

"My Reason and Senses: Creation, Incarnation, and the Image of God"

God intentionally created not just the atoms and molecules of our human bodies, but also our reason and all our senses.

Moreover, in the person of Jesus, God himself became an incarnate human, observable by the very human senses he created. This session will include a case study of senses in the book of Genesis with application to how a Christian understanding of our senses illuminates our relationships with God and the rest of creation and also shapes the vocation of scientist.

Three categories of hypotheses for human origins

Direct Creation



Theistic Evolution



Naturalistic Evolution



Creation, Incarnation, and the Image of God – Dr. Michael Young

Sort the following into TWO groups:



Living vs Non-living



“Soulish” (has breath) vs Non-soulish



Supernatural vs. Natural



Creator vs. Creature



How does the fact that **you are a creature** (not necessarily even a human) shape...

- † ...your understanding of how God views you?
- † ... you view yourself?
- † ... you view others?
- † ... you view the rest of creation (plants, animals, environment, etc.)?



How does the fact that **you** are a **creature** shape...

- † ... how you view God?
- † ... how much you expect to understand God?
- † ... how you expect God to reveal himself to you?



Which answers change if you **aren't a creature** (naturalistic evolution)?

- † ... your understanding of how God views you?
- † ... you view yourself?
- † ... you view others?
- † ... you view the rest of creation (plants, animals, environment, etc.)?
- † ... how you view God?
- † ... how much you expect to understand God?
- † ... how you expect God to reveal himself to you?

What if God used a natural process to create you?

- † ... your understanding of how God views you?
- † ... you view yourself?
- † ... you view others?
- † ... you view the rest of creation (plants, animals, environment, etc.)?
- † ... how you view God?
- † ... how much you expect to understand God?
- † ... how you expect God to reveal himself to you?

What if God used ~~a natural process~~ parents to create you?

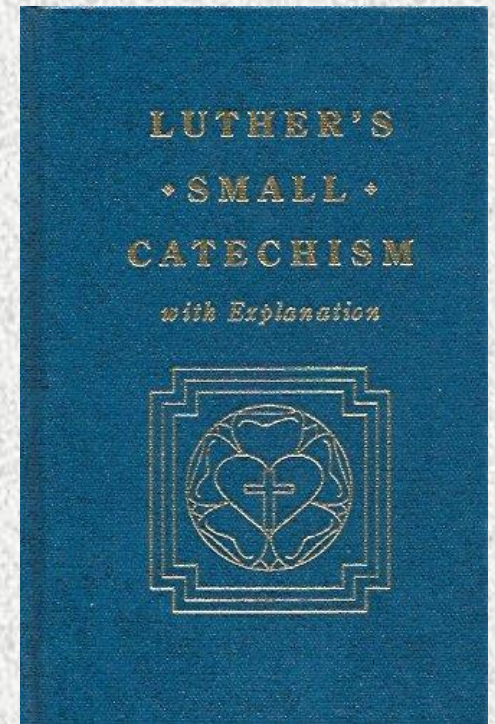
- † ... your understanding of how God views you?
- † ... you view yourself?
- † ... you view others?
- † ... you view the rest of creation (plants, animals, environment, etc.)?
- † ... how you view God (and your parents)?
- † ... how much you expect to understand God (and your parents)?
- † ... how you expect God (and your parents) to reveal themselves to you?

What if God used ~~a natural process~~ **theistic evolution** to create you?

- † ... your understanding of how God views you?
- † ... you view yourself?
- † ... you view others?
- † ... you view the rest of creation (plants, animals, environment, etc.)?
- † ... how you view God (and evolution)?
- † ... how much you expect to understand God (and evolution)?
- † ... how you expect God (and evolution) to reveal themselves to you?

How do you expect God to reveal himself to you?

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, **my reason and all my senses**, and still takes care of them.



Small Catechism- Article I

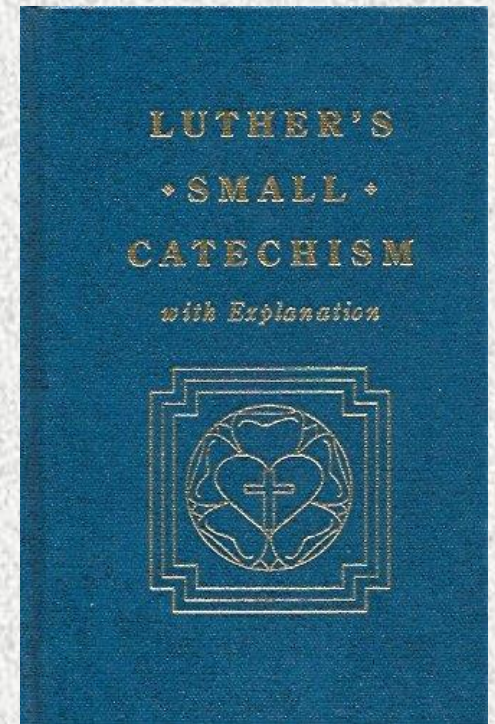
I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, **my reason and all my senses**, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.

How do you expect God to reveal himself to you?

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, **my reason and all my senses**, and still takes care of them.



What are your senses?



Your senses are...

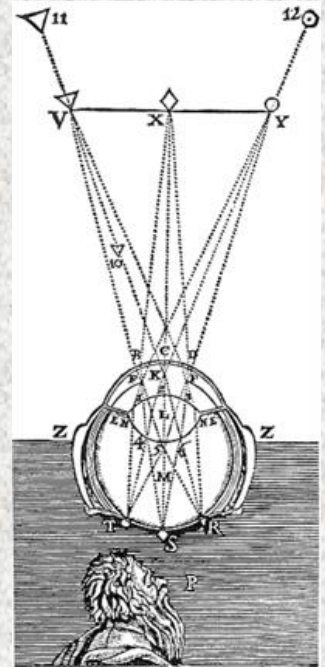
† how you observe the real, physical world you are part of, but ...

† ... can you trust them?

† ... are they helpful to a Christian?

† ... can they lead you away from God?

† Let's use the book of Genesis as a case study



Genesis contains 1533 verses

† How many do you think contain at least one word specifically related to senses (touch, saw, ears, etc.?)

† 227 (15.5%)



[eye* OR see OR saw* OR look* OR sees OR seen OR seeing OR sight* OR vision* OR hear OR hearing OR heard OR ear OR ears OR listen* OR smell* OR nose* OR nostril* OR aroma* OR touch* OR feel* OR felt OR cold OR pain OR tast* OR tongue*]

Genesis contains 1533 verses

† Which senses do you think are mentioned the most?

166 verses: Sight

60 verses: Hearing

16 verses: Touch

5 verses: Smell

0 verses: Taste (does not include food/eating)

Can we observe God with our senses?

- † 3:8 And they [Adam and Eve] heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden
- † 15:1 the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision
- † 16:13 Truly here I [Hagar] have seen him who looks after me
- † 18:2 He [Abraham] lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him
- † 32:30 So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered



Our senses observe sinful things

- † 1:6 So when the woman **saw** that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the **eyes**
- † 3:16-17 in **pain** you shall bring forth children. ... in pain you shall eat of [the ground] all the days of your life
- † 9:22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, **saw** the nakedness of his father
- † 19:26 But Lot's wife, behind him, **looked** back, and she became a pillar of salt.
- † 31:34 Laban **felt** all about the tent, but did not find them [his household gods/idols]
- † 39:7 And after a time his master's wife cast her **eyes** on Joseph and said, "Lie with me."

Our senses observe good things

- † 1:9 And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the **sight** and good for food
- † 7:1 I have **seen** that you [Noah] are righteous
- † 13:14-15 Lift up your **eyes** and **look** from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land that you **see** I will give to you and to your offspring forever
- † 22:13 And Abraham lifted up his **eyes** and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram
- † 49:2 Assemble and listen, O sons of Jacob, **listen** to Israel your father

Does God have senses?

- † 1:4, And God **saw** that the light was good.
- † 5:5 And the LORD came down to **see** the city and the tower
- † 8:21 when the LORD **smelled** the pleasing aroma [Noah's sacrifice]
- † 21:17 And God **heard** the voice of the boy [Ishmael]
- † 16:13 [Hagar said], "You are a God of **seeing**"



The most sensuous chapter in Genesis?

27:1 When Isaac was old and his **eyes** were dim so that he could not **see**, he called Esau his older son ... 5 Now Rebekah was **listening** when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. 6 Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "I **heard** your father speak to your brother Esau, ... 12 Perhaps my father will **feel** me, and I shall seem to be mocking him and bring a curse upon myself and not a blessing." ... 21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may **feel** you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not." 22 So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, who **felt** him and said, "The voice [sounds like] is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." ... 27 So he came near and kissed him. And Isaac **smelled** the **smell** of his garments and blessed him and said, "See, the **smell** of my son is as the **smell** of a field that the LORD has blessed! ... 34 As soon as Esau **heard** the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry

How should we use our reason and senses?

† Magisterial (teacher/ruler) use:

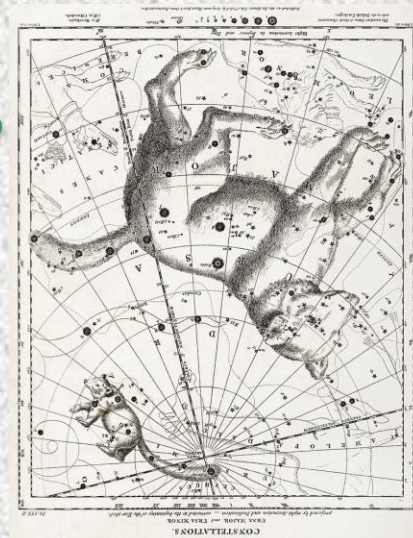
† Trusts them first

† Jesus can't logically be 100%
God and 100% man

† I only see/taste wine,
not Jesus' blood

† Ministerial (servant) use:

† Used to interpret God's revelation



What should I expect of Science?



- † Science is fundamentally a method of using sense to obtain knowledge of the natural world through observation
- † Two Christian approaches to science:
 - † Limit science to natural explanations and also use complementary methods
 - † Define science in a way that allows inclusion of supernatural explanations

What do I, as a creature, use my senses to observe?

† God at work

† God works through means



What do I, as a creature, use my senses to observe?

- † God at work

 - † God works through means

- † My neighbors

 - † Love and serve them

- † The rest of creation (our fellow creatures)

 - † Christian Stewardship



Does how you talk about nature affect how you think of humans?

“The world”
OR
“Creation”



Do these views lead to different understandings of our senses?

Direct Creation



Theistic Evolution



Naturalistic Evolution



- † What is the purpose of our senses?
- † How reliable are our senses?
- † How sufficient are our senses?

Incarnation

- † God himself is observable!
- † How long has Jesus had a body?
- † Is Jesus creator or creation?
- † How is believing in the incarnation similar and different than pantheism?



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Incarnation

- † If I believe that God can have a body, how hard it is to believe that humans can be more than a body?
- † If I believe that God can take on flesh, how hard is it to believe that he can take on bread and wine?

Do these views lead to different understandings of incarnation?

**Direct
Creation**



**Theistic
Evolution**



**Naturalistic
Evolution**



How about humanity?

How about humanity?

Psalm 8:5 Yet you have made [man] a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.



What is the difference between humans and animals?



A word cloud of human traits and abilities, with words of varying sizes and orientations scattered across the page. The words are: Religion, Flat face, Relative brain size, Self-Awareness, Conscience, Manipulate Environment, Tools, Metacognition, Language, and Opposable Thumbs. The words are in a dark blue, sans-serif font.

Religion

Flat face

Relative brain size

Self-Awareness

Conscience

Manipulate Environment

Tools

Metacognition

Language

Opposable Thumbs

My Answer...

- † **Ecclesiastes 3:11** [God] has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.
- † **Romans 2:15** They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

Created in God's Image

Genesis 1:26-27 Then 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." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Will, Intellect , Covenantal Belonging to God Intrinsic
and Memory Children Wisdom Worth

What is the "image of God"?

Golden Rule Righteousness Intelligent Soul

"These verses [Genesis 1:26-27] are perhaps the verses of the Old Testament most commented on by the Fathers." - *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, Andrew Louth, ed.

Glorifying God Free will Virtue Goodness
Our Vocation Purest Senses Reflecting God
Worthy of Honor Immortal Free from fear to creation

Will, Intellect ,
and Memory

Covenantal
Children

Belonging to God

Intrinsic
Worth

Wisdom

What is the "image of God"?

Golden Rule

Righteousness

Intelligent Soul

Rational

Religious

Flesh & Spirit

Authority

Integrity
of Nature

Self-Transcendence

Having Memory

Incorporeal

Living Sacrifice

Order-bringing

Loving God
& Neighbor

Having Dominion

Part of
Creation

Loving

Christ

Conscience

Glorifying God

Free will

Virtue

Goodness

Our Vocation

Purest Senses

Reflecting God
to creation

Worthy
of Honor

Immortal

Free from fear

Defining the "Image of God"

- † Explicitly Reflecting the Trinity
 - ("Let US make man in OUR image")
 - † Will, Intellect, and Memory
 - † Body, Soul, and Spirit
- † Other Aspects of Community/ Relationship
 - † Complementarity of male/female
 - † Covenantal Children or Belonging to God
 - † Part of Creation or Loving God & Neighbor

Defining the "Image of God"

- † Contrasting with Animals
 - † Rational soul/Reason (Logos)
 - † Intelligence
 - † Conscience
 - † Loving
 - † Free-will

Defining the "Image of God"

† Concepts in other Genesis verses:

† "Dominion" over creation → Authority

† Created to work the garden → Vocation

† "Very good" → Righteousness or Virtue

† "Breath of Life" & "dust from the ground"

† Prior to fall → Immortality or Integrity of entire Nature

Defining the "Image of God"

+ New Testament Verses

+ Eph 4:24 "and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

+ Col 3:10 "and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator."



Defining the "Image of God"

† My favorite (Martin Chemnitz)

"This image was in agreement with the normative righteousness in God. This means that in the entire spirit, in the entire heart, in the entire will, in all the members of the body and all the forces of the soul, the powers were completely unimpaired and completely perfect; they were perfectly fitted to recognize God, to love God, and also to love the neighbor, according to love's double commandment. On the morning of creation, human nature was completely pure and holy. It corresponded to the last commandment: "You shall not covet." Thus was the image of God in humanity. That it was so is evident from the restoration of this image which the Holy Spirit begins in us in this life (Romans 12; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10)."

Defining the "Image of God"

† Can you tell which is Luther and which is Council of Trent?

† "Adam knew God and ... lived a life that was wholly godly; that is, he was without the fear of death or of any other danger."

† "[God] gifted [man] with free will ; and so tempered all his motions and appetites, that they should at all times be subject to the control of reason."

Do these views lead to different understandings of God's Image?

Direct Creation



Theistic Evolution



Naturalistic Evolution



Defining the "Image of God"

- † Potential risks of Direct Creation
 - † Ascribing scriptural authority to scientific theories
 - † Confusing interpretation of scripture with scripture



Defining the "Image of God"

† Some dangers of Naturalistic Evolution

- † Believing you are "just an animal" can be self-fulfilling
- † Missing out on much of the richness of life
- † Missing out on a relationship with God.



Defining the "Image of God"

† Some dangers of Theistic Evolution

† Attributing the image only to humankind, not individuals.

† Developing a habit of overly separating body and spirit

† Overly "spiritualizing" the image

† Incorporating the "image of evolution", e.g. bringing order from disorder



How to choose?

**Direct
Creation**



**Theistic
Evolution**



**Naturalistic
Evolution**



How to choose?

† Abductive Reasoning – Which best explains all available information?

† Study of creation with our senses

† Comparing humans with Animals.

† "Super-natural" realities (Moral law, virtue, beauty, reason)

† The claims of the incarnate Christ (who also endorsed the Bible)



Creation, Incarnation, and the Image of God – Dr. Michael Young

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