Babel's tower was built, leading, especially in our days, to an accumulation of cities of millions, with all their misery, while the greatest part of the earth remains empty! Over all this God's wrath is burning and He brings righteous punishment. And what has been successful in God's plan for the centuries in this apostate world is only a result of His active power, e.g., in the marriage-urge, forced dispersion, passion for discovery, labour in order to stay alive, and deadly competition. God keeps His world going in order to display His grace in it, but in the meantime He follows, through history, a road of judgments until the day when He shall inspect and judge man's work. Was, then, what God began a failure? Certainly not! All His works are known to God from eternity, also this: that the purpose of His work shall be attained on the basis of the obedient service-as-office-bearer of the Lord Christ, the last Adam, Who is the new root of life.

Finally we read that God has added the guarantee of verse 29, 30, regarding the maintenance of life, to the ordinations of the blessing of creation. Seed-bearing plants were for man, and all the trees which have seed-bearing fruit, while the green plants were intended for the animals. We know from Genesis 9 that in this respect a change was made.

This part ends with the words: "And it was so." Life had been put into motion. A start could be made with the world-encompassing work. And the first nourishment, at which man had not laboured, was already present. Hands were stretched out in blessing."

"And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, *it was very good!*"

Questions

1. How do we describe, according to the Scriptures, the image of God?
2. Was man the image of the Son of God or of the Triune God?

3. Was man permitted and able, after the fall into sin, to remain the image of God?
4. Who is or are meant when it is said in Genesis 9:6: “for God made man in His own image”; and in James 3:9, where we read: “men, who are made in the likeness of God”?
5. In what manner are we recreated in the image of God and how is this act of recreation apparent?
6. Do the angels also show God’s image?
7. Was it possible for the image of God in Adam to increase?
8. When is it totally and in all its parts perfect and complete in us?
9. Why was it added in Genesis 1:27 “male and female He created them,” while this is not mentioned of the animals? Is there a connection here with Genesis 2:18ff.?
10. Is mankind still able to do all that God stated in the blessing of creation? If not, can this be counted as guilt?
11. How should we judge “the pill?”
12. How should we judge the prediction of too great an increase in population? And what if it is impossible to find room elsewhere for people, or is this possible? Is it possible to create a healthy world-life wherein mankind can again fulfil the prescribed regulation? Or will the world totally “run aground?”
13. Is there no delivery possible out of this distress, either collectively or individually?
14. How and when is the relationship restored between image of God and dominion over all creatures?