

Berkouwer, Bartian, Pelagian, Remonstrants and Evangelical View

by John Murray

The doctrine of the divine image is essential to understanding human nature and the incarnation, and is intimate with the great central doctrine of the incarnation.

Duration: 48:03

Scripture: Acts 8:13

Topics: "Pelagian"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of Jesus coming in the likeness of sinful flesh and how it relates to human nature. The speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the context and language of the Bible, especially for those whose native language is not English. The sermon also highlights the transformative power of faith and the role of scripture in revealing God's word to humanity. The impact of scripture on individuals varies, with some experiencing a negligible impact while others are deeply affected.

Transcript

All right, let's turn over and close the door. What I want to do, what I'll do is to one invitation of... to establish their going so that anthems of praise will eternally resound. To Thy great name we join now in a song of praise to Thee, so that we shall all abound.

That divine image of God, the divine image of man, that there is equality, thereby prejudicing the God. Now, of course, it is quite true that there can be grave mis... that man in his fallen state, because as we mean that there is in man and that he is not totally depraved. But the doctrine of man in the divine image in his fallen state does not any... or does not give any real support to that erroneousness of man's sinful nature.

Existing all along that a doctrine of total depravity may involve this doctrine of man in the divine image. For a proper assessment of the gravity of our depravity and the intensity of our depravity proceeds from the recognition it is man in the image of God who was rebelled against. In other words, the more we appreciate what is involved in man's distinctive identity in the image of God, I repeat, the more we accentuate what is involved in man's identity as made in the image of God, the more serious becomes our estimate of his original sin, that is, of his first sin, and of his depravity.

So that so far from impinging upon the doctrine of total depravity, this doctrine of the divine image, to a proper assessment... Now, to come back to the Lutheran position, that is the reason why I think that the defective view of man in the image of God, which is a defective view, is really logically bound up with their defective view of man's depravity. That is all I'm going to say. In reference, I'm dealing with the teachings of the formless, Bard's position is that of evangelical Lutherans.

His fallen state cannot be regarded as by man's evangelical concurrence. Bard holds that God does not have contact. That contact is established insofar as it dares to fall.

And the second is what I shall call the point of contact. That revelation is a permanent or abiding deposit. That it exists only as God, here and now, to this man and to no other, in a concrete crisis and confrontation, through the medium of scripture or church proclamation, brings his word home with ruling authority and conviction.

Hence, well, that the word of God does not exist in fact. It exists only as God, here and now, to this man and to no other, in a concrete crisis or confrontation, through the medium of scripture or church proclamation, brings his word home with ruling authority and conviction. And it is only in that action that the image of God is created in man.

So there is no revelatory contact, no revelatory contact between God and man until that event takes place. Now, obviously, it is not the biblical truth. The emphasis in the scripture which calls upon the written word means that revelation has become in scripting, and by in-scripturation has received abiding form.

Let me ask you, what other influence could be drawn from the basic emphasis in scripture upon it is written, it is written. Tantra, faith, hence according to scripture, revelation is always present whenever the scripture is made known. That scripture is the abiding voice of God addressed to man, so that God is constantly speaking in scripture, and He is speaking even to the unregenerate who are confronted by it.

It is a further fact of the witness of scripture that this word of God makes some impact upon the hearts and minds of the unregenerate in extent, depth and effect, in different cases. Okay, in some instances the impact that is made is what we would call negligible, but in other cases it is very arresting, so that those thus arrested are vertically affected, even when they are not savingly. You want a few examples of that, I suppose.

What about Simon the Sorcerer, Acts 13-23? What about Felix trembling before Paul's word, Acts 24-25? What about the seed sown upon rocky soil, on thorny ground? And those who are illustrated thereby. What about Paul himself? I have not known lust, he said, except the Lord said there shalt not covet. When the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

He is not talking then about his confession, he is talking about something that occurred before him. When the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And what about those who become apostates? Return from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

2 Peter 2, 20-22. Now these are obvious instances of the impact, and in some cases such an impact that we men wouldn't be able to distinguish between the regenerate and the unregenerate. That is as we observe others.

Now, if that is the case, there is something in man that makes the unregenerate man addressable. There must be something in man that makes this contact possible and makes it to that extent efficacious. Now,

here we have two things that cannot be provided for on Karl Marx's premises.

First, an abiding speaking word of God. And second, a constitution in man that makes the word of God meaningful. Now secondly, we come to this matter of the point of contact.

Remember and distinguish. This impact which the word of God makes upon the natural, the precondition of saving faith, this point of contact, this impact rather, which the word of God makes upon the natural man, is the precondition of saving faith. The precondition of saving impact.

Pages of hearing. And hearing is the word of the Christ, which the word of God makes upon the person concerned before he becomes a believer. If faith is of hearing, of course the hearing is as this presuppose and means that faith emerges from an antecedent condition in the subject, an antecedent state of mind in the subject, which has been created by the word of God.

An antecedent state of mind, this antecedent state of mind, is the point of contact for the saving address of the word of God. And the believing response on the part of the person. Believing response.

And this is thus saying that there must be some conviction, conviction produced by the word of God, and some cognition of the import of the gospel. Conviction and cognition. These are the two terms I am using to describe this necessary antecedent state of mind.

Without conviction and cognition, faith itself, the first act of faith, is meaningless, unintelligible. That condition of mind, produced by the word of God, is unintelligible. That condition of mind, produced by the word of God, addressed to the person, the state of mind, you may call the vestibule of faith.

You can call it the vestibule of faith. The vestibule. We see in the chamber or something like this, the vestibule of faith.

But in any case, it is the transitional state from indifference and ignorance, transitional experience, a transitional state from indifference and ignorance, to saving faith. It is only from a person with such conviction and cognition that faith can arise. And I call it the point of contact.

The point of contact for saving address of the word of God and saving response on the part of the person. Now, this point of contact God, on his premises, cannot allow, cannot allow. And consequently, I say that his concept of faith, his concept of faith, cannot be as psychologically abstract and unrelated as is his concept of revelation.

As abstract realm of subjectivity, as is his concept of revelation in the realm of God's address to man. Now, bring this to our conclusion. It is in relation to these considerations that I have been mentioning that the doctrine of the divine image becomes all-important.

Because in reality, if we fail to predicate of man this divine image, we have removed the basis upon which we can maintain the relevance of the word of God to the natural world. And we also place ourselves in a position in which it is impossible to entertain a proper view of the genesis of faith. Proper view of the genesis of faith.

That's all I'm going to say. The next view that I will deal with, that I'm going to deal with, should be the Pelagian view. That's dealt with fairly satisfactory indeed.

And of course the most distinctive feature of the Pelagian view is that the divine image, in the sense of knowledge, righteousness and holiness, cannot be created, but must be an acquisition. How it can be created, that is a position very clearly enforced by Pelagius. You cannot predicate moral character of anything but volitional acts under subjective consequences.

Volitional acts under subjective consequences. Consequent to sin is the voluntary transgression of law. And that Pelagian viewpoint has exercised tremendous influence on the Christian Church.

Tremendous. And you have to be on guard to detect this infiltration of Pelagian thoughts constantly. You have to be constantly on your guard against this violent influence.

You have this criticized very well in the textbook, and I'm not going to deal with it. There is, historically, the remonstrant Arminians have written, remonstrant Arminians. On this particular question, the remonstrant Arminians was practically identical with that of Pelagius.

They thought that good habits and virtues, such as goodness, holiness and righteousness, goodness, holiness and righteousness, could not have had a place in the will of man when he was first created. The remonstrant confession taught that man was created with three wills, but his primitive state was not one of perfect holiness. Holiness cannot be something concreated.

It has to be something that is acquired. So in this respect, the affinity to Pelagianism is quite obvious. We distinguish between remonstrant Arminianism and Evangelical or Wesleyan Arminianism.

Remember that Evangelical Arminianism and Wesleyan, that modification of the Arminian position, which came in the middle of the 18th century from the influence of John Wesley. Now on this particular question, on this particular question of the image of God, the earlier classic exponents of Evangelical Arminianism, such as Richard Watson, agree formally with the Reformed position. If you read this, Richard Watson's Institute, Theological Institute, Volume 2, pages 281 through 288.

Volume 2, pages 281 through 288. You will find that his exposition of this is essentially the same as the Reformed position. But there has been the tendency in Evangelical Arminianism to compromise with the Remonstrant Arminian position on this question.

And you find that in John Miley, John Miley, the more recent Evangelical Arminian theologian, John Miley's Systematic Theology, Volume 1, pages 409 through 416. 409 through 416. And consequently, there is We match the consistent position taken by the classic exponents of Western Arminianism.

Well, that is a very, very brief review of the history. One concluding word to start. There are various, various, various ways upon which we live.

There is upon the doctrine of sin. But there is one, just one further observation I want to make. That this doctrine of man in the image of God is very, very intimate with the great essential doctrine of all Christians.

This doctrine of man in the image of God upon the great central doctrine of this can be the incarnation system of God. The incarnation and humiliation. God made man in His image.

The Son of God was made in the likeness of God. God made man in His likeness. And the dead Son of God came.

For the incarnation, for it was humiliation, was not dead. The incarnation was congruous with the very nature of God. Because human nature is in the image of God.

Not only is that, but we must remember also that Christ came in the likeness of flesh, in the likeness of sinful flesh, literally in the likeness of flesh. That is to say He came across to human nature as it was possible for Him to come without becoming Himself sinful. And I submit that this consideration that He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, bears upon the question that we discussed at the very beginning whether man in his fallen state is in the likeness.

Whether man in his fallen state is made. How could Jesus have come in the likeness of sinful flesh? In the likeness of sinful human, if even sinful human, that would be unmanifest. He didn't come in sinful human nature, but He came in the likeness, He came in that very human nature that in all others is sinful.

And therefore He came in the likeness of sinful flesh. But how could He have come in that likeness if that human nature had no affinity? Affinity. Affinity.

If I am in that man so fallen, still in the image and likeness of sinful flesh. Well, I'll stop today because I remind you of the fact that you do not hear your coffee break as possible and then you'll have a full hour. Those of you who come from countries where the language, the native language is not English, you can take longer if you wish.

You can take more than an hour if you wish. That's the concession I always wanted to know is that the native language is not English.

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