

IN THE “IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD” [PART II]

Eric Lyons, M.Min. and Bert Thompson, Ph.D.

[EDITOR’S NOTE: Part I of this two-part series appeared in the March issue. Part II follows below and continues, without introductory comments, where the first article ended.]

WHAT, THEN, IS THE “IMAGE OF GOD?”

What is it that actually makes man a divine image-bearer? Or, is it even possible for one to know what it means at all? The great reformer Martin Luther believed that man cannot comprehend the meaning of *imago Dei* (“image of God”). He wrote:

[W]hen we speak about that image, we are speaking about something unknown. Not only have we had no experience of it, but we continually experience the opposite; and so we hear nothing but bare words.... **Through sin this image was so obscured and corrupted that we cannot grasp it even with our intellect** (as quoted in Chaney, 1970, 13:18, emp. added).

Admittedly, it is much easier to speak of what the “image of God” is **not** than what it is. The simple fact is, in most cases wrong answers are easier to eliminate than right ones are to defend. In commenting on Genesis 1:26-27, Henry Morris wrote: “This is a profound and mysterious truth, **impossible to fully comprehend**” (1976, p. 73, emp. added). Camp agreed: “Several elements of our nature seem to distinguish us from animals, but without scriptural guidance **it is impossible to be certain which are intended**” (1999, p. 44, emp. added). Wilson suggested: “The only way in which Genesis explains the image of God is to define its purpose—man’s dominion over creation—rather than its nature or location” (1974, p. 356).

Part of the difficulty in ascertaining the meaning of the “image of God” is the fact that the Bible does not define what being created in the image of God means; it simply states that to be human is to bear God’s image. Hence “whatever meaning is to be ascribed to the concept in its Biblical locus must be derived from its usage” (Anderson and Reichenbach, 1990, 33:201). How, then, is it used in Genesis 1:26-27? Speaking in a broad sense, as Morey has explained,

[d]espite all the elaborate attempts to read highly technical, theological, and philosophical concepts into the biblical words “image of God,” we should take them in their simplest meaning as they would have been understood by the people to whom Moses wrote. In this sense, “image of God” simply meant that man was created to be and do on a finite level what God was and did on an infinite level. Man was created to reflect God in the created order. Thus, we do not need to divide up the image of God into such categories as “inner and outer,” “higher and lower,” etc. Neither should we reduce the image-bearing capacity of man to **one** of his functions such as reason, language, or emotion. The “image of God” simply means that **man reflects his creator in those capacities and capabilities which separate him from the rest of the creation**. The nobility, uniqueness, meaning, worth and significance of man all rest on his being made in the image of God and being placed over the world as God’s prophet, priest, and king (Gen. 1:26,27) [1984, p. 37, emp. added].

When Moses wrote of man’s creation in the “image of God,” he did indeed “separate him from the rest of the creation.” In fact, Moses’ entire discussion appears in the context of man being different from animals. As Morris correctly observed:

[M]an was to be more than simply a very complex and highly organized animal. There was to be something in man which was not only quantitatively greater, but qualitatively distinctive, something not possessed in any degree by the animals.... [T]here can be little doubt that the “image of God” in which man was created must entail those aspects of human nature which are not shared by animals—attributes such as a moral consciousness, the ability to think abstractly, an understanding of beauty and emotion, and, above all, the capacity for worshiping and loving God (1976, p. 74).

It is apparent from the text of Genesis 1 and 2 that the creation of man differed markedly from that of all other life on Earth in at least the following ways.

(1) A “divine conference” preceded the forming of man. God said, “Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness” (Genesis 1:26, emp. added). Such never is said of animals. Feinberg noted:

[M]an is the apex of all creation. Man’s creation by God comes as the last and highest phase of God’s creative activity.... Now there is counsel or deliberation in the Godhead. No others can be included here, such as angels, for none has been even intimated thus far in the narrative. Thus the creation of man took place not by a word alone, but as the result of a divine decree (1972, 129:238).

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(2) Man's creation was unique in that God "breathed life" into him (Genesis 2:7). As James Orr wrote in his classic text, *God's Image in Man*:

The true uniqueness in man's formation, however, is expressed by the act of the divine inbreathing.... This is an act peculiar to the creation of man; no similar statement is made about the animals. The breath of Jehovah imparts to man the life which is his own, and awakens him to conscious possession of it (1906, pp. 41,46).

(3) The sexes of mankind were not created simultaneously, as in the case of the animals. Rather, the first female was "built" from a section of the first male's flesh and bone.

(4) Unlike animals, mankind is not broken down into species (i.e., "according to their kind" or "all kinds of"), but instead is designated by sexuality. God created them **male** and **female** (see Hamilton, 1990, p. 138).

(5) The Psalmist (8:5) spoke of man as being created a little lower than the angels (*elohiyim*; ASV "God"). As Keil and Delitzsch put it in their commentary on Psalms:

According to Genesis 1:27 man is created in the image of God; he is a being in the image of God, and, therefore,...since he is only a little less than divine, he is also only a little less than angelic (1996, 5:154).

Leupold, in his *Exposition of Genesis*, commented: "Man is not only made after the deliberate plan and purpose of God but is also very definitely patterned after Him" (1942, p. 88). The psalmist's point was that man, because he bears the image of God, is indeed "patterned after Him."

(6) Finally, the text of Genesis 1 explicitly states that **mankind alone** was created in the image of God. Nowhere is such a statement made about the rest of Earth's life forms.

Unlike the other creatures that God created, man alone bears a special resemblance to Him. Of all the living beings that dwell on planet Earth, one solitary creature was made "in the image of God." What is it that composes the critical essence of man that distinguishes him from all of creation, and what are the ramifications of this distinction?

We believe it is unwise to restrict the meaning of the "image of God" to one particular "feature" as some have tried to do. The apostle Paul declared that man is "the offspring of God" (Acts 17:29). Such a concept certainly would consist of more than one bond of similarity (cf. Chafer, 1943, 100:481). As Victor Hamilton observed: "Any approach that focuses on one aspect of man...to the neglect

of the rest of man's constituent features, seems doomed to failure" (1990, p. 137). Or, as Poe and Davis wrote: "The idea of the image of God represents a far more complex matter, however, than one essential thing" (2000, p. 136). We agree wholeheartedly. **It is evident from the context of Genesis 1 that the "image of God" denotes in a number of ways how man resembles God, and yet at the same time is distinct from animals.** The features that make up this image link humankind to what is above, and separate him from what is below (see Marais, 1939, 1:146). What, then, are the characteristics peculiar to man that liken him to God, differentiate him from the lower creation, and allow him to subdue the Earth?

IN THE "IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD"

There are several different aspects that deserve to be explored in responding to such a question. Those enumerated below certainly would be included, but are not discussed in any specific order of importance or priority.

(1) First, man is **capable of speaking**. Although some might consider this to be a trivial feature in man's likeness to God, the Scriptures teach otherwise. God, in His dealings with mankind, has revealed Himself as a **speaking God**. The phrase "and God said" occurs ten times in Genesis 1 alone. God Almighty **spoke to create** the "heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is" (Exodus 20:11; Psalm 33:6-9), and He **spoke to communicate** to man (Genesis 1:28). Then, very soon after God created Adam, He expected him to name the creatures brought before him (Genesis 2:19). Adam named the animals of the Earth; he spoke of the helper that God had created for him as "woman"; and later, when attempting to justify his sinful actions, he "creatively" offered excuses and placed blame on others (Genesis 3:9-13)—all of which indicates that man was created with the ability to speak. As Werner Gitt observed in his book, *The Wonder of Man*:

Only man has the gift of speech, a characteristic otherwise only possessed by God. This separates us clearly from the animal kingdom. We are able to use words creatively, but we are unable to create anything by speaking, as God can do.... We are able to express all our feelings in words, and we can enter into trusting relationships like no other beings on Earth. In addition to the necessary "software" for speech, we have also been provided with the required "hardware" (1999, p. 101).

The renowned language researcher from MIT, Noam Chomsky, has championed the idea that humans are born with a “built-in universal grammar”—a series of biological switches for complex language that is set in place in the early years of childhood. This, he believes, is why children can grasp elaborate language rules even at an early age. Powerful support for Chomsky’s theory emerged from a decade-long study of 500 deaf children in Managua, Nicaragua, which was reported in the December 1995 issue of *Scientific American* (see Horgan, 1995). These children started attending special schools in 1979, but none used or was taught a formal sign language. Within a few years, and under no direction from teachers or other adults, they began to develop a basic “pidgin” sign language. This quickly was modified by younger children entering school, with the current version taking on a complex and consistent grammar. If Chomsky is correct, where, then, did humans get their innate ability for language? Chomsky himself will not even hazard a guess. In his view, “very few people are concerned with the origin of language because most consider it a hopeless question” (as quoted in Ross, 1991, 264[4]:146). The development of human language, he admits, is “a mystery.” The fundamental failing of naturalistic theories is that they are inadequate to explain the origins of anything as complex and information-rich as human language, which itself is a gift from God and part of man’s having been created “in His image.”

The fact is, no animal is capable of speaking in the manner in which people can speak. Speech is a peculiarly **human** trait. In an article titled “Chimp-Speak” that dealt with this very point, Trevor Major wrote:

First, chimps do not possess the anatomical ability to speak. Second, the sign language they learn is not natural, even for humans. Chimps have to be trained to communicate with this language; it is not something they do in the wild. And unlike humans, trained chimps do not seem to pass this skill on to their young. Third, chimps never know more than a few hundred words—considerably less than most young children.... [E]volutionists have no way to bridge the gap from innate ability to language relying on natural selection or any other purely natural cause. Why? Because language is complex and carries information—the trademarks of intelligent design (1994, 14[3]:1).

Another MIT scientist, Steven Pinker (director of the university’s Center of Cognitive Neuroscience), stated in *The Language Instinct: The New Science of Language and Mind*:

As you are reading these words, you are taking part in one of the wonders of the natural world. For you and I belong to a species with a remarkable ability: we can shape events in each other’s brains with remarkable precision. I am not referring to telepathy or mind control or the other obsessions of fringe science; even in the depictions of believers, these are blunt instruments compared to an ability that is uncontroversially present in every one of us. **That ability is language.** Simply by making noises with our mouths, we can reliably cause precise new combinations of ideas to arise in each other’s minds. The ability comes so naturally that we are apt to forget what a miracle it is....

Language is obviously as different from other animals’ communication systems as the elephant’s trunk is different from other animals’ nostrils.

...As we have seen, human language is based on a very different design. The discrete combinatorial system called “grammar” makes human language infinite (there is no limit to the number of complex words or sentences in a language), digital (this infinity is achieved by rearranging discrete elements in particular orders and combinations, not by varying some signal along a continuum like the mercury in a thermometer), and compositional (each of the infinite combinations has a different meaning predictable from the meanings of its parts and the rule and principles arranging them). **Even the seat of human language in the brain is special...** (2000, pp. 1,365, emp. added; parenthetical comments in orig.).

It is evident that only man was given the gift of speech. It is a fundamental part of his nature that associates him with God and separates him from the rest of creation.

(2) Second, man can **write, improve his education, accumulate knowledge, and build on past achievements.** The Bible mentions two occasions when God Himself wrote something. The first, of course, was on Mount Sinai when He gave the Ten Commandments to Moses: “And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, the two tables of the testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18). The second time was during Belshazzar’s feast: “In the same hour came forth the fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote” (Daniel 5:5; cf. also 5:24-28). Werner Gitt thus observed:

Various writing systems have been devised by man, who is now able to record thoughts and ideas. The invention of writing is one of the greatest achievements of the human intellect. The human memory span is brief and the storage capacity of the brain, though vast, is limited. Both these problems are overcome by recording information in writing. Written information can communicate over vast distances; written records may last for many years, even centuries. Only nations possessing the skill of writing can develop literature, historiography, and high levels of technology. Nations and tribes without writing are thus restricted to a certain level of cultural development. Written language offers the possibility of storing information so that inventions and discoveries (like medical and technological advances) are not lost, but can be developed even further (1999, p. 103, parenthetical comment in orig.).

It is this ability to “develop even further” that allows mankind to improve his own educational levels, accumulate knowledge, and build on past achievements. The adage that we “learn from our mistakes” contains more than just a kernel of truth. It actually represents the basis of cumulative human knowledge. Human society today is in many ways a far better place than it was, say, two thousand years ago. We have cracked the human genome, developed cures for deadly diseases, and landed men on the Moon. Today the citizens of most civilized countries are better fed, better clothed, and healthier than they have ever been. Transportation, educational, medical, industrial, and even recreational facilities are vastly improved compared to those of previous generations. Prospects for mankind’s future hardly could be brighter.

But compare mankind’s achievements to those of the animal kingdom. Truth be told, animals today possess no greater knowledge than they did 200—or 2,000—years ago. Insofar as discernible improvements to their habitats, knowledge base, or past achievements are concerned, animals of this generation fare little better (if any) than their ancestors of previous generations. Humans, however, not only learn from their mistakes, but also are capable of planning and building for the future. No animal has the ability to do that. Man, as a part of his endowment in the “image of God,” has the ability to improve and progress—a trait that is conspicuously lacking in any inhabitants of the animal kingdom.

(3) Third, **man is creative**. In Genesis 1-2, the words “created” (*bara*) and “made” (*asah*) are used fifteen times to refer to God’s work. His omnipotence is seen in His ability to create something out of nothing simply by speaking it into existence (cf. Hebrews 1: 3). The amazing and intricate design of His creation testifies to His creative prowess (see Ackerman, 1990, p. 48). Like God, man also is able to create and invent, although he does so on a distinctly different level. Consider the creativeness in Picasso’s paintings, Mozart’s music, or Goethe’s writings. Man has built spaceships that can travel 240,000 miles to the Moon; he has manufactured artificial hearts for the sick; and he continues to construct computers that can process billions of pieces of information in a fraction of a second. Animals cannot do such things because they lack the inherent creative ability with which God has endowed man. Spiders may weave intricate webs, beavers may build fascinating huts, and birds may construct homey nests, but they are guided by instinct. In his *Great Texts of the Bible* series, James Hastings commented:

It may possibly suggest itself here that some of the lower animals are producers no less than man. And so they are, in virtue of the instinct with which the Almighty has endowed them.... But they are artisans only, working by a rule furnished to them, not architects, designing out of their own mental resources. They are producers only, not creators... (1976, 1:53-54).

Exhaustive attempts have been made to teach animals to express themselves in art, music, writing, etc., but none has produced the hoped-for success. Beyond the simple and clumsy drawing of a circle, no attempt at creative expression has ever been observed. There is an enormous, unbridgeable gap between humans and animals in the realm of creativity and aesthetics. When one considers the genius of man’s creativeness in areas such as literature, art, science, medicine, technology, etc., it is clear that a huge gap separates man from all members of the animal kingdom—and that this gap is indeed unbridgeable. Certainly, in his creativity, man is made “in the image of God.”

(4) Fourth, closely related to man’s creative ability is his gift of **reasoning**. Admittedly, animals possess a measure of understanding. They can learn to respond to commands and signs, and in some cases even can be trained to use minimal portions of sign language, as in the case of the chimpanzee named Washoe who was taught certain portions of American Sign Language. But, as biologist John N. Moore has pointed out:

Although the chimpanzee Washoe has been taught the American Sign Language, such an accomplishment is **primarily** an increase in an ability of the anthropoid to respond to direct presentation of **signs**. And, further, the learned capability of the chimpanzee Lana to utilize push buttons connected with a computer to “converse” with a human trainer depends fundamentally upon increased conditional reflex response to **signs** (1983, p. 341, emp. in orig.).

Even though apes, dogs, and birds can be “trained” to do certain things, they cannot reason and communicate ideas with others so as to have true mental communion. The intelligence of animals is unlike that of humankind. As Moore went on to discuss,

[t]he purest and most complex manifestation of man’s symbolic nature is his capacity for conceptual thought, that is, for thought involving sustained and high order abstraction and generalization. Conceptual thought enables man to make himself independent of stimulus boundness that characterizes animal thinking. Animals, especially primates, give undeniable evidence of something analogous to human thought—analogous yet medically different in that their thought is bound to the immediate stimulus situation and to the felt impulse of the organism. Animal thinking, too, is riveted to the realm of survival (broadly taken) and therefore encompasses a variety of needs pertinent to the species as well as to the individual. These differences account for the distinction between **conceptual** thought, which is the exclusive prerogative of man, and **perceptual** thought, a cognitive function based directly upon sense perception, which man shares with animals (p. 344, emp. in orig.).

Thus, the issue is not “can animals think?” but rather “can they think the way humans do?” The answer, obviously, is a resounding “No!” In summarizing his thoughts on this subject, Trevor Major offered the following conclusion concerning the intelligence of chimpanzees.

Are chimps intelligent? The answer is yes. Do chimps possess the **same kind** of intelligence as humans? The answer would have to be no. Humans are more intelligent, **and** they possess additional forms of intelligence. What we must remember, also, is that the greatest capabilities of the apes belong to a handful of superstars like Kanzi and Sheba. Even these animals lack the empathy, foresight, and language capabilities of all but the youngest or most intellectually challenged of our own species (1995, 15: 88, emp. in orig.).

In any examination of the intellectual capacity of God’s creation, one of the most obvious differences between humans and animals is that animals do not possess the ability to know and love God. Animals cannot look at the heavens and understand them as God’s handiwork (cf. Psalm 19:1); they cannot perceive that there is a God based upon what is made (cf. Romans 1:20; Hebrews 3:4); neither can they understand God’s written revelation. For this reason, animals are neither righteous nor sinful. Feinberg was absolutely correct when he wrote that this feature “must stand forth prominently in any attempt to ascertain precisely what the image of God is” (1972, 129:246). Some authors, such as Gordon Clark, have argued that “**The image must be reason** because God is truth, and fellowship with him—a most important purpose in creation—requires thinking and understanding” (1969, 12:218, emp. added). While we never would go so far as Clark and limit the “image” to reason alone, it most assuredly plays a critical role in man’s rule over God’s creation and in his unique relationship to God—a relationship that animals cannot have, partly because they lack the intelligence for such.

(5) A fifth characteristic included in the “image of God” is man’s **free-will capacity** to make rational choices. God Himself is a Being of free will, as the Scriptures repeatedly document. The psalmist wrote: “Whatever the Lord pleases, He does” (135:6). God’s free will is apparent in Romans 9:15: “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” He is a God Who “would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). God has free will, and has employed it on behalf of humanity.

As a **volitional creature** endowed with what we often refer to as “free moral agency,” man likewise possesses free will. And as such, he is capable of choosing his own destiny. When animals react to their environment, they are guided by instinct. The Arctic tern travels from the Arctic to the Antarctic and home again each year—a round trip of 22,000 miles—without concern for changes in climate or in the environment (see Devoe, 1964, p. 31). Salmon are able to find their way back home through thousands of miles of trackless ocean to the same river and same gravel bed where they once were hatched (Thompson and Jackson, 1982, p. 24). Salmon and Arctic terns, along with thousands of other creatures, are guided by the amazing trait we refer to as “instinct.”

But unlike animals, man does not rely primarily upon instinct for his survival. Rather, God gave him the capability to plot the course of his own life and then to carry out his plans in a rational manner. Adam and Eve freely chose to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, even after being instructed otherwise (Genesis 2:16-17). Joshua challenged Israel to serve either Jehovah or some false god (Joshua 24:15). Jesus chastised the Pharisees of His day because they were “not willing” to accept Him as the Son of God (John 5: 39-40). **But Adam, Eve, the Israelites, and the Pharisees did have a choice!**

Today, in a similar fashion, each person has a choice regarding whether or not he or she accepts the invitation of Jesus (Revelation 22:17; Matthew 11:28-30). Unlike all of God’s other creatures that act primarily on instinct, human beings are able to think rationally and act willfully in regard to the choices they make. And, as numerous scholars have noted, it is this ability to choose that helps explain why there frequently is so much evil, pain, and suffering in the world. The simple fact is, we do not always choose correctly.

(6) Sixth, of all the creatures upon the Earth, only man has the ability to choose between **right and wrong**. Animals do not possess an innate sense of moral “oughtness.” A dog might be taught by his master not to do certain things, and even may fear punishment, but he certainly does not possess a conscience. A Doberman Pincher does not feel sorry about biting the paperboy; nor does he feel guilty after eating his master’s birth-

day cake. A lion has no pangs of conscience because it kills a young gazelle for an afternoon meal. There is simply no evidence to show that beasts possess any sense of morality or ethics.

True morality is based on the fact of the unchanging nature of Almighty God. He is eternal (Psalm 90:2; 1 Timothy 1:17), holy (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8), just and righteous (Psalm 89:14), and forever consistent (Malachi 3:6). In the ultimate sense, only He is good (Mark 10:18). Furthermore, since He is perfect (Matthew 5:48), the morality that issues from such a God is good, unchanging, just, and consistent—i.e., exactly the opposite of the relativistic, deterministic, or situational ethics of the world.

There is within each man, woman, and child a sense of moral responsibility which derives from the fact that God is our Creator (Psalm 100:3) and that we have been fashioned in His spiritual image (Genesis 1:26-27). As the potter has sovereign right over the clay with which he works (Romans 9:21), so our Maker has the sovereign right over His creation since in His hand “is the soul of every living thing” (Job 12:10). As the ancient patriarch Job learned much too late, God is not a man with whom one can argue (Job 9:32; 38:1-3; 42:1-6).

Whatever God does, commands, and approves is good (Psalm 119:39,68; cf. Genesis 18:25). What He has commanded results from the essence of His being—Who He is—and therefore also is good. In the Old Testament, the prophet Micah declared of God: “He

showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and walk humbly with thy God” (Micah 6:8). In the New Testament, the apostle Peter admonished: “As he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, ‘Ye shall be holy: for I am holy’ ” (1 Peter 1:15-16).

The basic thrust of God-based ethics concerns the relationship of man to the One Who created and sustains him. God Himself is the unchanging standard of moral law. His perfectly holy nature is the ground or basis upon which “right” and “wrong,” “good” and “evil” are determined. The Divine will—expressive of the very nature of God—constitutes the ultimate ground of moral obligation. Why are we to pursue holiness? Because God is holy (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:16). Why are we not to lie, cheat, or steal (Colossians 3:9)? Because God’s nature is such that He cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). Since God’s nature is unchanging, it follows that moral law, which reflects the divine nature, is equally immutable.

God has not left us to our own devices to determine what is right and wrong, because He knew that through sin man’s heart would become “exceedingly corrupt” (Jeremiah 17:9). Therefore, God has “spoken” (Hebrews 1:1), and in so doing He has made known to man His laws and precepts through the revelation He has provided in a written form within the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 2:11ff.; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). Thus, mankind is expected to act in a morally responsible manner (Matthew 19:9; Acts 14:15-16; 17:30; Hebrews 10:28ff.) in accordance with biblical laws and precepts. Surely, then, this is a part of our having been fashioned “in the image of God.”

(7) Seventh, man possesses a **conscience**. While writing to the first-century Christians in Rome, Paul argued that even the ancient Gentiles, who had possessed no written law from God and who did not have access to the Law of Moses (without becoming a Jewish proselyte), nevertheless had a form of law “written in their hearts” (Romans 2:14-15). Hence, their consciences either accused them or excused them. Whenever man violates his conscience, he feels guilt. And although a person’s environment admittedly plays a major role in his or her individual **concept** of morality, the **need** for morality is acknowledged universally by humans all around the globe.



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Furthermore, the conscience must work in close concert with our judgment in order to prompt us to review that judgment (i.e., our concept of right and wrong) to determine if we are acting in accordance with it. One of the best and most comprehensive discussions we have seen on this subject can be found in Guy N. Woods' book, *Questions and Answers*.

[C]onscience is thus a safe guide in ascertaining whether our conduct is in harmony with our judgement; and, so long as it is not allowed to become hardened, seared over and callous, it serves effectively in the area which God designed for it. But, it was not intended to serve as a standard of right and wrong; and, it is not a "creature of education" so as to be equipped for such action. If we think what we are doing is right, we have a **good conscience** (Acts 23:1; I Tim. 1:5,19; Heb. 13:18; I Pet. 3:16,21), a pure conscience (I Tim. 3:9; II Tim. 1:3); and a conscience **void of offence** (Acts 24: 16). If we think we are doing wrong, our conscience is **evil** (I Tim. 4:2). What we **think**, however, does not determine what is right and wrong and, like Paul when he persecuted the saints, we may have "a good conscience" although we are grievously in error. In such instances, it is the judgement which is at fault, and which must be "educated." When this is done, the conscience will swing around and approve that which it formerly condemned, and oppose that which it before approved. ...It is wrong to disregard the promptings of our conscience, because it is designed to lead us to review our judgement; but, it is our judgement (our concept of right and wrong) which determines whether the conscience approves or condemns us (1976, pp. 213-214, emp. in orig., parenthetical item in orig.).

How does one explain this? The only way to explain it is to acknowledge that man was given a conscience "in the beginning" as a part of having been created in the image of God.

(8) Eighth, like God, man can **experience heart-felt emotions**. Camp addressed this fact when he wrote:

Several elements of our nature seem to distinguish us from animals.... Perhaps the most fundamental difference is self-transcendence, the capacity to make oneself and the world the object of reflection. Other aspects of our uniqueness, some of which flow from self-transcendence, include moral and spiritual awareness, creativity, and abstract reasoning. **We also have a unique capacity for worship, love, fellowship, and emotional experience** (1999, p. 44, emp. added).

As an example of this point, consider 1 John 4:8,16, wherein the apostle recorded that "God is love." If we were created by God in His image, then we, too, should be capable of, and radiate, love. This is why Christ told His disciples: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). And this is why Paul admonished first-century Christians: "Let all that ye do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14).

God can experience anger or righteous indignation [as He did when the Israelites built and worshiped a golden calf (Exodus 32), and as Christ did when He ran the moneychangers out of the Temple (Matthew 21: 12)]. Thus, we, too, can experience righteous indignation ("Be ye angry, and sin not," Ephesians 4:26).

God is merciful, as Paul described Him in 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 when he referred to Him as "the Father of mercies." Consequently, we, too, should strive to be merciful, just as Christ urged us to do when He said: "Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

God is compassionate, as is evident from the fact that He said: "As I live...I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die" (Ezekiel 33:11). Furthermore, he is "longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9). This is exactly why Christ commanded us: "But love your enemies, and do them good" (Luke 6: 35). And so on.

(9) Ninth, man alone possesses a unique, inherent **religious inclination**; he has both the desire and the ability to worship. Regardless of how "primitive" or "advanced" he may be, and despite living isolated from all other humans, man always has sought to worship a higher being. And even when man departs from the true God, he still worships something. It might be a tree, a rock, or even himself. As one writer observed, evidence reveals that "no race or tribe of men, however degraded and apparently atheistic, lacks that spark of religious capacity which may be fanned and fed into a mighty flame" (Dumme-low, 1944, p. ci). The steadily accumulating historical and scientific evidence forced unbelievers to accept this fact decades ago. In their text, *Infidels and Heretics: An Agnostic's Anthology*, Clarence Darrow and Wallace Rice quoted the famous skeptic, John Tyndall:

Religion lives not by the force and aid of dogma, but because **it is ingrained in the nature of man**. To draw a meta-

phor from metallurgy, the moulds have been broken and reconstructed over and over again, but the molten ore abides in the ladle of humanity. **An influence so deep and permanent is not likely soon to disappear...** (1929, p. 146, emp. added).

More than twenty years ago, evolutionist Edward O. Wilson of Harvard University admitted: "The predisposition to religious belief is the most complex and powerful force in the human mind and in all probability an ineradicable part of human nature" (1978, p. 167). Thus, both believers and nonbelievers readily admit that **religion is ingrained in man**. Yet no chimpanzee or dog ever stopped to build an altar, sing a hymn of praise, or give a prayer of thanks. Man's unique **inclination to worship** someone or something, and the fact that he alone is amenable to God (Acts 17:30; Hebrews 14:13), is a vital part of the image of God that he bears.

(10) Finally, and very likely most important, is the fact that man bears the spiritual imprint of God due to the fact that he possesses an **immortal soul**. Only man is endowed with an immortal soul; animals do not possess such a soul (see Thompson and Estabrook, 1999, 19:89-92). Unlike animals, man possesses a God-given spirit that returns to Him when man dies (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Such never is affirmed of animals. Scripture refers to Adam, the first man, as the son of God (Luke 3:38), and to mankind in general as "the offspring of God" (Acts 17:29). No animal ever was described by such language. **Man** is the only physical being upon this Earth that possesses an immortal soul given to him by God—the Father of Spirits (Hebrews 12:9). This immortal spirit that is given by God (and that one day will return to Him) most assuredly makes us divine image-bearers. It likens us to God, separates us from the lower creation, and gives us a reason to live—and to live in accordance to God's will! As Poe and Davis noted:

In whatever sense people are made in the image of God, this image or likeness refers to the sense in which people are like God. People are like all other animals in many respects related to the physical world, but people are like God in many respects related to the **spiritual** world (2000, p. 134, emp. added).

Leupold perhaps summarized the matter best when he stated that "...the spiritual and inner side of the image of God is, without a doubt, the most important one" (1942, p. 90). Henry Morris agreed when he wrote that the image of God "involves many things,

but **surely the essential fact is that man has an eternal spirit**, capable of fellowship with his Creator” (1965, p. 65, emp. added). This is why, to use Hastings’ words, man is “fitted to hold communion with God” (1976, 1:57).

CONCLUSION

The Bible paints a picture of man as a being that stands on a different level from all other creatures upon the Earth. He towers high above all earthly creation because of the phenomenal powers and attributes that God Almighty has freely given him. No other living being was endowed with the capacities and capabilities, the potential and the dignity, that God instilled in each man and woman. Indeed, humankind is the peak, the pinnacle, the crown, the apex of God’s earthly creation.

Man was commanded to “subdue and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:28). The Hebrew word for “subdue” (*kabash*) is described in *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* as meaning “to tread down,” “to bring under subjection,” etc. The same word is used in Numbers 32:22, 29 and Joshua 18:1 where it is used to describe the subduing and pacifying of Israel’s enemies.

Man’s “pre-emptive authority” over the creation, including the animal kingdom, was demonstrated forcefully in a single stroke when God granted mankind permission to kill and eat animals for food (Genesis 9:3-4). Interestingly, however, within the same context God specifically forbade manslaughter “for in the image of God made he man” (Genesis 9:5-6). If man “shares kinship” with animals or if animals possess immortal souls, why would God permit him to kill his own kin—relatives whose souls are no different than his own? As Neale Pryor commented: “Animals also have a *ruach* [a Hebrew word for “breath” or “life”—EL/BT] (Genesis 6:17). Killing one who has a *ruach* or *nephesh* would not necessarily constitute murder; otherwise animals could not be sacrificed or slaughtered” (1974, 5[3]:34). God’s prohibition against murder carried over even into New Testament times (Matthew 19:18). At the same time, however, God broadened the list of animals that men could kill and eat (Acts 10:9-14). Why was it that men **could not** kill other men, but **could** kill animals? The answer, of course, lies in the fact that animals were not created “in the image of God.”

And what a tremendous difference that fact should make in our lives! As Poe and Davis put it:

Whether people are an **aspect** of God or **creatures** of God has profound implications for human existence on earth. If people are the result of the creative activity of God based on God’s intentional, self-conscious decision to make people, then creation results from the purpose of God. People have a purpose, and this purpose emerges from the Creator-creature relationship. If, on the other hand, people are aspects of a...unity of which all things are a part, but which lacks self-consciousness, then life has no purpose. It merely exists (2000, p. 128, emp. added).

Unbelievers are forced to conclude that, in fact, life does “merely exist,” and that it has no real purpose. In his book on the origin of the Universe, *The First Three Minutes*, Nobel laureate Steven Weinberg wrote:

It is almost irresistible for humans to believe that we have some special relation to the universe, that human life is not just a more or less farcical outcome of a chain of accidents reaching back to the first three minutes, but that we were somehow built in from the beginning.... [Yet] **the more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless** (1977, p. 154, emp. added).

The truth is, however, that man’s existence is not “pointless.” We alone have been made in the “image and likeness of God.” And while in some aspects man is indeed different from his Creator-God, we nevertheless are justified in concluding that man—to use the words of Robert Morey—was created to **“be and do on a finite level what God was and did on an infinite level!”** (1984, p. 37, emp. added). What a thrilling concept!

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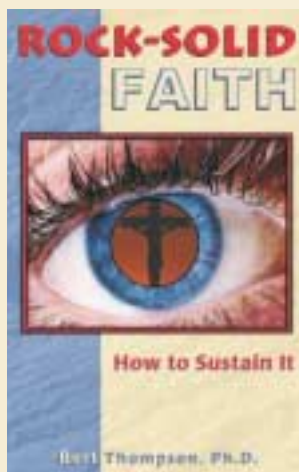
ANNOUNCING: VOLUME TWO IN THE “ROCK-SOLID FAITH” TRILOGY

I know what some of you likely are thinking as you read this. “Finally! It’s about time!” OK, I capitulate. You’re absolutely right. It is about time.

Exactly two years ago this month, in the April 2000 issue of *Reason & Revelation*, I announced in my “Note from the Editor” the publication of the first volume in our new *Rock-Solid Faith* trilogy, *Rock-Solid Faith: How to Build It*. That book was designed specifically to provide the initial evidence upon which Christianity rests, and to help a person build a faith exactly like the one Jesus described the “wise man” as having built—a faith that, when the vicissitudes of life hit, “fell not, for it was founded upon the rock” (Matthew 7:25). In its 350 pages, *Rock-Solid Faith: How to Build It* contained four initial chapters investigating the faces and causes of unbelief, three chapters devoted to the cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments for the existence of God, two chapters on the compilation, content, and inspiration of the Bible, and four chapters dealing with the deity of Christ, God’s plan for man’s salvation, the essentiality, singularity, and uniqueness of the church of Christ, and the mercy and grace of an omnipotent, sovereign God.

Each volume in the *Rock-Solid Faith* series contains 13 lessons (for use in Bible school settings), and has a beautiful, full-color, eye-catching cover with an easy-to-read type style. Plus, volumes two and three may be used as a sequel to the book that precedes them.

Volume two in the trilogy, *Rock-Solid Faith: How to Sustain It*, contains 375 pages, and is intended to help strengthen and nourish a Christian’s faith. For example, the first two chapters of the book examine the concept of biblical faith (how to correctly define it, and how to sustain it). The next two chapters are on mankind’s creation in the “image and likeness of God” (yes, the material included in the March and April 2002 issues of *RE&R* is contained within these chapters—along with much, much more!).



Chapter five is titled “Knowing and Defeating the Enemy,” and examines in great detail Satan, his origin, his mission, and how to triumph over him. Chapters six through ten are on the origin, nature, and destiny of the soul—topics each Christian needs to understand if he or she wants to sustain a rock-solid biblical faith. Chapter eleven, titled “Abandoning Faith—Why Are We Losing Our Children?,” examines why so many of our children are leaving The Faith—and what we can do to prevent this terrible tragedy. Chapter twelve, in a similar vein, is titled “Abandoning Faith—Why Are We Losing Our Adults,” and discusses (with suggested solutions) the same problem among adults in the church. The last chapter, “Faithfully Teaching the Faith,” stresses the importance of “handling aright the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15), and investigates the effects of the intentional (and even unintentional) teaching of error, as well as how acceptance of erroneous teachings can destroy a person’s faith. The book also contains subject, name, and Scripture indices.

[Volume three in the trilogy, *Rock-Solid Faith: How to Defend It*, will provide ammunition that Christian soldiers can use to repel attacks against The Faith (it is this volume that will deal with Bible/science and creation/evolution issues, among others). We hope to have it in print late in 2003.]

Rock-Solid Faith: How to Sustain It has just arrived from our printer and is now available for purchase. [During the upcoming summer months, I am scheduled to tape a 13-lesson video series to accompany the book chapter by chapter (just as I did with *Rock-Solid Faith: How to Build It*). I will announce the videos in my “Note from the Editor” as soon as they are available.] Cost for the newest edition of *Rock-Solid Faith* is only \$12/copy (\$2 s/h), with a 15% discount for 10 or more copies (15% s/h for multiple copies). For credit card orders, or orders to be billed to churches, call us at 800/234-8558. Don’t miss this new book!

Bert Thompson