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Created in God's Image (Book Review)

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Book Reviews

Created in God's Image. Anthony A. Hoekema, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1986, \$19.95. Reviewed by Dennis De Jong, Instructor in Computer Science.

Dr. Anthony Hoekema has written an excellent exposition of the theology and implications of the concept of the image of God as reflected in created humankind. The pertinent texts concerning the various issues are considered carefully, as are the writings of several important theologians.

Hoekema considers several different views of the image of God in human beings. The first view contrasts the structural and functional aspects of the image of God, stating that we retain the structural aspect after the fall, while losing the functional part. The second view indicates that we have three kinds of relationships as a consequence of the image of God: with God, with others, and with nature. The third view sees four stages in the image of God: *original* - before the fall, *perverted* - by the fall, *renewed* - by sanctification, and *perfected* - in glory. The author carefully considers each of these views in various sections of the book.

The first two chapters are entitled "The Importance of the Doctrine of Man" and "Man as a Created Person." In Chapter 3, "The Image of God: Biblical Teaching," Dr. Hoekema analyzes the texts which pertain to the topic. He follows with Chapter 4, "The Image of God: Historical Survey," in which he considers the ideas of several theologians, including Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, Karl Barth, and G.C. Berkouwer. He points out areas of agreement and disagreement with each.

"The Image of God: A Theological Summary" is the key chapter of the book, explaining the concepts developed in the two previous chapters. Hoekema states that the basic thought of image is *likeness*, or mirror or representation, and that the image concerns the entire person. In light of this, he urges us to maintain balance between the structural

(what a human being is) and functional aspects (what a human being does). According to the author, a fallen human being is still an image-bearer, but must also be renewed. Jesus Christ is the true image of God, especially in terms of the three-fold relationship which we have: 1) Christ is wholly directed toward God, 2) is wholly directed toward us, and 3) rules over nature. Hoekema also explains the four states of the image in this chapter. The original image means that Adam and Eve functioned sinlessly, but could lose their condition. The capacities were still present in the perverted image, but Adam and Eve used these incorrectly. The renewed image involves the ongoing process of sanctification, while in terms of the perfected image humans are destined for glory and unlosable perfection.

The remaining chapters study some of the implications of the image of God: "The Question of the Self-Image," "The Origin of Sin," "The Spread of Sin," "The Nature of Sin," "The Restraint of Sin," "The Whole Person," and "The Question of Freedom." He uses and expands on the concepts developed earlier. For example, in the chapter on true freedom, Hoekema reinforces his description of the structural and functional aspects of the image of God while distinguishing between "choice" and "true freedom." He states that Adam had the ability to choose (even after the fall), while he lost true freedom, that is the ability to live in total obedience to God. In this life, "the Christian is *genuinely* free, but not *totally* free" (p. 236).

Dr. Hoekema has written a fine book explaining the image of God as represented in humankind. Intended for interested lay persons, students and pastors, it is thoroughly researched and well-organized, and will be useful for its intended audience.