

THE EQUIP INSTITUTE

Theme: Baptist Beliefs

Topic: BF&M (2000): Article III: Man

Fall 2025

Introduction

The Equip Institute exists to equip members of Taylors First Baptist Church to think rightly about God and his Word for the sake of living rightly before God in his world. The topic this week is Article III in the Baptist Faith and Message (2000), which is on the doctrine of man.

Article III

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

Key Biblical Texts

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ²⁹And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. (Gen. 1:26-30)

³When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? ⁵Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet. (Psa. 8:3-6)

¹²Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.... ¹⁷For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life

through the one man Jesus Christ. ¹⁸Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. (Rom. 5:12, 17-19)

¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. (1 Cor. 1:19-22)

⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. (Col. 3:9-11)

Observations

Exposition of Article III

Historical Context

Most of the 2000 text echoes earlier edition of the BF&M. However, two key updates were made. One was related to gender/sex, while the other was made to race/ethnicity. Both changes were intended to clarify a basic Christian understanding of humanity. Neither of these changes were controversial at the time.

Key Ideas

God created humans without using any secondary processes such as evolution

Humans alone among God's creatures are created in God's image and represent the pinnacle of his creative works

There are only two genders, male and female, which is intrinsic to God's creative purposes for humans

The first humans were historical people who were innocent of sin but capable of choosing to sin

Satan is a real being who tempted the first humans to sin

Sin is first and foremost against God and involves rejecting his divine commands

Through the freely chosen sins of the first humans, their original innocence was lost

The sin of the first humans has tragic implications for all mankind because all humans are affected by that original sin

All humans inherit a sin nature and inhabit sinful environments

All humans choose to sin as soon as they are able to make such choices, and all humans are personally accountable for their own sin

God's grace alone restores humans to a right relationship with God and enables them to fully live out God's purposes for their lives

Human dignity is rooted in the twin truths that all humans are created in God's image and that Jesus died for mankind

Human dignity applies to all people, everywhere, regardless of their race

The Revisions

The first sentence of the 1963 edition was expanded into three separate sentences. The latter two sentences in the 2000 edition make clear that God's divine design for humans is that there are two genders, male and female. Gender is a good gift from God. This revision was in direct response to third-wave feminism, which argues that gender is a social construct informed more by cultural preferences than biology. Most feminists didn't want to reject biological sex, but rather they wanted to subvert societal expectations about the differences between men and women.

Providentially, the revision also anticipated our current cultural context because it suggests that gender isn't a fluid concept but rather is a fixed reality. That humans are either male or female is part of God's good design for his image bearers. There are people who struggle with gender dysphoria, including some Christians. There are also individuals who undergo various "gender reassignment" procedures to conform their physical traits as much as possible to the opposite gender. However, it is impossible for a person to change his or her gender.

The second revision is in the sentence on human dignity. The 1963 edition said that "every man possesses dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love." The 2000 edition says that "every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love." This revision was in response to various forms of racism. The Southern Baptist Convention was formed in 1845 to

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