

VI.

Rome, Socinus, Arminius, Calvin.

“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”—*Ephes.* iv. 24.

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It is not surprising that believers entertain different views concerning the significance of the image of God. It is a starting-point determining the direction of four different roads. The slightest deviation at starting must lead to a totally different representation of the truth. Hence every thinking believer must deliberately choose which road he will follow:

First, the path of Rome, represented by Bellarminus.

Second, that of Arminius and Socinus, walking arm-in-arm.

Third, that of the majority of the Lutherans, led by Melancthon.

Lastly, the direction mapped out by Calvin, *i.e.*, that of the Reformed.

Rome teaches that the original righteousness does *not* belong to the divine image, but to the human nature as a superadded grace. Quoting Bellarminus, *first*, man is created consisting of two parts, flesh and spirit; *second*, the divine image is stamped partly on the flesh, but chiefly on the human spirit, the seat of the moral and rational consciousness; *third*, there, is a conflict between flesh and spirit, the flesh lusting against the spirit; *fourth*, hence man has a natural inclination and desire for sin, which as desire alone is no sin as long as it is not yielded to; *fifth*, in His grace and compassion God gave man, independently of his nature, the original righteousness for a defense and safety-valve to control the flesh; *sixth*, by his fall man has willingly thrust this superadded righteousness from him: hence as sinner he stands again in his naked nature (*in puris naturalibus*) which, as a matter of course, is inclined to sin, inasmuch as his desires are sinful.

We believe that the Romish theologians will allow that this is the current view among them. According to Catechismus Romanus, question 38: “God gave to man from the dust of the earth a body, in such a way that he was partaker of immortality not by virtue of his nature, but by a superadded grace. As to his soul, God formed him in His image and after His likeness, and gave him a free will; *moreover* [*præterea*, besides, hence not belonging to his nature], He so tempered his desires that they continually obey the dictates of reason. Besides this He has poured into him the original righteousness, and gave him dominion over all other creatures.”

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The view of Socinus, and of Arminius who followed him closely, is totally different. It is a well-known fact that the Socinians denied the Godhead of Christ, who, as they taught, was born a mere man. But (and by this they misled the Poles and Hungarians) they acknowledged that He had *become* God. Hence after His Resurrection He could be worshiped as God. But in what sense? That the divine nature was given Him? Not at all. In Scripture, magistrates, being clothed with the divine majesty which enabled them to exercise authority,

are called “*gods*.” This applies to Jesus, who, after His Resurrection, received of the Father power over all creatures in an eminent degree. Hence He is absolutely clothed with divine majesty. If a sinner, as a magistrate, is called god, how much more can we conceive of Christ as being called God, simply to express that He was clothed with divine authority?

In order to support this false view of Christ’s Godhead, the Socinians falsified the doctrine of the image of God, and made it equivalent to man’s dominion over the animals. This was in their opinion also a kind of higher majesty, containing something divine, which was the image of God. Hence the first Adam, being clothed with majesty and dominion over a portion of creation, was therefore of God’s offspring and created in His image. And the second Adam, Christ, also clothed with majesty and dominion over creation, the Scripture therefore calls God.

That the Remonstrants also adopted this doubly false representation appears conclusively from what the moderate professor À Limborch wrote in the beginning of the eighteenth century: “This image consisted in the power and exalted position which God gave to man above all creation. By this dominion he shows most clearly the image of God in the earth.” He adds: “That in order to exercise this power, he was endowed with glorious talents. But these are only means. Dominion over the animals is the principal thing.” Hence we infer that the bravest and coarsest tamer of animals” playing with lions and tigers as if pet dogs, is the tenderest child of God. We say this in all seriousness and without a thought of mockery, to show the foolishness of the Socinian system.

The Lutheran view, as will be seen, occupies the middle ground between the Roman Catholic and the Reformed.

Its most prominent part (readily recognized in the representation of Dr. Böhl) is that the divine image is merely the original righteousness. They do not deny that man, as man, in his nature and being shows something beautiful and excellent, reminding one of the image of God; but the real image itself is not in man’s nature, nor in his spiritual being, but only in the original wisdom and righteousness in which God created him. Gerhardt writes: “The real similarity with God lay in the soul of man, partly in his intelligence, partly in his moral and rational inclinations, which three excellencies together constitute his original righteousness.” And Bauer: “Properly speaking, this image of God consists of some perfections of will, intellect, and feeling which God created together with man (*concreatas*), which is the original righteousness.” Hence the Lutheran doctrine teaches that the proper image of God is now totally lost, and that the sinner is as helpless before the work of grace as a stock or block, as one fettered and unable even to rattle his chain.

The Reformed, on the contrary, have always denied this; and taught that the image of God, being one with His likeness, did not consist only in the original righteousness, but included also man’s being and personality; not only his *state*, but also his *being*. Hence the original righteousness was not something additional, but his being, nature, and state were

originally in the most beautiful harmony and causal relation. Ursinus says: “The image of God has reference: (1) to the immaterial substance of the soul with its gifts of knowledge and will; (2) to all in-created knowledge of God and of His will; (3) to the holy and righteous inclination of the will, and moving of the heart, *i.e.*, the perfect righteousness; (4.) to the bliss, holy peace, and abundance of all enjoyment; and (5) to the dominion over the creatures. In all these our moral nature reflects the image of God, tho imperfectly. St. Paul explains the image of God from the true righteousness and holiness, without excluding, however, the wisdom and in-created knowledge of God. He rather presupposes them.”

These four views concerning the divine image present four opposing opinions that are clearly drawn and sharply outlined. The Socinian conceives of the image of God as entirely outside of man and his moral being, and consisting in the exercise of something resembling *divine authority*. The Roman Catholic does indeed look for the divine image in man, but severs him from the divine ideal, *i.e.*, the original righteousness which is put upon him as a garment. The Lutheran, like the Socinian, puts the divine image outside of man, exclusively in the divine ideal, which he considers not as foreign to man, but calculated for him and originally created in his nature (however distinct from it). Lastly, the Reformed confesses that man’s whole personality is the impress of God’s image in his being and attributes; to which belongs naturally that ideal perfection expressed in the confession of original righteousness.

Undoubtedly the Reformed confession is the purest and most excellent expression of the Bible revelation; hence we maintain it from deepest conviction. It maintains that God created *man* in His image, and not his *nature* only, like Rome; nor his *authority* only, like the Socinians; nor his *righteousness* only, like the Lutherans.

His divine image does not belong merely to an attribute, state, or quality of man, but to the whole man; for He created *man* in His image; and the confession which subtracts from this detracts from the positive Scriptural statement, *i.e.*, from the Spirit’s direct testimony: “Let Us *make* man in Our image and after Our likeness,” ([Gen. i. 26](#)) and not: “Let Us *re-form* man in Our image.”

Neither is the divine image only in man’s *personality*, as the Vermittelungs (Mediation) theologians, following Fichte, hold. Man’s personality certainly belongs to it, but it is not all, nor even the principal thing. Personality is *contrast* to our equals, and contrast can not be after the image of God, for God is One. *Personality* is a very feeble feature of the divine image. True personality is no contrast, but glorious completeness, like that in God. One person is something defective; three persons in one being, completeness.

Wherefore we protest against these loud and emphatic assertions that the image is our imperfect personality, as leading the Church away from the Scripture. No; man himself is the image of God, his whole being as man—in his *spiritual* existence, in the being and nature

of his soul, in the attributes and workings that adorn and express his being; not as tho this human being were a locomotive without steam, posing as a model, but a living and active organism exerting influence and power.

As a being man is not defective, but perfect; not in a state of *becoming*, but of *being*—*i.e.*, he was not to *become* righteous, but *was* righteous. This is his original righteousness. Hence, that God created man in His image signifies:

1. That man's being is in *finite* form the impress of the *infinite* Being of God.
2. His attributes are in *finite* form the impress of God's attributes.
3. His state was the impress of the felicity of God.
4. The dominion which he exercised was image and impress of God's dominion and authority.

To which may be added that, since man's body is calculated for the spirit, it also must contain some shadows of that image.

This confession the Reformed churches must maintain in the pulpit, in the catechetical classes, and above all in the recitation halls of theology.



VII.

The Neo-Kohlbrugians.

“And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, and after his image; and called his name Seth.”—*Gen. v. 3.*

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Many are the efforts made to alter the meaning of the word, “Let Us make man in Our image and after Our likeness,” (*Gen. i. 26*) by a different translation; especially by making it to read “*in*” instead of “*after*” our likeness. This new reading is Dr. Böhl’s main support. With this translation his system stands or falls.

According to him, man is not the bearer of the divine image, but by a divine act he was set in it, as a plant is set in the sun. As long as the plant stood in the dark, its shape and flowers are invisible; carried into the light its beauty becomes apparent. In like manner, man was without luster until God put him in the shining glory of His image, and then he appeared beautiful. Of course, this idea requires the translation: “Let Us create man *in* Our image.” (*Gen. i. 26*)

Let us explain the difference: *Gen. i. 26* in the Hebrew has two different prepositions. The one standing before “likeness” (לְכַדְמֹתָיו) is invariably used in comparisons; while the other before “image” is mostly used to denote that one thing is found in another. Hence the translation, “In our image and after our likeness,” has apparently much in its favor. This translation (altho we believe it to be incorrect; for our reasons see the next article) does not alter the meaning, if rightly interpreted.

And what is that right interpretation? Not that of Dr. Böhl; for, according to him, the newly created man did not stand in the midst of that image, but only in its reflection and radiation. The plant is not set in the sun, but in the sun-rays. No; if Adam stood in the midst of God’s image, then he was wholly encompassed by it.

Let us illustrate. There are wooden images covered with paper on which is printed a head or bust, colored to imitate marble or bronze. The wood may be said to be *in the image*, covered by it from all sides. Again, the sculptor actually chisels the image, in his mind, or posing as a model, *about the marble* until it encloses the whole block. In like manner it may be said that Adam, upon his first awakening to consciousness, was enclosed by God’s image; not externally, and he only its reflection, but its ectype penetrating his whole being.

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The correctness of this exegesis appears from *Gen. v. 1-3*, the contents of which, tho often overlooked, settle this matter. Here Scripture brings Adam’s creation in direct connection with his own begetting a son after his own likeness. We read: “In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him; male and female created He them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth.”