

Doctrine of Humanity

We affirm that man is a special creation of God and that all of humanity has a shared ancestry originating with Adam. Male and female alike is the pinnacle of His creation work. God created man ultimately for His own glory and also that he may delight in his creator (Psa. 27:4, 16:11). God also delights in man (Isa. 62:5; Zeph. 3:17-18) and desires to share life together with him (John 10:10). Man is distinctly created in the very image, *imago Dei*, or likeness of God (Gen. 1:27; 1Cor. 11:7; James 3:9). God originally created man good and innocent and gave him the moral capacity to choose to do good or evil. Man chose evil (Gen. 3) and sin was introduced into God's good creation. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherited a nature inclined to sin. With sin, man did not lose the image of God completely but rather it was defaced or distorted and is progressively restored in the believer through redemption and sanctification.

We affirm that man is created unique among all of God's creatures. Being created in His likeness, not specifically a physical likeness but as a characteristic or quality of the total constitution of man and is expressed in his relationships and in the things he does. Man is a complex being having many constituents. First humans have a body, not corrupt by nature, but a good thing which God has given him. Second, man has a soul or spirit, both terms being used interchangeably throughout scripture (Matt. 10:28; Eccl. 12:7; 1Cor. 5:3). The soul is often defined as the seat of life, that which makes the body a living being. The spirit of man is that aspect of man through which God most immediately encounters him (Rom. 8, Matt. 5:3; Mark 2:8). As such, man has the capacity to have a relationship with God through His spirit and man's spirit (Rom. 8:9-11, 16). At conversion the believer's spirit is reborn and sanctification begins whereby

man is ultimately conformed into the very image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; 1Cor. 15:49). Third, man uniquely has a mind or will which is a faculty of judgment whereby it exercises discernment to choose between right and wrong (Rom. 12:2). Fourth, man has a moral nature, often referred to as a conscience, which acts as a moral guide helping to keep him in check and from moving in the wrong direction (Romans 2:15; 1Cor. 8:12). Lastly, man entails human sexuality. God created both male and female in His image (Gen. 1:27). His purpose of sexual interrelations is two-fold: first sex is created for procreation, and secondly for pleasure, neither of which are meant for eternity. With that being said, God intended sexual relations to be between man and woman; homosexuality is a sin (Lev. 18; Rom. 1; 1Cor. 6:9) and is a perversion of God's plan and therefore is not an acceptable lifestyle. As God's image bearers we believe every person regardless of gender, race or ethnicity possess full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

God created both man and woman equally in His image; both share equal value, dignity, and responsibility before God. They were created not only for procreation but also for a mutual enriching relationship with each other (Gen. 2:18-25; 1Cor. 11:8-11), as well as for God's own glory. Men and women are equal in essence but there are some functions ordered according to gender (Gen. 1-2; Gal 3:28). God created Eve as a helper suitable to or corresponding to Adam which implies a differentiation of roles, which places man as the initiator and the woman in the role of supporting assistant. The different gender responsibilities are found in the marriage, the family, and the church.

God created man and woman and gave them the responsibility of dominion over all of creation (Gen. 1:28). As such, we are to be good stewards of the resources God has given us. This responsibility pertains to maintaining healthy bodies, healthy relationships, and finally to a preservation of the natural resources, environment, and wildlife that He has charged us with sustaining, maintaining, and protecting.

