

This closing paper is a ragbag. Initially, it was intended that it should draw together the threads from all the other papers. However, in God's providence, two of the **five** papers arrived too late to be taken into consideration. So I have happily used the opportunity to escape in some measure from that constraint and to explore some issues that seem important to me..

I intend (A) to list and comment briefly on some issues where there appears to be a broad consensus among the three contributors whose work I had the opportunity to read. I intend (B) to highlight two issues which surface in the papers and which to my mind, warrant further discussion. Finally, I intend (C) to suggest three issues which fall outside the scope of the papers but may be worthy of consideration.

## A. I THINK WE ARE ALL AGREED (MORE OR LESS...)

### 1. On the exegesis of Genesis 1:26.

The plural pronouns point to plurality within God's unity and ultimately to the doctrine of the Trinity. Man in the image of God will reflect the eternal fellowship that exists between the persons of the Trinity. "It is not good for man to be alone": man is created to enjoy structured relationships within family and the wider human society. In this Man differs from the angels, who to our knowledge enjoy no organic relationships. Each of the angels apparently was created individually - there are no relationships of **paternity/sonship** among them • nor do they marry.

Comment: Ranald Macaulay rejects Barth's insistence that "the male/female relationship (is) *the* constitutive element of the image". But he **affirms** that Adam and Eve are made in the image of the Trinity. "Their relationship is one of unity and diversity as husband and wife. Is this not a reflection of the unity and diversity within the Godhead". This is surely correct. It is supported by the parallelism of Gen 1:27 ("in the image of God he created him//male and female he created them), and by the curious variation between singular and plural pronouns throughout the passage. The plural noun God (Elohim) consistently takes a singular verb. With reference to God, the "us" of vs 26 gives way to the "he" of vs 27. God is one yet within that oneness there is plurality. So God says "let us make Man (singular) . . . and let **them** (plural) have dominion." "In the image of God he created **him**; male and female he created **them**." Man is one, yet by virtue of the male/female distinction, within that oneness there is likewise plurality.

This is further supported by Paul's argument in 1 Cor 11:2-3 where he argues that the relationship between husband and wife is an analogue of the relationship between the Father and Christ. As the Father is the head of Christ, so the man is created to be the head of the woman. (Every unbeliever, entering a Christian home, should catch a glimpse of the eternal life of the Trinity in that Christian marriage!)

The implications for sexual ethics are of course comprehensive. They have been discussed at great length (from a neo-evangelical standpoint) by Paul King **Jewett**<sup>1</sup>. One does not need to endorse all his conclusions to appreciate his summary statement: "Our sexuality is a quality of being that penetrates the deepest ground of our humanity. As the creature in the divine image, we are given our humanity not only as shared humanity • humanity that is not shared is **inhumanity** • but the primal

<sup>1</sup> *Who We Are: Our Dignity as Human* Eerdmans 1996

form of this shared humanity is the fellowship of man and woman” (pp 136). In the light of this, it is not difficult to see why Paul affirms that sexual sin has a unique power to damage the sinner: the fornicator assaults himself at the very centre of his humanity. “The immoral man sins against his own body” (1 Cor 6: 18). Nor is it difficult to understand why homosexual sin is viewed with peculiar horror by Paul.

The terms “image” and “likeness” are essentially synonymous. Ian Hamilton lists out a number of ways in which theologians have attempted to differentiate between them. These attempts appear in great part to derive from, or lead to a diminution of the doctrine of total depravity. The “likeness” may have been lost - but the “image” kept intact. However, the most natural reading of the text allows for no such distinctions.

- (i) The statement that man is made “*in* the image of God” is best understood as implying identity: “Man is created ‘as’ God’s image or to be God’s image” (IH). “God’s image is not located somewhere in man; man in all that he is, is God’s image”. This is Paul’s understanding (1 Cor 11:7). Man is the finite mirror of God’s infinite being.

Comment: Ranald Macaulay and Ian Hamilton go on to argue that the image therefore is inalienable. “The imago though defaced by the fall cannot be lost” (RM). As long as a man is a man, he must by definition be the image of God. The question however, is surely, “can a man ever cease to be a man?” “Can a man be **destroyed** - not annihilated, but so ruined as no longer to be a man?”. I shall argue in the closing section of this paper that this is indeed the case. Jesus declares that soul and body will be destroyed in hell (Mt 10:28). Does this not suggest that everything which makes a man a man has been obliterated? A burnt-out wreck of a car lies by the side of the road. It has not been annihilated - but it is no longer a car. It is “something that was once a car”.

- (ii) The term “image of God” cannot be restricted by a neat checklist of attributes. “Man in **totus** is God’s **image**”(IH). Attempts to provide such a checklist, though helpful, are never adequate. So, eg Hughes (cited by RM) lists “personality, spirituality, rationality, morality, authority, creativity”. But should we not include, eg the capacity for dominion? Man is to reflect God in all his being.

Comment: I find it helpful to remember that Genesis 1:26 is intended to be read after vs 1-25. The God who is imaged in Man is the God who is revealed in those verses. In these verses **we see God’s power, creativity, beauty, orderliness. We see his rationality:** he reasons, he uses words to accomplish his ends. We see his moral character: he looks at the things he has created and judges them, declaring them good. We **see** his **kindness:** he speaks words of blessing over his creation - even over the birds and the fish. We **see** his **Triune nature.** He creates by his Word and his Spirit. Here we have the first indication that within the being of God there are three persons, relating to one another eternally in unity and harmony.

To read vs 26 in the context of vss 1-25 is to be guarded against any attempt to restrict the image, eg to moral/spiritual attributes or with Barth, to human sexuality.

**It may be worth asking:** Is the traditional distinction between God’s communicable and God’s incommunicable attributes viable? Would it not be better to say that Man in the image of God reflects all God’s infinite attributes in a finite way? (To anticipate the objection, omnipotence, omniscience etc are not properly spoken of as “attributes”. The attribute is **potentia** - power; **scientia** - knowledge. God possesses those attributes infinitely. His **image-bearers** possess them finitely).

## 2. That the image of God can only be rightly understood in relation to Christ

Christ is the eternal and infinite image of God's being: the outshining of God's glory, the imprint of God's character, the expression (Word) of God's hidden being, the Son who shares the Father's nature perfectly. Ian Hamilton cites Berkouwer, "a stress on the Christological emphasis involves dealing with the original image in terms of Christ, who himself is the image of God".

Comment: But how is the relationship between Christ the **uncreated** image of God and Adam the created image of God to be understood? Randal Macaulay s-arises Hughes thus: "**..man** is made in the image *of the image* • which is Christ..." "The 'true image' of God.. is Christ the second person of the Trinity. It is in *Christ's* image that Adam and Eve are made". "**..it is only in relationship with Christ that the human image can be restored..**"

Macaulay is unhappy with Hughes' formulation. "Are Adam and Eve not made in the image of the *Trinity*?" "**..the clear significance of Genesis 1:26 is that we are made in the image of God, the triune God**".

To my mind, the issues raised here are of compelling importance. Of all the questions under discussion in these papers, this is, to my mind, the one that has the most profound theological implications. Hopefully, Kelly Kapic's paper will clarify the issues. Not having yet seen that paper, it would be premature to comment further!

## 3. That fallen man continues to be the image of God

Geoff Thomas cites Gen 9:6, James 3:9, and interestingly Gen 5:3 and points out that man's standing in God's image "is the basis in Scripture for some wide appeals and application". "The implications of the human race uniquely bearing the divine image are immense for all our conduct". Ian Hamilton movingly summarises those implications: "No biblical truth more confronts and challenges the naturalistic presuppositions and amoral values of our modern (or post-modern) world. It challenges the perceived autonomous character of man; it establishes an infallible bulwark against the trampling on and despising of the poor, the dispossessed, the infirm and the unborn; it speaks hope to the lonely; it challenges the rampant individualism that scars our world (and the Church); it condemns racism and **anti-Semitism**; and it clarifies the essential equality and dignity of men and women."

Comment: It would be valuable to explore the relationship between the doctrine of the continuing image of God in fallen human beings and the doctrine of common grace. Is it true to say that it is God's common grace which preserves the remnants of his image in human beings?

## 4. That the fall has damaged the image of God in every aspect

Geoff Thomas: "**..one** may not judge that man is partially corrupt and partially not. The corruption **cannot** be considered as peripheral and patchy. We cannot plead some parts of man to be unaffected by sin.." He goes on to demonstrate this in the areas of knowledge, freedom, aesthetic sense, man's longing for communion, man's use of his body. Ian Hamilton quotes Calvin: "Now, all man's faculties are, on account of the depravity of nature, so vitiated and corrupted that in all his actions persistent disorder and intemperance threaten.."

### In summary..

Evangelical preachers, understanding the doctrine of the image of God, are uniquely able to address the observable realities of human experience. We are able to expose the depth of man's depravity without denying the reality of human dignity and value. I have tried to apply this in an evangelistic booklet currently being prepared for publication:

“Man ▪ every human being here in this world ▪ still carries the image of God. That is why human beings still have reason and knowledge. Total depravity means that we use our minds in a deceitful and proud and sinful way ▪ but we still have minds. Our thinking is twisted by prejudice and bias ▪ but we can still think and reason and learn and know.

Man still has conscience. Total depravity means that our conscience is damaged ▪ **it can** be perverted and twisted ▪ but we still have conscience. Every man still knows that some things are right and others are wrong.

Man still has love. Total depravity means that love is mixed with selfishness and greed and lust; our love is often given to the wrong people and the wrong things ▪ but fallen men and women can still love.

Man still has hope. Total depravity means **that** our hopes and dreams are often evil, and the way we set out to achieve them is wicked ▪ but fallen men and women still do dream of a better future ▪ for themselves and for the world.

Man is guilty and damaged. But he still carries the image of God. It's terribly defaced but it's still there. Someone compared Man with a wonderful temple that's been bombed, gutted by fire, and vandalised. It's overgrown with weeds, the stonework is blackened, the pillars have been broken down. It's utterly ruined ▪ completely unfit for use as a dwelling-place. And yet as you wander round it, you **find** traces, reminders of what it has been ▪ a stained glass window that's cracked but still intact, a bit of fine carving, the remains of a mosaic pavement. That's man ▪ every man ▪ created to be God's dwelling-place, but now utterly ruined. And yet there are still these traces, the last remnants of the image of God.

So human beings still have value. Human beings are depraved, corrupt, God-haters ▪ and yet while they have any last traces of God's image, they are not rubbish”.

## **B. I THINK WE NEED TO TALK MORE ABOUT...**

### **1. Creationism and Traducianism**

Geoff Thomas assumes a creationist position. I would like to hear him defend it. If Man is **the** image of God-in-Trinity, will not an unqualified creationism ultimately lead to tritheism? The Son shares the essence of the Father and derives his subsistence from **the** Father. Can we then view human beings, each as an underived, individual creation?

If we see each human being as created individually, will this not undermine the doctrine of the unity of mankind and the real participation of every man in Adam's sin?.

## 2. Anthropomorphism

Ronald Macaulay's discussion of anthropomorphic language within Scripture, and his citation of Moises Silva's work raises vital issues. Silva is surely right to say, "...it is not altogether far-fetched to say that descriptions of what we are and do should be called 'theomorphisms'. In other words, it is not as though God looks at our existence and searches for some quality that will illustrate in some simple language who God is. Rather, our human qualities are themselves but a reflection of God's person and attributes". That viewpoint needs to be explored in relation to many theological questions. Silva himself applies it to the human body. The reason we are created with eyes is because we are in the image of a God who sees. We might say that God alone has "real" eyes - infinite in their all-seeing scope, perfect in their perceptions. Every particle in the universe is vividly present to his "sight". The reason we have hands is because we are created in the image of a God who can interact with the created order, shaping it, using it, modifying it. He alone has "real" hands - hands that are simultaneously in contact with every atom of creation! Our hands are a finite counterpart of his infinite hands! If we pursue this line of thought, we will perhaps be less inclined to rush to the statement that "God has no body". The statement is of course true, if taken to mean "God is not limited to a specific place within the universe". But it would be equally true to say "God has an infinite body" if we mean, "God is present throughout his universe, seeing every part of it, hearing every part of it, in contact with every part of it". God's unlimited totally effective "contact" with the whole universe is not less, but more "real" than our limited contact with one tiny fraction of the world. When we say that "God is infinite", too often the thought conveyed is that God is nowhere "really". The truth is that he is really everywhere: "Thou art a sea without a shore, A sun without a sphere. Thy time is now and evermore. Thy place is everywhere". Our bodies contract our ability to interact with creation into a specific place. God suffers no such contractions!

The same perspective should be applied to the ongoing debate over divine impassibility. Too often theologians have failed to take account of the doctrine of the image of God. They suggest that Scripture language merely projects onto God human emotions which are foreign to him. Again the idea is that human feelings are "real" feelings - God may experience something analagous, but "of course", he doesn't experience "real" pain or fury or joy! Surely it would be truer to say that only God experiences these passions in all their "reality". He created man in his own image, with **the** capacity to experience pain, anger, delight, compassion, precisely so that man could in a finite way, mirror his own infinite and eternal passions.

The second-century Fathers who formulated the doctrine of divine impassibility were concerned that we should not construct God in our own image. They were right. His experiences are not forced on him from without, against his will. Rather, they arise from his own foreknowledge and will. In that sense, they are not analogous to ours. But ours *are* analogous to his. We are made in his image'.

Learning to think consistently in this way may demand a Copernican revolution in our minds. We will no longer think of human fatherhood as "real" and God's fatherhood as a picture, drawn from human experience. Rather we will say that "from him all fatherhood in heaven and earth is derived" (Eph 3: 15). He is the only "real" Father - human fathers, made in God's image are a created analogue of him. We will no longer think of human marriage as the "reality"; the marriage between Christ and the church as a picture. Christ's choice of the church, love for the church, union with the church, is the reality. Human marriage was invented by God to be the picture. We will no longer think of human kingship as something "real"; divine kingship as a helpful picture. God is the only real king, sitting on a real throne, wielding a **real** sceptre. Human institutions reflect the divine realities.

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<sup>2</sup> On the meaning of divine impassibility of J I Packer, *Theism for our Time in God Who is Rich in Mercy*, eds P T O'Brien & D G Peterson, Lancer 1986, pp 16-17

**Bavinck**<sup>3</sup> comments: “Whatever pertains to man, whatever pertains to creatures, is applied to God, especially ‘human organs, members, sensations, **affections,**’etc”. He goes on to cite an astonishing array of examples, and declares, “**Anthropomorphism** seems to be unlimited”. But then he is careful to add, “Indeed, although we **first** apply to the creature the names which designate God because of the fact that we know the creature before we **know God; essentially** they apply first of all to God, then to the creature. All virtues pertain first to God, then to the creature: God possesses these virtues ‘in essence,’ the creature ‘through participation’. As the temple was made ‘according to the pattern shown to Moses in the mount’ Heb **8:5**, even so every creature was **first** conceived and afterward (in time) created..”

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<sup>3</sup> *Doctrine of God*, BoT edition pp 86-94

C. AND NOW SOME HOBBY-HORSES..

1. The imitation of God and Christian ethics

Several of our contributors have touched on NT passages which speak of the Christian as “being transformed into Christ’s and God’s likeness”. Ian Hamilton refers to Romans **8:29**, 1 **Cor 15:49**, 2 **Cor 3: 10**, Eph **4:22-24**, Phil **3:21**, Col **3: 10**. The passages in Ephesians and Colossians are particularly explicit in their reference to the renewal of God’s image. The believer has “put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after **the** image of its creator” (**Col 3:10** RSV). What is stated as a definitive reality in Colossians is presented as a command in Ephesians: “Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness”. I do not intend to discuss these passages further: they are dealt with adequately in the standard commentaries. But we should note the practical application Paul gives here. He writes (Eph **4:32 - 5:2**): “..**be** kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, **as God in Christ forgave** you. Therefore, **be imitators of God**, as beloved children. And walk in love, us **Christ loved** us and gave himself up for us”. Paul appeals to the Ephesian Christians that they should consciously imitate God in his actions and attitudes. God’s image-bearers are God’s children, sharing the family likeness. And as devoted children, they are consciously to imitate their Father. It is as they imitate God that his image is renewed in them. This is worked out in some detail with reference to relationships within church and family. For example, (**Col 4: 1**: “Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly **knowing that you also have a Master in heaven**”.

Evangelical Christians have perhaps been reluctant to stress the call to imitate the character and conduct of God. Such an emphasis may seem to smack of moralism. Yet the imitation of God is a surprisingly frequent theme in the NT. Let us consider some **further** examples.

Matthew ch 5. Jesus is dealing with **the** question of how his disciples treat their enemies. He declares: “But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for **those** who persecute you that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven..” (vs 44) Christians show love even towards their enemies. Why? In order that they may be sons of their Father. They seek to be like him - as his sons, they must show a family likeness to their Father. vs 45 “he makes his sun shine on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” Since he treats his enemies with kindness, forbearance, generosity, his children must imitate him in that. He concludes: “Be perfect, therefore, even as your heavenly Father is perfect”. Christians are to imitate the perfections of God.

1 Peter ch 1. Again, the context is our position as children of God. vs 14 “**As** obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he **who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct**; since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’..” Believers are called to imitate him in his holiness: ie in all the qualities that make him what he is; his attributes. The text stresses that this is to be applied to “all your conduct” - the character of God is to be the benchmark for every practical detail of life. Believers are to imitate God’s attributes in **their behaviour**, their outward actions and lifestyle.

2 Corinthians 1. Paul is forced to defend himself against opponents who accuse him of breaking his word. He had planned to visit Corinth but his plans were frustrated. His critics sneered at him and said “He says yes one moment - no **the** next. In the same breath he says yes, yes and no, no”. Paul rebuts **the** charge (vs 15), “us surely as **God is faithful**, our message to you is not Yes and No”. Paul points to God’s character - God’s faithfulness. God makes plans God can be trusted to stand by what he’s said. “No matter how many promises God has made, they are Yes in Christ” “And” says Paul, “I aim to imitate God in that - as surely as he’s faithful, I aim to be faithful. I never make plans lightly - I never make promises and then casually break them. If I didn’t come to Corinth when I planned, it wasn’t for lack of trying. My aim is to imitate God’s reliability.”

Other passages could be cited but enough has been said to make the point. This latter passage is a telling example of the way that Paul aims to imitate God's attributes in daily life. The image of God includes such Godlike attributes as faithfulness to promises, careful planning, punctuality, orderliness. A man who falls short in these areas is to that extent, *ungodlike* and therefore *subhuman*. The restoration of the image of God in the believer must include renewal in these areas.

## 2. The image of God and cultural confrontation

Our contributors have found common ground in two propositions.

- (i) That the image of God constitutes true humanness. To the extent to which a person falls short of the image of God, to that extent (s)he is *subhuman*.
- (ii) That the fall of man in Adam has affected every aspect of human existence. Human depravity cannot be restricted to an artificially defined "moral" or "spiritual" sphere. Human beings are depraved - damaged - in their physical, intellectual, emotional, aesthetic, societal capacities and characteristics. In all these areas, they fall short of the image of God.

The **rider** to these two propositions is surely that the work of salvation must ultimately involve restoration in all of these areas.

In my observation that principle has often been neglected in evangelical thinking concerning the work of mission. Much is said today about the need for missionaries to be sensitive to different cultures. Missionaries are warned against any attempt to impose an alien culture. The underlying assumption appears to be that every human culture is equally valid. A sharp disjunction is made between, on the one side, moral and spiritual matters; on the other, cultural matters. The goal of mission will include moral renewal but not confrontation with cultural norms.

In the light of what we have argued, such a disjunction is surely impossible to sustain. Every culture in all its aspects is to be measured against the benchmark of God's attributes. The goal of mission is to restore human beings to the **fulness** of God's image in all its aspects.

Let us take two examples, and then list a few more:

- (i) It is frequently suggested that matters of *punctuality* and *timekeeping* are "merely cultural". Missionaries must not impose "Western" cultural ideals in such matters. But as I have suggested above, exactitude in such matters is a characteristic of God himself. He plans ahead. Psalm 33 vs 11: "The plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations". Isaiah 46 vs 10: "I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say 'My purpose will stand and I will do all that I please' God has his schedule, his programme prepared - down to the **last** detail - and God keeps to it.

That is a fundamental part of his trustworthiness. When God warns of a 40 year pilgrimage in the desert or promises a **return** from Babylon after 70 years, his people can depend on his punctuality.

An unpunctual man fails to reflect God's attribute of punctuality. At that point, the image of God has been damaged. He has become subhuman. Can missionary workers ever acquiesce in a *manaña* culture and view it as a matter indifferent?

- (ii) It is frequently assumed by Bible-translators that all human languages are equally valuable and worthy of respect. So, the task of translation means working within the confines of any particular language. No attempt must be made to extend and reform the possibilities of the language. Where necessary, they must modify the message of Scripture to accommodate the limitations of the language.

Again, the assumptions need to be questioned. Man has been damaged linguistically as he has been damaged in every other area. So for example a language that lacks abstract expressions is at that point a *subhuman* language: it falls short of God's image. God is capable of expressing himself abstractly.

Guy Wint's analysis of the militaristic culture that drew Japan into the Second World War is chilling. He pictures an appallingly hierarchical and rigid system in which communication between different classes became increasingly **difficult**. "In particular, the Japanese language was unsuited as a medium of communication for holding the political machinery together. Nobody talked Japanese as a form of intellectual pleasure.. the language was thought to be muzzy and **imprecise**."<sup>4</sup> The consequences of such linguistic deprivation were ultimately horrific. On the 26 July 1945 the allies issued a final call to Japan to surrender. The answer received appeared when translated to be a contemptuous rejection of their ultimatum. The bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. **After** the war the Japanese protested that their response had been misunderstood - that they had merely indicated that they were not ready to publish their reaction. Wint comments: "The subsequent controversy about what really happened has been inconclusive. If the confusion in fact occurred, it is typical of the Japanese language, one of the most involved and muddled languages of the world, that it should have betrayed Japan towards disaster"<sup>5</sup> A language so lacking in clarity is *an ungodlike* language. Christians cannot acquiesce in anything that robs a man of his full humanity. Tyndale extended the English language to express God's thoughts. Luther reshaped the German language by his Bible translation.

The Christian mission demands that every culture be rebuked at every point where it falls short of the image of God. Christians must either reform their culture or stand in radical **diassociation** from it at those points. UK society falls short of God's triune image by its narcissistic individualism. (Once a family gathered around the fireside to play Monopoly together - now each member of the family is in his own room watching a different TV channel!) Churches cannot accommodate that outlook - they must confront it. Western societies generally fall short of God's image by their increasing rejection of verbal in favour of visual communication. If we believe that God accomplishes all his purposes by his Word, we will confront that rejection. Can even matters of dress be indifferent? Some segments of "youth culture" demand that their devotees dress in uniform black. Surely that is a denial of God's image. Of all the colours in God's palette, he uses black most sparingly in painting the world in which we live! When people are converted out of such a culture, we expect to see them, as restored human beings, beginning to rejoice in a variety of colour, pattern and texture. (How delightful to read of the American Puritan William Brewster with his blue coat, violet coat and green **waiscoat!**). The command "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" calls for every aspect of life to be reformed by the imitation of God's attributes.

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Calvocoressi & Guy Wint: *Total War: Causes and Courses of the Second World War* Penguin 1972 pp 880

<sup>5</sup> pp 860

### 3. The doctrine of eternal punishment

Ian Hamilton concludes his study by citing John Murray: “..it is the fact that man is in the image of God that constitutes the unspeakable horror of eternal perdition”. However, within the confines of his paper, the implications are not explored. Murray goes on to speak of “the image of God as inalienable”. The implication appears to be that the reprobate, even in hell, retain the image of God. That is an assumption which would surely need the most rigorous examination if it were to be adopted. The Christian mind naturally recoils from the thought that creatures in hell can in any sense be said to be God-like.

It must be admitted that Scripture does not explicitly discuss the issue. Yet there are surely hints. Here we can only indicate some lines of argument.

(a) The name most often used for the final destination of the lost is *Gehenna* - the rubbish heap outside the walls of Jerusalem. The creatures in hell are **rubbish**, cast out as worthless and ready to be burned. Could such language be used for creatures that still reflect the being and glory of God?

(b) The Scriptures affirm that Christ is the one true Man, the second Adam, who heads up the true human race. Only those who are united to him are ultimately human. The second chapter of Hebrews is emphatic that the whole human race will fulfil its destiny to **rule** a restored creation under the **headship** of Christ. The implication is that the reprobate, cut off from Christ are cut off from the human race. They cease to be human. But to say that is to say that **they** are no longer in any sense, God’s image-bearers.

(c) We have suggested above that the doctrine of the image of God is closely connected with **the** doctrine of common grace. In this world, God in common grace perpetuates God-like qualities in the reprobate. Rationality, sanity, creativity, the capacity for affectionate relationships - these things are not natural to fallen creatures - they exist only because of common grace. But these things are fundamental to the image of God. If God withdraws common grace from the creatures in hell, they lose everything that ever made **them** recognisably human. Indeed it is questionable whether such creatures can still be called persons. Several of our contributors argued that personhood involves the capacity for relationships. Can a creature that has been handed over to unrelieved self-centredness, hating God and every **other** creature, barred by pride from any affectionate communication, be spoken of as a person? Can he (or it?) be said to share any likeness to the Triune - ie **other**-person-centred - God?

**Warfield** lists a number of writers whose thought appears to move in **this direction**<sup>6</sup>. He includes Martineau, Bushnell, Drummond, **Schäffer**, Curtis. He sums up their position as teaching “not **the** total extinction of the souls of the wicked, but rather, as it **is** commonly phrased, their ‘transformation’ into impersonal beings incapable of moral action, or indeed of any feeling”. A similar view has been argued movingly by **C S Lewis**<sup>7</sup> : “..to enter hell is to be banished from humanity. What is cast (or casts itself) into hell is not a man: it is ‘remains’.. it is, of course, impossible to imagine what the consciousness of such a creature - already a loose congeries of mutually antagonistic sins rather than a sinner - would be like..”

**Evangelicals** have sometimes objected that such a position mitigates the horrors of hell. To myself, the contrary appears to be true. I have tried to apply **this** in the booklet referred to previously. The conclusion I offer there seems an appropriate way to close this paper:

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<sup>6</sup> *Studies in Theology*, BoT edition, pp 456-457

<sup>7</sup> *Problem of Pain* ch VIII

“Those who are joined to Jesus Christ are the true humanity. They are the only people who, in the end, are truly human. They have true knowledge, true goodness, true love, true hope, and infinite value. They are God’s treasured people.

But what of those who reject Christ - who never turn to him, who are never joined to him - the true perfect Man? What will happen to them on the Day of Judgment? They will be cut off from the human race. The last traces of the image of God will be obliterated from them. And **they** will be cast into hell - ruined and wretched creatures, stripped of reason and knowledge, insane and bewildered. The seared conscience will finally be burned out of **them** and they will be given over completely to evil and ugliness, clinging forever to the sins that make **them** wretched. They will be cut off for ever from love, filled with an everlasting hatred and rage against God and against every other creature. They have no hope - they are trapped forever in despair and horror. They are no longer human - they really are what Samuel Beckett pictured - a pile of rubbish, without meaning, without value. The name the Bible gives to hell is Gehenna - that was the rubbish heap outside Jerusalem where the refuse of the city was burned. And that is the fate of those who live and die without Christ - they become worthless, value-less rubbish, cast out forever from God’s universe, into **the** tire of Gehenna.

In the end, the division between the saved and **the** lost is total and absolute. Men and women, children, who are joined to Jesus Christ become true human beings, utterly beautiful, **full** of wisdom and righteousness and love, reflecting God’s glory for ever, ruling over a restored universe forever. That is what men and women are supposed to be.

But those who will not have Christ - those who will not have the God of the Bible - those who will not bow to the sovereign God - for them there is nothing but ruin. Cut off from God, cut off from the human race, cut off from all that is good and God-like for ever.

Sometimes people ask me: “In heaven how can I be happy, knowing that my fellow human-beings - maybe the people I love best - are in hell?” And the answer is simple. No human being will be in hell. The creatures in hell are not human beings any longer. They are things that were once human beings. But **they** are human no longer. The person you **knew** and loved will not be in hell. That person had so many lovable qualities - the remnants of the image of God - but now, the image of God has been obliterated. The creature in hell shares the likeness not of God but of the devil. That person you once knew and loved - with his God-like qualities - no longer exists. You could not love the creature in hell if you tried - God cannot love that creature - there is nothing there to love.

Here in this world, the line between believers and unbelievers is often hard to discern. We have so much in common with one another. We can sympathise with one another because we are all still human beings. Unbelievers have so many remnants of the image of God still remaining in them - they may have so much charm; so much kindness; so much wisdom. And believers may fall so far short of the full image of God - they may

display so much dishonesty, malice, selfishness. We meet unbelievers who seem so much nicer than many believers.

But in the world to come, there will be no such confusion. Those who are joined to Jesus Christ will at last be restored fully to the image of God, sharing all his perfections. And those who are cut off from Jesus Christ will be stripped of all the last remnants of humanness. At last we shall see Man-in-Christ for what he is really is - the true likeness of God. And we shall see that Man-without-Christ is not truly Man at all; he is - as George Whitefield used to say - part devil and part beast.

It is not enough to ask the question: "What is Man?" The question is "What are you?" Are you a true man, a true woman, joined to Christ, growing in the likeness of God, being prepared for glory? Or are you still living without Christ, doomed to destruction and everlasting shame? May God press that question home to every heart, for Jesus's sake."

**Stephen V Rees**