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IN THE "IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD" [PART I]

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The Hebrew slave who dwelt in Egypt 3500 years ago was considered to be the property of Pharaoh. All Egyptians detested that slave because of his association with shepherding (cf. Genesis 46:34). He labored rigorously from sunrise to sunset, constructing the impressive store-cities of Pithom and Raamases. The only one he knew who was considered to be like a god was Pharaoh, the supposed incarnation of the Sun god, Ra. Pharaoh also was considered the sole person who bore "the image of God." The Egyptian canal digger and the merchant, the taskmaster and the Hebrew slave, all were innately inferior because they were not divine image bearers (or so they had been told, and thus so they thought). Such a designation **never** was applied to the common man in Egypt, nor anywhere else for that matter. The rulers of empires were the sole beings referred to as "images" of gods.

What a joy, then, it must have been for a former slave in Egypt to find out that **he** was created in God's image. After generations of bondage in Egypt, the Israelite was humbled—and yet thrilled—to learn that he was as special in the eyes of Jehovah as Pharaoh thought he was in the eyes of Ra. How delighted the Gentile convert must have been when he realized that he was as much an image bearer as any king. The Gentile discovered that high-ranking officials were not the only ones who bore God's image. Rather, mankind as a whole was created God's vice-regent.

Outside the Bible, archaeologists and historians never have found where mankind in general was said to have been created in the "image" of a particular god. Three Akkadian texts from the Sargonic period of Assyria's history use the Akkadian cognate of *tselem* ("image"), but it is employed only in a context where kings are being discussed (Miller, 1972, 91:294-295). Genesis 1:26-27 describes **all** mankind with language that previously had been applied only to the supreme rulers of nations.

> And 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 cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

The Creator of the Universe has honored mankind by endowing him with certain qualities that are intrinsic to His nature. Through the centuries, many have contemplated the meaning of the phrase "in the image and likeness of God." Much has been written on the subject, and no doubt much more is yet to be written. Here, however, we would like to take a logical approach in searching for this meaning. First, we intend to narrow the possibilities by eliminating inaccurate definitions. Second, we want to discuss whether the image of God in man has been "lost," as some have claimed. And third, we plan to deal with the actual meaning of the Bible's statement that man exists in the image and likeness of God, and investigate the ramifications of that statement for those people today who want to build and sustain a rock-solid faith based on this marvelous truth.

"IN THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD"—WHAT IT DOES NOT MEAN

Before we elaborate on what being created in the image and likeness of God means, it is appropriate to inquire as to what it does **not** mean. First, it does not mean that we are divine. Satan strives daily, of course, to persuade us to believe that we are God (cf. Genesis 3:5). In fact, deification of self is the central message of the New Age Movement (see Bromling, 1989, p. 39). Consider, for example, the following quotation from Ramtha, a so-called "channeled" spirit that allegedly speaks from a higher realm through New Ager J.Z. Knight:

> "I am Ramtha, the Enlightened One, indeed. And who be you, my most illustrious brotheren [sic], who have gathered yourselves into this wondrous audience? You be that which is termed Man, you be that which is termed Christus, **you be that which is termed God**. Fallacy? Reality! You be of your importance and your value and your word far greater than that which you have first concluded yourself to be. **You be the totality of all that The Father is: God Supreme**. What else be there? What grander state is there?" (see Ramtha 1985, p. 22, emp. added).

This is the same message that leaps from the pages of the writings of Oscar-winning actress Shirley MacLaine. In her book, *Out on a Limb*, she told of her discussions with a friend by the name of Kevin Ryerson who allegedly was able to "channel" John—a disembodied spirit from the days of Christ's earthly sojourn. Once, when Ms. MacLaine was speaking with "John," he allegedly said

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to her: "[Y]our soul is a metaphor for God. ...**You** are God. **You** know you are divine" (1983, p. 188,209, emp. in orig.). In addressing what she refers to as her "higher self" in her book, *Dancing in the Light*, MacLaine said: "**I am God**, because all energy is plugged in to the same source. We are each aspects of that source. We are all part of God. We are individualized reflections of the God source. God is us and we are God" (1991, p. 339, emp. added). In her 1989 book, *Going Within,* she wrote: "I, for example, do a silent mantra with each of my hatha yoga poses. I hold each yoga position for twenty seconds and internally chant, 'I am God in Light' " (1989, p. 57).

In the book he authored refuting MacLaine's views, *Out on a Broken Limb*, lawyer F. LaGard Smith stated:

> The heart and soul of the New Age movement, which Ms. MacLaine embraces along with her reincarnation ideas, is nothing less than **self-deification**.... But it really shouldn't be all that surprising. All we had to do was put the equation together: We are One; God is One; therefore, we are God. The cosmic conjugation is: I am God, you are God, we are God.... Surely if someone tells herself repeatedly that she is God, it won't be long before she actually believes it! (1986, pp. 178,179-180,181, emp. in orig.).

When Shirley MacLaine stands on the sands of the beach and yells out loud, "I am God," she literally means just what she says! But such a concept is not inherent in the biblical statement that mankind has been created in the "image and likeness of God." God's Word does not indicate that He created men and women in His **essence**, but in His **image** (Genesis 1:26). Only God is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. God revealed this truth when He said to the king of Tyre through Ezekiel: "You say, 'I am a god, and sit in the seat of gods, in the midst of the seas,' yet, **you are a man and not a god**" (Ezekiel 28:2, emp. added). In the Bible, only the wicked elevate themselves to the status of deity. King Herod flirted with self-deification—and died in a horrific manner as a result. Luke reported the event as follows:

> So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not the voice of a man!" Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten of worms and died (Acts 12:21-23).

This stands in stark contradistinction to the reaction of Paul and Barnabas when the heathens at Lystra attempted to worship them (Acts 14:8-18). Had they held the same views as Shirley MacLaine and her New-Age kin, these two preachers would have encouraged the crowds in Lystra to recognize not only the preachers' deity but their own deity as well! Yet, consider the response they offered instead:

> They rent their garments, and sprang forth among the multitude, crying out and saying, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is" (Acts 14:14-15).

The testimony of the Creation itself is not that man is God, but rather that God transcends both this world and its inhabitants. In Romans 1, the apostle Paul spoke directly to this point.

> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness; because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. ...Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, so that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature, rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever (Romans 1:18-25).

The idea of self-deification effectively eliminates the entire scheme of redemption, and negates 4,000 years of Heaven's interaction in men's lives. It denies the role of Jesus in creation (John 1:1-3), the amazing prophetic accuracy of the Old and New Testaments (1 Peter 1:10-12), the providential preservation of the messianic seed (Galatians 3:16), the miraculous birth of Christ (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:21-23), the significance of His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15), and the hope of His second coming (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). When man decides to declare his own deity, he foments rebellion against the legitimate Inhabitant of heaven's throne. And he will bear the consequences of that rebellion, just as angels of old did (Jude 6). Certainly, then,

the phrase recorded in Genesis 1:27 which states that "God created man in his own image" **does not mean that man is God.**

Second, this description of man obviously does not refer to his physical appearance. It is true, of course, that some writers have suggested exactly the opposite, and have defended the view that when the Bible speaks of man being created "in the image of God," it means a **physical** image. Theodore Nöldeke argued as early as 1897 that the concept of the "image of God" basically had to do with man's physical appearance (see Miller, 1972, 91:292-293). Hermann Gunkel also took this position in his commentary on Genesis (1964, p. 112). In 1940, after respected theologian Paul Humbert published his now-famous word studies of *tselem* ("image") and *demuth* ("likeness"), the view that the "image of God" actually was something physical became more widely accepted by many critical scholars (Miller, 91:293).

Others, although careful to place more emphasis on the fact that man was indeed created in the **spiritual** image of God, nevertheless have suggested that "in some sense, therefore, even man's body is in God's image in a way not true of animals" (Morris, 1976, p. 74). In his book, *The Genesis Record*, Henry M. Morris wrote:

> There is something about the human body, therefore, which is uniquely appropriate to God's manifestation of Himself, and (since God knows all His works from the beginning of the world —Acts 15:18), He must have designed man's body with this in mind. Accordingly, He designed it, not like the animals, but with an erect posture, with an upward gazing countenance, capable of facial expressions corresponding to emotional feelings, and with a brain and tongue capable of articulate, symbolic speech (1976, p. 4, parenthetical comment in orig.).

While it might be tempting to believe such an interpretation of Genesis 1:26-27, the actual phrase "image of God" does **not** refer to the fact that man's physical being has a form or shape like God. It does not mean that God has two eyes, two ears, two arms, and two legs. As T. Pierce Brown noted:

> The fact that God is spoken about as one who has eyes, hands, ears, and so on, has no bearing on the subject for two reasons. First, if God is trying to let us know that He can observe us, hear us, and minister to us, He has to do it in words that mean something to us. These expressions are called "anthropomorphisms" or "forms of man" figures of speech. Second, a bird or a fish may have eyes without being in the form of a man. So it is not without reason to speak about God's eyes, ears, or hands, although He is Spirit (1993, 135 [8]:50).

Nor does man's creation in God's image have anything to do with man's posture, as Morris suggested in the last sentence of his assessment. Some have attempted to make a connection between Genesis 1:26-27 and Ecclesiastes 7:29 where it is stated: "God hath made man upright." But as L.S. Chafer correctly noted, "God, being incorporeal, is neither perpendicular nor horizontal in His posture" (1943, 100:481). Gordon H. Clark addressed this topic when he wrote:

> This image cannot be man's body for two reasons. First, God is spirit or mind and has no body. Hence a body would not be an image of him. Second, animals have bodies, yet they are not created in God's image. If anyone should suggest that man walks upright, so that his bodily position could be the image, the reply is not merely that birds also walk on two legs, but that Genesis distinguishes man from animals by the image and not by any physiological structure (1969, 12:216).

In their commentary on the Pentateuch, Keil and Delitzsch remarked:

> There is more difficulty in deciding in what the likeness to God consisted. Certainly not in the bodily form, the upright position, or the commanding aspect of man, since God Himself has no bodily form, and the man's body was formed from the dust of the ground (1996, 1:39).

Being made in the image of God, then, does not refer to the physical body, the posture, or the authoritative aspect of man.

Although it is true that the word "image" (Hebrew *tselem*) is a term used in certain contexts within the Old Testament to refer to a model or to idols (and thus can refer to a similarity in physical appearance), it cannot, and does not, denote such meaning in Genesis 1:26-27, nor in any of the other passages referring to the *imago Dei* ("image of God"). God is not "like unto gold, or silver, or stone" (i.e., He is not physical; Acts 17:29). As Ashby Camp observed:

> God, of course, is a spirit (Jn. 4:24), and the O.T. stresses his incorporeality and invisibility (see Ex. 20:1-4; Deut. 4:15-16), so the resemblance no doubt relates to some nonphysical aspect(s) of humanity (1999, p. 44).

Since it is the case that a spirit "hath not flesh and bones" (Luke 24:39; cf. Matthew 16:17), then man **does not bear the image of God in his physical nature.**

Third, the "image" (*tselem*) of God does not refer to something different than the "likeness" (*demuth*) of God. The Greek and Latin "church fathers" frequently suggested a distinction between the two words. They taught that *tselem* referred to the physical, and *demuth* to the ethical, part of the divine image (Feinberg, 1972, 129:237). Other theologians (like Irenaeus, A.D. 130-c. 200) taught that "image" denoted man's unchangeable essence (viz., his freedom and rationality), whereas "likeness" referred to the changing part of man (i.e., his relationship with God). The first thus related to the very nature of man, while the second was that which could be lost (Crawford, 1966, 77:233). As of 1972, this still was the official view of the Roman Catholic Church (Feinberg, 129:237). It is not a correct view, however, as Hoekema pointed out:

> The word translated as **image** is *tselem*; the word rendered as **likeness** is *demuth*. In the Hebrew there is no conjunction between the two expressions; the text says simply "let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Both the Septuagint and the Vulgate insert an **and** between the two expressions, giving the impression that "image" and "likeness" refer to different things. The Hebrew text, however, makes it clear that there is no essential difference between the two: "after our likeness" is only a different way of saying "in our image." This is borne out by examining the usage of these words in this passage and in the two other passages in Genesis. In Genesis 1:26, both **image** and **likeness** are used; in Genesis 1:27 only **image** is used, while in 5:1 only the word **likeness** is used. In 5:3 the two words are used again but this time in a different order: **in his likeness, after his image**. And again in 9:6 only the word **image** is used. If these words were intended to describe different aspects of the human being, they would not be used as we have seen them used, that is, almost interchangeably.... The two words together tell us that man is a representation of God who is like God in certain respects (1986, p. 13, emp. in orig.).

Despite the influence of those who claim that these words carry very different ideas about the image of God, a careful study of such passages as Genesis 1:26-27, 5:1-3, and 9:6 reveals that, in fact, these two Hebrew words do **not** speak of two different entities. "Likeness" simply emphasizes the "image." As William Dyrness noted in regard to *tselem* and *demuth:* "[T]he two words should be seen as having complementary rather than

competing meanings. The first stresses its being shaped and the second its being like the original in significant ways" (1972, 15:162). Charles Feinberg, writing on "The Image of God" in the respected religious journal *Bibliotheca Sacra*, agreed when he remarked:

> A careful study of Genesis 1:26-27; 5:1,3; and 9:6 will show beyond question that it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the two Hebrew terms are not referring to two different entities. In short, use reveals the words are used interchangeably (1972, 129:237).

There actually is no good evidence for making any distinction between the two and, in fact, the words are essentially synonymous in this context. Keil and Delitzsch remarked in their commentary on Genesis that the two words are "merely combined to add intensity to the thought" (1996, 1:39). As Clark put it: "Man is not two images. To distinguish between image and likeness is fanciful exegesis" (1969, 12:216).

Fourth, the "image" has nothing to do with the sexual distinction between man and woman. Karl Barth, one of the most popular theologians of the twentieth century, suggested, however, that it did (see Clark, 12:216). Yet how could this be the image of God in man if a sexual distinction also is present in animals? Furthermore, since there are no sexual distinctions in the Godhead (spirits do not have a gender), one wonders how this could be the image at all. Realistically, **sexuality could not be the image of God that man possesses.**

Fifth, the "image" is not man's domination of the lower creation around him. In a "letter to the editor" that Norman Snaith penned to the *Expository Times* in 1974, he boldly claimed:

> The meaning is that God created man to be his agent, his representative in ruling all living creatures, and he was given sufficient (to quote the psalm) "honour and glory" to do this.... Biblically speaking, the phrase "image of God" has nothing to do with morals or any sort of ideals; **it refers only to man's domination of the world and everything that is in it**. It says nothing about the nature of God, but everything concerning the **function** of man (1974, 86:24, emp. added, parenthetical comment in orig.).

In regard to this kind of thinking, we would be wise to remember that

> man must exist before dominion can be invested in him, and that man has authority because of the truth that he is made in the image or likeness of God. The authority is not the **cause** of the image or likeness, but the image and likeness is the **ground** of the authority (Chafer, 1943, 100:481, emp. added).

In commenting on this subject James Hastings wrote:

> The view that the Divine image consists in dominion over the creatures cannot be held without an almost inconceivable weakening of the figure, and is inconsistent with the sequel, where the rule over the creatures is, by a separate benediction, conferred on man, already made in the image of God. The truth is that the image marks the distinction between man and the animals, and so qualifies him for dominion: **the latter is the consequence, not the essence, of the Divine image** (1976, 1:48, emp. added).

"Dominion," Keil and Delitzsch noted, "is unquestionably ascribed to man simply as the consequence or effluence of his likeness to God" (1996, 1:39). As William H. Baker commented: "[I]t is the presence of the image of God in people that makes them able to exercise dominion over the earth. **Dominion itself is not what constitutes the image**" (1991, p. 39, emp. in orig.). Although somewhat closely related to the image of God, **exercising dominion over the world is not itself that image.**

WAS THE "IMAGE OF GOD" DESTROYED BY SIN?

Through the years, numerous scholars have suggested that the image of God spoken of in Genesis 1:26-27 refers to some sort of "spiritual perfection" that was lost at the time of man's fall, and thus is incomprehensible to us today. Reformer Martin Luther claimed that the image was an original righteousness that was lost completely. He averred: "I am afraid that **since the loss of this image through sin**, we cannot understand it to any extent" (as quoted in Dyrness, 1972, 15:163, emp. added). John Calvin similarly spoke of the image of God as having been destroyed by sin, obliterated by the Fall, and utterly defaced by man's unrighteousness (see Hoekema, 1986, p. 43). At other times, he took a less "hard-core" approach and vacillated between a complete loss and a partial loss of the image. In his commentary on Genesis, he wrote: "But now, although **some** obscure lineaments of that image are found remaining in us, yet are they so vitiated and maimed, that **they may truly be said to be destroyed**" (as quoted in Hoekema, p. 45, emp. added). Keil and Delitzsch commented that the "concrete essence of the divine likeness was shattered by sin; and it is only through Christ, the brightness of the glory of God and the expression of His essence (Heb. 1:3), that our nature is transformed into the image of God again (Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24)" [1996, 1:39]. Canadian anthropologist Arthur C. Custance, in his book, *Man in Adam and in Christ*, observed:

> Genesis tells us that man was created in a special way, bearing the stamp of God upon him which the animals did not bear. **Genesis also tells us that he lost it**.... Now while Adam himself was created with this image, his disobedience so robbed him of it that all his children thereafter bore not the image of God but his—and even his **likeness** (1975, pp. 103, 109, first emp. added, last emp. in orig.).

When we see in Genesis 1:26-27 that man was created in the "image and likeness of God," does the language refer **only to Adam and Eve** as these writers would have us to believe? Or does it refer to **all mankind** in general?

It is our position that the "image of God" spoken of in Genesis 1:26-27 does not refer to some kind of "spiritual perfection," especially considering the fact that the members of the Godhead (Who created man) are omniscient and therefore knew that man would sin. Why would Deity create man with an image that required spiritual perfection, knowing beforehand that man was going to sin and thereby "lose" that image? Granted, **if** this phrase referred **just** to a sinless condition, **then** it would have been lost in the Fall and man no longer could be called God's image bearer. Yet the Bible clearly reveals that man still retained the image of God **after** the Fall. In addressing this fact, Gordon H. Clark remarked:

> Can man still be in the image of God? Yes, the image is still there. Paradoxical though it may seem, man could not be the sinner he is, if he were not still God's image. Sinning presupposes rationality and voluntary decision. Animals cannot sin. Sin therefore requires God's image because man is responsible for his sins. If there were no responsibility, there could be nothing properly called sin. Sin is an offense against God, and God calls us to account. If we were not answerable to God, repentance would be useless and even nonsense. Reprobation and hell would also be impossible.... [T]he fall and its effects, which have so puzzled some theologians as they studied the doctrine of the image,

are most easily understood by identifying the image with man's mind.... "Out of a man's heart proceed evil thoughts." Note that in the Bible the term **heart** usually designates the intellect, and only once in ten times the emotions; it is the heart that thinks. Sin thus interferes with our thinking. It does not, however, prevent us from thinking. Sin does not eradicate or annihilate the image. It causes a malfunction, but man still remains man (1969, 12:216,217-218, emp. in orig.).

Various writers have suggested that the image of God in man has been **damaged** by sin, **but not destroyed**. Feinberg, in speaking of the image of God as what he called an "inalienable part of man's constitution," spoke of that image as currently being in a "marred, corrupted, and impaired state" (1972, 129:245). Hoekema elaborated on the same point when he wrote:

> In other words, there is also a sense in which human beings no longer properly bear the image of God, and therefore need to be renewed in that image. We could say that in this latter sense the image of God in man has been marred and corrupted by sin. We must still see fallen man as an image-bearer of God, but as one who by nature...images God in a distorted way (1986, p. 31).

The well-known British writer of Oxford University, C.S. Lewis, expressed this very idea in a most unforgettable manner via a personal letter to one of his friends.

> [I]ndeed the only way in which I can make real to myself what theology teaches about the heinousness of sin is to remember that every sin is the distortion of an energy breathed into us.... We poison the wine as He decants it into us; murder a melody He would play with us as the instrument. We caricature the self-portrait He would paint. Hence all sin, whatever else it is, is sacrilege (1966, pp. 71-72).

While the fall of man was tragic, and the consequences far-reaching, man's sin did not so completely shatter the image of God within him that it no longer existed. Man still possessed the ability to discern right from wrong. He still had the desire, and the capability, to worship his Creator. The late Reuel Lemmons, while editor of the *Firm Foundation*, devoted one of his editorials to this concept.

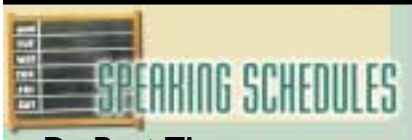
> The fall did not impair man's ability to reason nor destroy his desire to worship. If so, then where did Abel's sacrifice come from? If Calvin's view were right, then the world would have been left completely without a witness to the very existence of God from Adam at least until Jesus. If the link were completely shattered, and man was a wandering star, consigned to the blackness of unrelatedness with God, then where did the Old Testament come from?
>
> The fact is that man was then and is now in the image of God. He never lost the capacity to respond to God, even though separated from God because of his rebellion. His sacrifices throughout the Patriarchal age, and his submission to ten commandment law in the Mosaic age, demonstrates the fact that his "image" was never totally shattered. He retained his capacity to recognize the law of the Lord, and even to correct his wayward ways through repentance. Although dimmed and obscured by rebellion, the image was still visible (1980, 97:546).

G. Campbell Morgan, in his book, *The Crises of the Christ*, lamented: "By the act of sin, the image and likeness of God in man was not destroyed but defaced, and in all the history contained in the Old Testament Scripture, is seen a degraded ideal" (1903, p. 26). In Genesis 5:1-3, Moses recorded:

> In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth.

There would be no point in once again proclaiming Adam and Eve as image bearers if, by this time, the divine likeness already had vanished. Thus, in spite of Custance's insistence that Adam's "children thereafter bore not the image of **God** but **his**," the real truth is that "the likeness of God that stamped Adam (and Eve) was perpetuated in his offspring, despite the corruption caused by sin" (Camp, 1999, p. 45, parenthetical item in orig.). That is to say, Seth, being made in the likeness of Adam, similarly possessed the "image of God," just as his father had. In addressing the fact that man's sin did not cause the loss of his humanity, Feinberg wrote:

> Nowhere does the Old Testament indicate that the divine image and likeness are lost.... When one contemplates Genesis 9:6; James 3:9; and 1 Corinthians 11:7, it can be seen that it is incorrect to say unqualifiedly that the image of God was lost through sin. There are references where man's nature after the fall is still the "work and creature of God" (see Deut. 32:6; Isa. 45:11; 54:5; 64:8; Acts 17:25; Rev. 4:11; Job 10:8-12; Ps. 139:14-16). The insurmountable obstacle to the position that the image of God is entirely lost through the fall is the fact that even fallen man is man and is not short of his humanity.... [T]hat which relates to rationality, conscience, and self-consciousness cannot be less, for then man would cease to be man. In spite of the fall, man did not become a beast or a demon, but retained his humanity (129:245).



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Perhaps an even stronger argument may be found in the passage in Genesis 9:6, to which Feinberg referred. It states: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: For **in the image of God** made he man" (emp. added). According to this passage, fallen man still bears the image of God. The account of Adam and Eve's fall had been recorded earlier in the book; that man had become a rank sinner is stated unequivocally in the immediate context of the passage. "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood" (8:21). Although God's assessment was absolutely correct in regard to mankind, "in Genesis 9:6 murder is forbidden because man was made in the image of God—that is, he still bears that image" (Hoekema, 1986, p. 17). Chafer rightly commented:

> To sin against man either by murder or by slander is reprovable on the ground of the divine image being resident in man. A definite sacredness appertains to human life. Man must respect his fellow man, not on the ground of kinship, but on the ground of the exalted truth that human life belongs to God. To injure man is to injure one who bears the image of God (1943, 100:489-490).

Anderson and Reichenbach added: "To kill a human is to forfeit one's own life, for the denial of another's image is a denial of one's own. This value emphasis is reiterated in James 3:9, where to curse persons is to fail to properly recognize the image of God in them" (1990, 33:198).

If one suggests that Genesis 9:6 is referring only to the past and says nothing about the future, then he does violence to the meaning and intent of the passage. Moses, writing approximately 2,500 years after the Fall, said that the reason murder is wrong is because the victim **is** someone created in the image of God. If man no longer bore the image of God after the Fall (and apart from redemption), these words would have been completely meaningless to the Israelites (and, thus, subsequently, are valueless for man today). Without doubt, this passage teaches that man still bears the image of God. Notice what King David wrote about man approximately 3,000 years after his initial sin in Eden.

> What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him but little lower than God, And crownest him with glory and honor. Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet (Psalm 8:4-6).

Although this statement does not contain the phrase, "image of God," it nevertheless reminds one of the proclamation contained in Genesis 1:26-27. David used powerful, poetic language to describe contemporary mankind as having "all things under his feet." As Keil and Delitzsch affirmed: "...[I]t is the **existing generation** of man that is spoken of. Man, as we see him in ourselves and others...**is** a being in the image of God" (1996, 5:94-95, emp. added). Nowhere does the Old Testament indicate that the divine image was lost. Thus, it is incorrect to say (at least unqualifiedly) that the image of God vanished when sin entered the world.

In the New Testament, one can read where the apostle Paul, in addressing the then-current subject of head coverings, wrote: "Man ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as **he is the image and glory of God**" (1 Corinthians 11:7, emp. added). Paul used a present active participle in describing man's nature to note that man "is" the image, not that he "was" or "used to be" the image of God. Elsewhere in the New Testament, James wrote: "But the tongue can no man tame; it is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith curse we men, **who are made after the likeness of God**" (3:8-9, emp. added). The English verb "are made" (ASV) derives from the Greek *gegonotas*, which is the perfect participle of the verb *ginomai*. The perfect tense in Greek is used to describe an action brought to completion in the past, but whose effects are felt in the present (Mounce, 1993, p. 219). For example, when the Bible says "it is written," this usually is stated in the perfect tense. That is to say, scripture was written in the past, but is applicable in the present. The thrust of the Greek expression, *kath' homoisosin theou gegonotas* ("who are made after the likeness of God"), is that humans in the past have been made according to the likeness of God and **they still are bearers of that likeness**. For this reason, as Hoekema noted, "It is inconsistent to praise God and curse men with the same tongue, since the human creatures whom we curse [whether Christians or non-Christians—EL/BT] still bear the likeness of God" (p. 20).

A final text that speaks to the fact that man still bears God's image can be found in Acts 17:28-29 where Paul, preaching to the pagan Gentiles in Athens, quoted from their own poets and proclaimed that the whole human race is of the offspring of God. He did not say that man **was** a divine image bearer and then **lost** that image. He said, "we **are** (*esmen*) also his offspring" (17:28). The Greek *esmen* is the first person plural of *eimi* (to be). This recognition—of being Jehovah's offspring—served as a basis for the apostle's argument, as the next verse clearly indicates: "**Being** then the **offspring of God**..." (Acts 17:29, emp. added).

None of the above verses can be viewed as teaching that the image of God has been **lost**. But this fact does not minimize the devastating impact of sin, which always has been repulsive and always will be. According to biblical instruction, sin did not **destroy** the divine image stamped upon man by Jehovah. While it is true that after the Flood, God referred to the imagination of man's heart as being evil "from his youth" (Genesis 8:21), it also is true that just a few lines later, Moses recorded God as telling Noah that murder is wrong **because man is a divine image bearer** (9:6). Thus, Hoekema properly remarked:

> We may indeed think of the image of God as having been tarnished through man's fall into sin, but to affirm that man had by this time completely lost the image of God is to affirm something that the sacred text does not say (p. 15).

If, then, it is the case that the image of God does not refer to "spiritual perfection," how does one correlate the image that Christ Himself possessed, and "the renewed image" that Christians possess, with such passages as Genesis 1:26-27, Genesis 9:6, and James 3:9—each of which teaches that man innately bears God's image? The answer, of course, lies in the fact that the "image of God" applied to Jesus in the New Testament is a much "fuller" term than is intended in the usage found in Genesis 1:26-27. That is to say, the image Jesus possessed (2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3) is one that included spiritual flawlessness and the glory that emanated from the Lord's divine nature (two traits, incidentally, that humans do not, and cannot, possess). It is obvious that Jesus represented the "image of God" in an extremely unique sense. As Robert Morey has suggested:

> This is why the Apostle Paul could refer to Jesus as the messianic image-bearer of God (Col. 1:15). As the second Adam, Christ was the full and complete image-bearer. This is why Christ could say that to see Him was to see the Father (John 14:9). Christ reflected on a finite level as the second Adam what the Father was like on an infinite level (1984, p. 37).

While it is true—as both Old and New Testament testimony makes clear—that God created man in His image, the Bible similarly teaches that Christ bore the image of God. He was the **perfect** image—an unsurpassed example of what God wants each of us to be like. When Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 about how "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of **Christ, who is the image of God**, should not dawn upon them," he used the word *eikon* for "image"—the Greek equivalent of *tselem*. Verse 6 of that same chapter elaborates on what, exactly, he meant by his use of that term: "Seeing it is God that said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' who shined in our hearts, **to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**" Paul reiterated this same fact when he wrote in Colossians 1:15 of Jesus, "who is the **image of the invisible God**." This is precisely the point Christ Himself was making when He said to Philip: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). Boiled down to their essence, the two passages amount to this: If you look carefully at Christ, you will see God, since Jesus is His **perfect image**. There is a remarkable corollary in Hebrews 1:1-4:

> God...has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who **being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person**, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they (NKJV, emp. added).

According to W.E. Vine, the word translated in this passage as "image" (*charakter*) denotes

> a stamp or impress, as on a coin or a seal, in which case the seal or die which makes an impression bears the image produced by it, and, vice versa, **all the features of the image correspond respectively with those of the instrument producing it** (1966, p. 247, emp. added).

Just as one can look at a coin and know exactly what the die was like that produced it, so we can look at Christ and know exactly what the Father is like. In commenting on the Greek word *charakter* that the writer of Hebrews employed, Hoekema observed:

> It is hard to imagine a stronger figure to convey the thought that Christ is a perfect reproduction of the Father. Every trait, every characteristic, every quality found in the Father is also found in the Son, who is the Father's **exact representation** (1986, p. 21, emp. in orig.).

When we reflect on the fact that Christ is the perfect image of God and is one with Him, it helps us understand just how much we are able to view God through Christ. Because Christ was without sin (Hebrews 4:15), we can witness the image of God in all of its perfection. Christ bore the image of God in a way that man cannot. For example, when Paul referenced Psalm 8:6 in his letter to the Corinthians ("He has put all things under His feet"—1 Corinthians 15:27), he took a passage of Scripture that applies to all men and applied it in a distinctive fashion to Jesus. Although God has indeed put all things under the feet of mankind, He has given His Son dominion over "all things" in a deeper, more permanently abiding sense. Men, for example, can control and dominate the animal kingdom, but they cannot cause donkeys to speak (Numbers 22:21-30) or shut the mouths of hungry lions (Daniel 6:11-24; 1 Kings 13:28). One can see clearly that the language applied to man likewise applied to Christ, yet when applied to Christ, it was used in an exclusive manner.

Using the same type of logic, it also is reasonable to conclude that the image of God possessed by Christians (Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:22-24) simply is one that is more "refined" than what non-Christians possess. In commenting on Colossians 3:10, Camp wrote:

> Paul here implies that sin makes man less like God than he **should** be, but I believe he is using "image of his Creator" in a fuller sense than intended in Gen. 1:26-27. Man is like God in some aspects of his nature and therefore has the **potential** (and duty) of being like God in action. The sinner is less like God in action, even if the divine aspects of his nature are unchanged, and therefore can be said to be less like his Creator (1999, p. 47, emp. added, parenthetical item in orig.).

Realistically then, "the things that make mankind in the image of God are still present in the worst sinner as well as in the best saint" (Brown, 1993, 138[8]:50). All kings and peasants, all sinners and saints, possess God's image; it is the **use** of this image that makes the difference in mankind's relationship with God.

[to be continued]

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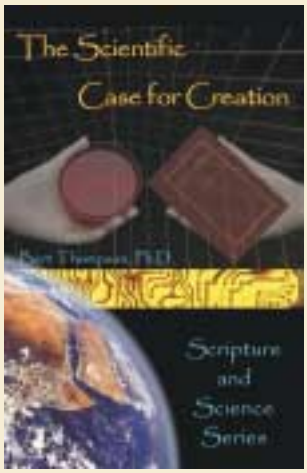
NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

ANNOUNCING: NEW 2002 EDITION OF "THE SCIENTIFIC CASE FOR CREATION"

God's revelation of Himself to mankind throughout the millennia has taken two basic forms—the revelation seen in nature and the revelation found in Scripture. Because God is the Author of both, a combined study of the two is a fascinating human enterprise that provides extremely rich rewards. It was with this fact in mind that I announced in my September 1999 "Note from the Editor" the new Apologetics Press "Scripture and Science Series" of books.

Some of the volumes in the series examine strictly biblical matters in an exploration of the divine revelation of God as presented in Scripture. Other books investigate strictly scientific topics as they relate to the powerful revelation of God provided in nature. And some discuss both. Since their introduction almost three years ago, the books in the series have become some of the most frequently requested items from our catalog offerings.



To date, we have ten volumes in the series, and more are planned for the not-too-distant future. [See this month's *R&R Resources* for a complete listing of all ten titles and a specially reduced price on the entire set.] The books are produced with attractive, full-color laminated covers and an easy-to-read, eye-pleasing type style (one book in the series, *The Case for the Existence of God*, has not yet been printed in the new style and still retains its original cover). Volumes vary in length from 40 pages to 200, and each contains extensive documentation with a complete, up-to-date bibliography. Plus, we print each volume in the series in small numbers so that as they are reprinted they can be revised and updated. And that brings me to my topic for this month's "Note from the Editor."

One of the most frequently reqeusted titles in the "Scripture and Science Series" has been in the past, and still remains today, *The Scientific Case for Creation*, which was the first book published in the set. This intriguing volume examines the current controversy over the subjects of creation and evolution. In doing so, it presents weighty evidence from the scientific laws of genetics, causality, biogenesis, and probability that establishes the superiority of the creation model when viewed in a strictly scientific context. Also included are discussions on the fossil record and the plausibility of the creation model. Because it contains **only** scientific information (without reference to the Bible or any other religious literature), because it provides a wealth of scholarly information, and because it is fully documented with an extensive bibliography, this book has proven to be especially valuable to high school and college students who constantly are being exposed to the "fact" of evolution—a concept this book thoroughly refutes.

The old (1999) version contained 100 pages. The newly revised (2002) version, at 200 pages, contains double that number. As I was in the process of rewriting the book, I included some extremely valuable information from the evolutionists themselves about the intricate design of the Universe and its inhabitants. Some of the quotations are so astonishing that you would think they were written by creationists. But, the fact is, they were not. They represent clear and compelling admissions (perhaps inadvertent—or perhaps not!) from Creation's adversaries who, in their more pensive moments, have admitted publicly that the walls of their neo-Darwinian Jericho are crumbling around them. This book documents that very phenomenon in a riveting journey through the scientific literature—a journey that eventually arrives at an unexpected (but oh-so-pleasant) destination, with the truthfulness of Creation being the stopping off place.

The old, 100-page version of *The Scientific Case for Creation* was $4.95. In keeping with our policy of providing each of our products at the lowest possible price, **we are offering the new, 200-page version at the same price** ($1.55 s/h). To purchase by credit card, call us toll free at 800/234-8558.

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