

James 3:8 9 -- But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God.

3. Development of the doctrine

a. The terms "image" and "likeness" in Genesis 1:26 (צֶלֶם, דְּמוּת) indicate that man is, in some sense, like God. However, there is also a vast unlikeness. God is the infinite Creator; man is a finite creature. How can we express the likeness while preserving the unlikeness?

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 4, asks "What is God?" and answers in terms of His characteristics, attributes, qualities, and perfections.

If we attempt to state the nature of man in such a way as to retain the Creator-creature distinction while asserting mankind's likeness to God, we arrive at something like the following:

God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

Man is a spirit (in union with a physical body), finite, temporal and changeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

b. Various theologians have distinguished between the natural and the moral aspects of the image. Some have distinguished between the formal and the material aspects, or the structural and the functional aspects, or the broader and the narrower aspects of the image of God.

As originally created, mankind was like God in personal faculties and capabilities. Adam and Eve were rational beings, emotional beings, volitional beings, moral beings, aesthetic beings, social beings, and spiritual beings; with creative and languaging capabilities, and with dominion and responsibility for God's creation. These aspects may be viewed as comprising the image of God in the broader sense, which aspects were affected but not lost at the Fall.

Also as originally created, mankind was like God in moral and spiritual qualities of character. Adam and Eve were upright, holy beings who were in right relationship with God, loved God, and were inclined to obedience to the will of God. These aspects may be viewed as comprising the image of God in the narrower sense, which aspects were lost at the Fall.