

"THE DOCTRINE OF MAN"

Edward G. Kettner, ThD, Professor of Systematic Theology, Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Edmonton, AB

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RESEARCH

The locus on man (anthropology) and the locus on sin (hamartiology) are standard dogmatic loci which set the stage for the loci on grace and Christ. Here we see man created in the image of God, and man fallen into sin with the consequent destruction of the image *coram Deo*, necessitating a divine act for our salvation. With the challenges to orthodoxy made in the 20th and 21st centuries by evolutionism, existentialism, and post-modernism, it is imperative to answer the challenges and to defend the orthodox, scriptural, confessional position over against attempts to blunt it, demythologize it, and reinterpret it.

OBJECTIVES

The central objective of this research project is to prepare a volume on anthropology and sin for the Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics series which maintains the confessional position in dialogue with theological trends that have arisen since Pieper wrote his definitive dogmatics for confessional North American Lutheranism.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this project begins by setting the stage for the discussion by looking at modern and post-modern trends and understandings regarding what it means to be human. In other words, it starts from below, from human observation and experience, and outlines some of the issues that need to be dealt with, including the nature of the image of God, body-soul dichotomy, creation as male and female, civic righteousness, sin as the destruction of the image, sin as rebellion and as exploitation, and other important issues. It then moves to the confessional (scriptural) discussion to demonstrate that God has actually provided an analysis of our condition, and ultimately a solution to it.

DISCUSSION OR RESULTS / OUTLOOK

Research and writing on this project is ongoing. Certain observations and themes come forth in this study. Certain issues analyzed in the Braaten and Jensen *Christian Dogmatics* of 1984, dealing with creation, including that of the human being (by Philip J. Hefner) sidestep the historicity of the direct creation of man from the dust of the earth and an actual fall that Scriptures teach and the confessions presuppose, and focus on the conundrum of what it means to be human by observation of man today. Methodologically, what we see is a worldview which is in many ways compatible with orthodoxy, though the question of historicity is brushed aside and the questions answered philosophically. The understanding of the Fall that is presented here is compatible with that of Reinhold Niebuhr, that the Fall is an "existential moment" rather than an historical event. The rejection of a fall from perfection in favour of the idea of the fall as a continuing existential problem certainly creates a problem with seeing even physical death as a consequence of sin, and not merely part of the natural order of things.

As we deal with questions of what it means to be male and female, civil righteousness, and so forth, the concept of natural law must be maintained. Modern (post-modern) thought has reduced natural law to phenomenology—what occurs in nature—rather than what should occur. In the end, the very concept of sin may lose its meaning. It ceases to be rebellion against God and lawlessness, and becomes only the offense to the sensibilities of one's neighbour and oppression of the neighbour.

One of the problems that arises is that man becomes the judge of truth, demonstrating (to him or herself) that the teaching of Scripture regarding man is validated by our own observations, rather than that our own experience is to be interpreted by means of God's revelation to us. Because of the fall, all creation has been subjected to futility (Rom. 8:20), so the human mind cannot understand the things of God until it is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, who, working through the Word, shows us who we are.

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