

Is man made in God's image or god in man's image?

While most people, at least those that believe in God, would say that man is made in the image of God, do their beliefs and actions really show this. What do I mean by this? If man is made in God's image, then we must accept what He has told us in His revealed Word, the Bible, about Himself. This would include things like:

- Mankind is condemned because of sin.
- The destiny of the condemned is in the lake of fire where they will be punished for all eternity
 - “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; (Matt. 25:41 NAS95)*
- No one can get into heaven on account of their own “good works”.
- There is no way to be saved other than through accepting the atoning sacrifice of Jesus
 - *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. (John 14:6 NAS95)*
 - *“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12 NAS95)*
- God is a just God and must therefore punish all sin.
- God is a loving and merciful God and has provided a way for His justice to be satisfied by providing Jesus, His Son to pay the penalty for our sins if we choose to accept it.
 - so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:15–16 NAS95)*

If god is made in man's image then we would have beliefs such as:

- If god is loving, then he will not punish people in hell.
- As long as you believe in god and do good, you will go to heaven.
- God is whatever I make him out to be and my god can be different from yours.
- God is just something that is made up in people's minds, there really is no such thing as a god that has created everything and is the final, absolute authority.
- Different religions have the same god, they just describe him differently, so it does not matter which one you believe, as long as you believe in a god.

You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. (James 2:19 NAS95)

Let's take a look at this logically now to see what can and cannot be true.

- First, we must establish who God is and what He is not. Since the universe is finite, and everything cannot come from nothing, we need to define God as the being that is

eternal, self-sufficient, self-sustaining, all powerful and all knowing that has created the material universe and all that is in it. He cannot be some vague idea or just a force that is not personal. God can also not be construed as being a part of this created universe.

- God cannot be something that is just made up in people's minds.
- Since God is not a part of this "natural" world, we need to define Him as being "supernatural".
- Science is only able to observe, test and verify things in the "natural" world, therefore it cannot be used to test or define God in the strict sense of science.
- Let's look at some definitions for science:
 - *the intellectual and practical activity encompassing the systematic study of the structure and behaviour of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment.*
 - *a systematically organized body of knowledge on any subject.*¹

The first one is the one that we normally associate with "science". As we look at history, we can see that scientific hypothesis change over time. A really good example of this is Covid 19. What is considered scientifically true and that which is labelled "misinformation" changes over time. We often find that "misinformation" becomes scientific "fact". Science, by virtue of its nature can never totally prove anything, since we never know if we have all the information and considered all possible situations. It can give us fairly high degrees of certainty in situations where testing, observation and falsification can be repeatedly verified. The second shows that true science actually encompasses a larger scope. Theology, the study of God, is a systematic study of the truths related to God. Our physical world does give us some ideas as to the nature of God and reveals that there is a creator God.

because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (Rom. 1:19–20 NAS95)

In order to know more than this, God has to reveal it to us. That would lead to the next major question: How do we know which "view", "philosophy" or "revelation" from God is the true one? Is one religion any more valid than another? Can it not just be a relationship with God?

The first logical truth is that God is who He is, regardless of what we think He may be or would like Him to be. Another logical truth is that mutually exclusive or contradictory views cannot be true at the same time. For example, polytheism cannot be true at the same time as monotheism. Jesus being wholly God and wholly man cannot be true at the same time as Judaism, Islam or any number of sects that deny the deity of Jesus. If Jesus is the only way to heaven, then all other religions are false. If a religion that

¹ Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, eds., *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

teaches that salvation (entry to heaven) is through works, then Christianity is false. If God has decreed that:

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, (Heb. 9:27 LSB)

then there is no other way than what He has established. We do not have a choice on what is true or how to enter heaven. It is only God that determines this.

In order to determine which of the possibilities is true, we must examine the evidence and follow it. On the website <https://www.biblestudyhelps.ca/bible-studies> there are a number of studies related to this, so it will not be dealt with in detail here. Essentially, the evidence points very strongly to the Bible being the true revelation of God to people. Miracles, archaeology, internal and external consistency all point to the Bible being true.

While people may like the idea of god being made in man's image, so that they can make him out to be whatever they like, it is not a logical, rational possibility.

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Gen. 1:27 NAS95)

Unless otherwise marked, Scripture quotations are from the NASB Bible.

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