



Dear Friends,

The question, what is a human, keeps popping up. How one answers that question is crucial. How we see ourselves and our fellow woman and man determines how we live, what we do with our bodies, how we treat nature and our obligations to one another.

The question of what a human is, is a theological matter. What I mean is, humans cannot truly understand what they are apart from God.

The Bible asks the question, “what is mankind?” (Psalm 8:4) The Bible has already answered the question. At the beginning of Scripture, in Genesis 1:26, God says, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.” The writer of Genesis then summarises:

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Gen 1:27)

That single statement is packed full of profound truths about what a human is. First, it says we are creatures. That truth of itself reveals a great deal about us. As creatures, we have been created by someone. It implies a relationship to a Creator. Humans are not self-made. Our Creator has designed us to be what we are. He has also created us for a purpose. Being a creature also assumes that humans have limits.

Second, this statement teaches that humans are made in God’s image. Only humans are made in God’s image. That means men and women are exceptional creatures. The truth that humans are God’s image bearers also infers that we have a God given purpose. Men and women are to be like God. The entire Bible teaches that this God-given purpose can only be realised in Jesus, who shows us what true humanity looks like. The truth that humans are made in God’s image also means there is a sacredness to human life that lies at the heart of the command to not take another’s life.

Third, God creates humans male and female. This truth also reveals much about our humanity. That humanity consists of men and women tells us that we are intrinsically relational beings. God explains in Genesis 2:18 that he creates woman because, “It is not good for man to be alone.” Man needs a partner to be able to fulfil the cultural mandate given to humanity by God to “be fruitful and increase in number,” to “fill the earth and subdue it,” and to “rule” (Gen 1:28). The truth that humans are male and female also teaches us that our sexuality is intrinsic to being human. Another way to say this is, our bodies are an essential part of our being. Humans are not essentially a mind or soul.

For many centuries, Biblical teaching informed and shaped Western culture’s understanding of what a human is. But in the past few hundred years, Biblical teaching has been increasingly rejected and as a result, there have been competing notions of what a human is. Notions, such as, human as essentially mind and not body. Human as animal, just like any other animal. Human as machine.

With the emergence of AI, there is talk of a new kind of human, the transhuman. Advocates of transhumanism believe that “the human condition” is a limitation to be overcome rather than accepted, and that technology such as AI makes this a possibility.

The death of God in modern culture does not simply mean the gradual disappearance of religious belief and practice. It has implications for what it means to be human. The gospel of Jesus Christ is humanity’s only true hope of saving us from ourselves. Jesus rescues us from our sinful desire to be “like God” in ways that are harmful and destructive to us, instead of creatures, made in his image, to partner one another in glorifying God and loving one another.

God Bless,
Mark Adams