

The Spark of Life

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

What does it mean that we are created in the image of God? Since God is Spirit and does not have a body as we know it anyway what would His image look like? Obviously God did not mean that we looked like Him but something else altogether.

As most of our theologians have through the ages we could search the Scriptures and compile a list of the a list of the attributes of God and further divide that list into two parts listing separately those attributes of God that God communicated to us and the ones He reserved for Himself. At the end of this task could we answer the question before us?

What do we do about gender since the Bible says that both male and female were created in the image of God? To try and engage a neuter God does not fit the image God revealed of Himself in the Bible. He is God the Father and the imagery in the Bible is quite distinctly male. The appeal to the New Testament and the Words of Christ that in heaven there is no marriage is so weak it doesn't deserve uttering. The feminists in our midst raising prayers to Mother God is heresy and idol worship and the most useless attempt by humankind to communicate with our Creator God.

This is not a thing indifferent to be lightly set aside nor may it be left to our so-called theologians to answer. The Children's catechism begins with, "Who made you?" The whole foundation of the Christian faith begins here with the fact that not only we were created, but created in the image of God.

Calvin began His Institutes of the Christian religion this way:

"Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid Wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other. For, in the first place, no man can survey himself without forthwith turning his thoughts towards the God in whom he lives and moves; because it is perfectly obvious, that the endowments which we possess cannot possibly be from ourselves; nay, that our very being is nothing else than subsistence in God alone."

Subsistence is the essence of being or existence. What does it mean then that we are in God? The first lie in the Bible is from Satan and spoken to Eve saying she would be like God. It becomes obvious very quickly then that we have more questions than answers and these have existed from the beginning of recorded history.

James J. O'Donnell, in his introduction to *The Confession of Augustine* says:

His God is timelessly eternal, without time's distention and hence anxiety, but also without the keen anticipations and rich satisfactions, of humankind; his God is perfection of language incarnate, without the umbrages, and thus without the cunning texture and irony, of human discourse; his God is pure spirit, without the limitations, and thus without the opportunities, of fleshliness. That God is in every way utterly inhuman; and yet (here we

approach the greatest mystery of this book) humankind is created in the image and likeness of that God--a resemblance that Augustine prizes highly, and in which he finds the way to knowledge both of self and of God.

The theologians through the centuries have hit many nails squarely and among these are several truths we must accept to begin to unwind what it means first be created in the image of God and later how this was affected by the fall of mankind into sin.

1. What we can know about God is only that which God has chosen to reveal about Himself.
2. The only place to know an absolute truth about God is therefore in the revealed Word of God, the Bible.
3. God has revealed Himself in a limited sense through the creation and nature.
4. Because only God is perfect in all things not only is our knowledge of God limited by our flesh it is further limited by the sinful nature that exists within man since the fall of man.
5. No man has ever or will ever even begin to comprehend God apart from God's grace in regeneration and the operation of the Holy Spirit within the individual to reveal that truth.
6. Man was created without sin and the ability not to sin.
7. Man disobeyed God and fell from the original state of perfect communion with God by his own will and choice.
8. In the fall man became corrupted in all of his faculties and his will became depraved fleeing from the presence of a God he sought to deny existed.
9. God having declared the end from the beginning so ordered all things to include evil or sin to His glory and the benefit of those whom He chose before the foundation of the earth (Ephesians one).
10. In this fallen estate man became completely unable to save himself temporally or eternally and in need of a Savior.

These presuppositions bring us to the title of this piece and why Calvin used the term that we only exist "in" God. Calvin posits a divine spark remaining within mankind that will cause man when looking at himself to immediately consider the heavens and God. I have chosen to call this the spark of life.

The only explanation for the universal drive within humankind to worship can only flow from such a divine spark of life that was not extinguished in the fall. It is beyond the scope of such a concise article to fully articulate this belief. Calvin does this quite well in the first book of the *Institutes* and the first four chapters.

To attempt to answer some of the questions asked here let us begin with this spark of life; what is it and more importantly what it is not.

Calvin's divine spark will lead natural man to worship God and to know of His power, Godhead, and glory (Romans one). It will not lead to the revelation of God's plan of salvation and the Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world. Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of God is the biblical answer.

Many have wrongly concluded that there is some spark of light or goodness within man that creates and inner ability for man to weigh the evidence and decide for Himself if there is a God and if there

is a Godhead. The Bible says that God is all and in all or fills all. Augustine wondered how it was that God could contain all things while being present in all things, yet what would God do with the rest of His immensity. Calvin was correct and we are all in God and only have our existence in God.

Some point to the kindness in hardened criminals and mass murders and say this I from this spark of life left from creation. They err greatly in their reasoning. There is nothing good that is not the gift of God and no good work unless prepared by God beforehand, not for all but for His chosen to walk in (Ephesians two). Therefore, two people doing the same thing can be good or evil depending on the election of God alone. Only that which is done in faith (the gift of God to His chosen) is good in the biblical sense of that word.

What then transcends this election and exists because all are created in the image of God? While I accept the fact that we only know God by the attributes He reveals of Himself in the Bible I do not create lists of what is communicable and what is not communicable. To me such lists assume a knowledge we do not have and limits God with whom all things are possible. For example, God could have given to man perfect knowledge of all things but did not by His choice not man's.

Thus the traits of personality we have do come from God and creation in His image. Left to the natural state and separated from God these will fail miserably to bring love, joy, and peace to a person. The same ability to reason will lead the godless person into error and further from God while that ability in a person enlightened by the Holy Spirit will draw a person ever closer to God.

God is sovereign and it is God working in us both to will and to do. That grates on the pride (ego) within humankind and creates all sorts of wrongheaded beliefs in the ability of man to choose God. Most of the Christian world if we go by numbers considered members of the various sects will fit into some sort of doctrine concerning the autonomy of man and his free will. They cannot or will not attempt to grasp and understand it is of *God for man both to will and to do* (Philippians two). Yet Scripture is clear that salvation is by grace through faith, the gift of God and never of works lest any should boast (Ephesians two).

Yes a divine spark lives on from the creation in the image of God, but that spark will die unless the breath of the Holy Spirit fans it to a roaring flame within the breast of man. The death of this spark is an awesome thing and should cause all to bow before the Creator and sustainer of all things. When and what extinguishes this spark? It dies when man does not make use of it to worship the one and only living God. When does it die? I do not know but the Bible says there is a time when God gives man over to the foolishness of his own mind (Romans one).

The presence of this spark and the revelation of God of Himself in nature leaves all without excuse, condemned already (John three).

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