

THE NEGLECTED GLORY OF MAN

Male and Female Created He Them

Rev. Desmond Allen, Ph.D., M.Div.

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Opelika, AL USA

Preface

Man, Woman and the Toilet Seat

Other than my mother, I was raised in a house full of men, no sisters: my father, my brothers of whom I am the oldest, my uncle (who is two years older than I) and his best friend. As you might imagine, we had many friends, male of course, who practically lived there as well. Our house was a hub of young masculine activity: model cars and airplanes, slingshots, BB guns, bows and arrows, baseball, bicycles, go carts and mini-bikes, electrical devices in various stages of construction or deconstruction; then came electric guitars and drums and motorcycles and at last, cars. With this new found mobility it is only natural that what followed next were girls.

One day, while still in my teens, I was visiting a friend's home and had need of the restroom facilities. The event transpired as it had since I was a child. However, shortly after having completed this necessity, I was confronted and verbally scolded by the young woman of the house.

"A woman lives here," she said, "show some respect, and put the seat back down when you're finished."

Now, in all the years of my short life, I had never heard this before. Neither, my father, my brothers, my uncle nor our friends ever spoke of it. Even my mother (no doubt overwhelmed and accustomed to the pervasive male presence) never spoke of it. However, I vividly recall that I

did not attempt to defend my actions. Immediately, intuitively, I understood her point. I knew she was right. I, a young man, should give deference to the women in this matter. What woman wants to handle a dirty toilet seat? I know I don't want to handle it; indeed I have been a bit of a "germaphobe" my whole life. My mother tells me that even as a toddler playing in the yard, I would run in the house and wash my hands if they got dirty. This has not changed, other than I don't play in the yard or run any longer.

From that day to this, I have never left a toilet seat up. The fact is I am a bit manic about it. As the Lord would have it, I fathered three daughters, no sons, and this toilet seat discipline has served me well.

By now I suspect you understand the purpose of this story. The man is to have deference for the woman. It is biblical. It is godly. It is, indeed, something for which men will be held accountable. Not the toilet seat so much, but the overall and specific treatment of women.

There are three reasons why the man is to honor the woman. God created man (used here in the majestic sense to speak of male and female) in his own image, and God does not take it lightly when one of his beloved are dishonored. She is the glory of man; not only because she is the fairer sex, but the working of her soul highlights those personal attributes that bring attention to matters of tenderness and affection, which often seem less immediate to the male. Finally, she is physically the weaker of the two, therefore it is man's duty to protect and provide for her.

Desmond Allen
Opelika, Alabama, 2013

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Part One

Man's Glory

Introduction

Throughout the annals of antiquity, with few exceptions, it has been a man's world. That is to say, as the physically stronger gender, men have generally held the dominant roles in society and family life. When this dominant role is abused, as has been the typical scenario throughout history, women are devalued, even dishonored as second class citizens.

To be a woman of a minority race in such a society is an especially burdensome role. The sinful nature of the human heart naturally shows preference to those of like kind, so that, those of another race or culture, or even nationality are often discriminated against. This is something that goes beyond skin color, for such discrimination often takes place even among those of the same pedigree; those who are separated by nothing more than a national border. As such, in most civilizations (both historic and modern), to be a woman of the victimized culture means you are the lowest of the low. This is not an issue of any particular race or culture; it is an issue of the fallen, sinful heart of man (both male and female); it is ubiquitous within humanity, true for every society in history. This sinful nature is at the root of the woman's humiliation. In this respect, the entirety of human history must be viewed in the light of man's

subsequent mistaken estimate of the female's "endowments, worth and rightful place."¹

Man's historic treatment of woman, due to his conceit, ignorance or moral perversion, has taken her inferiority for granted, and has thus necessitated it by her enslavement and degradation.²

In modern times, rebellion against various oppressive constraints placed upon women by the dominant male gender began as early as the late 19th century in certain parts of Europe and the United States. The movement was first organized as the International Council of Women, which was soon followed by the International Woman Suffrage Alliance. The initial intent was for women to gain the right to vote and to hold public office. At first, progress was slow: Although some countries granted the woman's vote, it was only after WWI that most countries adopted the policy.

By the 1960's some outspoken women were seeking to right other social injustices, and by the 1970's other organized women's groups were formed to fight these new battles. They sought legal and social equality with men, equal pay, the right to make contracts, to own property, reproductive rights, and protection from sexual discrimination and harassment. As the women's liberation movement grew, for some the pendulum swung to the ousting of men from heir lives altogether.

While most of the issues addressed by these various movements were and are true injustices in need of correction, some issues, pursued by those riding the far left swinging pendulum, are inappropriate and beyond the boundaries of righteousness. Nevertheless, the generally devalued status of women which gave birth to these movements is a

¹ I.S.B.E. Under topic: Women - In The Creative Plan.

² Ibid.

historical reality. This devaluation is also a product of ungodliness, for if society were to follow godly principles the woman would be honored and valued with the same esteem as the man.

Historically, only those cultures of revelation (the Judeo-Christian world) have considered woman as man's equal. Yet even here, due to sin and the influence of various ungodly cultures, at times women have been deprived of their proper status. This has been the case in modern Western society which has its roots in a Christian heritage. It was the same in ancient Israel.

Every decline in her status in the Hebrew commonwealth was due to the incursion of foreign influence. The lapses of Hebrew morality, especially in the court of Solomon and of subsequent kings, occurred through the borrowing of idolatrous and heathen customs from surrounding nations.³

The same holds true among certain nominal Christian communities who hold the woman in an inequitable status with the man. It is the influence of sin and willful ignorance, not Scripture, which generates this practice. Scripture is the woman's greatest proponent. Godliness, as set forth in Scripture, respects and protects the woman. As such, regardless of how piously it may present itself, any society or religious philosophy that devalues the female is a society or religion that does not follow biblical principles and is thus an ungodly society. Not that respect for women is the sole litmus test to determine righteousness, but its absence is a clear indication that unrighteousness is present; and its absence has been apparent throughout virtually every culture in history save those of revelation.

³ I.S.B.E. Under topic: Women-Social Equality.

Chapter One

Equality

Although many attempt to blame Christianity for the devalued status of women in our Western society, it is simply not the case. This is not to deny that women are generally treated with less regard than are men in Western society; nor is it to deny that some who claim Christianity are the culprits; but it is to deny that Christianity is the cause. Such inferior treatment of women by anyone who claims Christianity, or any group that claims to be a Christian community is perpetrated by their sin and/or ignorance.

It is our enemy, the great deceiver, who perpetuates both lies: first, that woman is inferior to man, and second, that Christianity teaches such nonsense. His objective is to create turmoil among humanity and to discredit the truth of the gospel. This lie, however, is completely absurd; for Scripture and Christian theology have nothing but respect and honor for the woman. On the other hand, women have been held with disregard in virtually every culture throughout history. Every culture, that is, other than those of revelation—the Judeo-Christian cultures which have followed biblical principles.

Adam, The Unit

In Scripture, the woman is qualitatively, in every way, man's equal. Each is a person created in the image of God. Each stands identically before the Creator. Each is to hold the other with mutual respect, revered as an equal creation, an equal partner in their humanity.

After taking a rib from the man to create the woman, the Lord brought her to the man. As we might imagine, Adam was delighted. Immediately he recognized their equality: *"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh"*. Immediately he recognized their intimate connection: *"she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man"* (Gen. 2:23).

Matthew Henry makes an astute observation concerning the rib from which the woman was created.

That the woman was *made of a rib out of the side of Adam*; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.⁴

But even more than being equals, they are a unit: for, *"male and female created he them"* (Gen. 1:27). It is true that Paul speaks of the man as being the leader (which we will discuss shortly); but in the same breath he also says *"the woman is the glory of the man"* (1 Cor. 11:7). Then he addressed their undeniable, indivisible oneness, pointing out that either ceases to exist without the other: *"as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman"* (1 Cor. 11:12).

This reality of male and female being a unit is reinforced again by the Lord. Notice the name God gives them: *"Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their*

⁴ Matthew Henry's Whole Bible Commentary. Comments on Gen. 2:22.

name Adam, in the day when they were created" (Gen. 5:2). Adam is not only the proper name of the first man, as Eve is the proper name of the first female, but Adam is also the collective name of both male and female, or of humanity at large. In English, we have several terms to indicate the entirety of humanity. When used as such, each term is genderless, collectively referring to both male and female; thus, man, mankind, humanity, the Latin homo and the Greek anthropos; in this text it is Adam.

Yet, even before the union of marriage, indeed even aside from the marriage union, there is this other, essential union between man and woman. Adam was made of the earth and Eve was made from Adam's rib, thereby, forming an inseparable bond, a bond that would not exist had Eve been formed directly from the clay as was Adam. Thus, God "*called their name Adam*".

Completing Each Other

I'm sure most of us remember Jerry and Dorothy watching the deaf couple communicate in the elevator in the 1996 romantic comedy, Jerry McGuire. After the couple left, Dorothy (who understood sign language) interpreted for Jerry: The man told the woman, "You complete me."

This is not an unbiblical concept. Man is completed by woman and woman is completed by man. "Man and woman are indeed essentially one, the natural qualities of each so responding to those of the other as to lay the foundation of the most tender and abiding unity."⁵

There is no qualitative superiority or inferiority between male and female. There is no "better than" as to either gender, merely differences; each filling a role that is vital to the other. When functioning correctly, godly, righteously, these different roles do not conflict. There is no internal strife; no envy, one for the other. They work in complete

⁵ American Tract Society Dictionary. Under topic: Women.

harmony, each in need of the other's abilities, each completed by the other's presence.

When this concept of unity and completion is understood with clarity, Adam's insight concerning the marriage union takes on a whole new meaning: "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh*" (Gen. 2:24).

Equal Yet Different

While Scripture clearly attributes qualitative equality to both the male and the female (each sharing the same divine perfections), at the same time, it also speaks of the different and vital roles ascribed to each.

We might say the roles are not dissimilar to the right and left hand. As part of the same body, each is qualitatively equal to the other. They are similar yet different; and their difference is not merely the mirror image of each other. Each is hardwired, as it were, to perform some functions more efficiently than the other. For example, I have played the guitar for more than forty years, so the fingers on each of my hands are somewhat dexterous. But the fingers on the right hand cannot do, with efficiency, what the fingers on the left hand can do, and visa versa. And this was not a learned behavior. From the first time I picked up a guitar, it was natural, even necessary to play it right-handed.

It is a curious thing about the guitar and the tasks the fingers have on each hand: on one they are strumming or picking certain strings, on the other they are bending and stretching to various positions to depress the strings against the fretboard. You would think the activities could be easily swapped; but they cannot be. The dominant hand wants to do the strumming and picking, thereby keeping the rhythm, while the less dominant hand has the more difficult task of stretching and contorting to form hundreds of fingering positions. One might think the dominant hand would be

more adept at this more difficult task; but it is not so, it is the less dominant hand that masters these difficult techniques.

Through the years I have tried many times to play the guitar as a lefty (with my left hand doing the strumming and picking) but it just doesn't happen. Conversely, I have met a few people who learned to play the guitar upside down; that is, to play a right-handed guitar left-handed with the bass strings on the bottom and the treble string on top. They did this because when they learned to play they had to use someone else's right-handed guitar; there was no guitar strung for a left-hander available; and because of the way the brain is "hardwired" they found it more efficient simply to play the guitar upside down rather than to learn to play it right-handed, thereby allowing the dominant hand its preferred role.

So it is with the male and female: they are equal in nature, yet different in function. In that man (male and female) is created in God's image, it should come as no surprise that this concept of equality (in which different persons share the same nature yet possess different roles) is also true of the Divine. We understand that although Jesus is himself equal in nature to the Father and the Holy Spirit (himself being the second person of the triune godhead), nevertheless, his role is different from either of theirs.

The Divine Order

Paul explained that men and women have been assigned different responsibilities: *"the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God"* (1 Cor. 11:3). This does not speak of substance but position or function. It is merely an organizational chart.

Again, these roles are not qualitative; they are merely a matter of function. Just as a 60 year old son is equal, qualitatively, to his 80 year old father, still there exists a role, a structure, a function that remains for each. This is not a qualitative issue, for both are persons to be respected and

treated as equals. Yet, their roles within the family structure and within the structure of society remain that of father and son.

So it is with the man and woman; each has a different function within the family structure and even in society at large. Although each share the same God-like attributes, at the same time each highlights certain of these perfections more so than does the other. Not only is she "*the glory of man*" (1 Cor. 11:7) in the physical sense, as being the fairer sex, but she is the glory of man in the very working of her mind and soul as well. For she brings attention to such tender matters as affection and domestic necessities—those very qualities that often seem less urgent to the male; yet without them man is a beast.

Far from being man's wench, the woman is his splendor. The term *δοξα* (*doxa*) *glory*, speaks to dignity, honor, praise. It may well be said that if there is anything praiseworthy in man, it is accentuated in woman, for she is his glory. Again, Dr. Henry's comments are worth noting:

man being made last of the creatures, as the best and most excellent of all, Eve's being made after Adam, and out of him, puts an honor upon that sex, as the glory of the man, (1 Cor. 11:7). If man is the head, she is the crown, a crown to her husband, the crown of the visible creation. The man was dust refined, but the woman was dust double-refined, one remove further from the earth.⁶

It is interesting to me that medical science has discovered a most profound process that takes place in the brain of the male embryo. A few months into gestation the male baby's brain is bathed in testosterone. It happens again during puberty causing his body to begin changing and

⁶ Matthew Henry's Whole Commentary on the Bible.

maturing. The interesting thing is that all this testosterone permanently impedes the synopsis between the left and right brain, thereby making the male less able to perform certain functions, such as multitasking, as efficiently as the female. It also makes it so the male has a greater propensity to turn out surrounding noises (such as his wife's voice) as he concentrates . . . say . . . on the ball game.

Although (for reasons we will discuss shortly) man is the head of the union, each is in dire need of the other, for *"as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman"* (1 Cor. 11:12). There is no qualitative superiority. There can be no qualitative superiority, for each is of the same essence. There is merely an order to the assigned roles. Furthermore, the male's leadership role is to be carried out in love. Mathew Henry makes this observation:

The love which God requires from the husband in behalf of his wife will make amends for the subjection which he demands her to her husband; and the prescribed subjection of the wife will be an abundant return for that love of the husband which God has made her due.⁷

In one pithy comment, Peter addresses both issues of equality and function when discussing the physical attributes of men versus women, and their equal standing before God: *"husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life"* (1 Pet. 3:7). The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia has these observations:

Priority of creation may indicate headship, but not, as theologians have so uniformly affirmed, superiority. Dependence indicates difference of function, not inferiority. Human values are estimated in terms of the mental and spiritual.

⁷ Matthew Henry's Whole Bible Commentary.

Man and woman are endowed for equality, and are mutually interdependent. Physical strength and prowess cannot be rated in the same category with moral courage and the capacity to endure ill-treatment, sorrow and pain; and in these latter qualities woman has always proved herself the superior.⁸

This paradigm (that man is the leader), exists for two specific reasons; and neither has to do with man's physical prowess. God has ordained this order because Adam was created first, while Eve was created from Adam; and secondly, Eve was deceived, not Adam. Paul said, *"I suffer not a woman . . . to usurp authority over the man, . . . For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression"* (1 Tim. 2:12-14).

These two reasons are worthy of further comment. The first is the order of creation. *"God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him"* (Gen.2:18). The root of the term עֵזֶר (azar) *help meet*, means to surround; so as to protect, to aid, to help or succor.

The passage indicates, most profoundly, the inseparable unity and fellowship of her life with his. Far more than being a mere assistant, "helper" . . . she is man's complement, essential to the perfection of his being. Without her he is not man in the generic fullness of that term.⁹

Eve was not created to be Adam's servant. The woman's role is not that of a wench hustling about to fulfill man's every desire. Such a concept is foreign to Scripture. The male was created first, but the woman stands side by side as an equal partner with the man, bone of his bone,

⁸ I.S.B.E.

⁹ Ibid.

flesh of his flesh. Being first, he is the leader, the aggressor; even physically, he is the stronger. She was created to follow, to respond to his leadership, but this does not equate to servitude or even a diminished status. Qualitatively, they stand equal before the Creator.

Dr. McGee explains that Paul's instruction for wives to submit to their husbands speaks of responding to his leadership, not of cowering before him (Eph. 5:22).¹⁰ Nowhere in revelation will we ever find the idea of servitude, subjection, or bondage. This distortion of the truth is propagated by Satan and practiced by heathen cultures. In the same passage, Paul instructs the husband to love his wife. It is this loving leadership to which she responds favorably; or, conversely, the lack of it, which then generates an undesired response.

She is the beloved, honored companion, as necessary to the man as he is to her, for man and woman are essentially one; they are a unit. Thus, when the Lord brought the female to him, Adam said, *"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh"* (Gen.2:23-24). Dr. McGee has said it well: "A wife is the other half of him. He is only half a man without her."¹¹

The second reason for this order is Eve's deception; for *"Adam was not deceived, but the woman."* This reality brings us back to Adam's love for Eve; a love that required the sacrifice of his own life. Indeed, a love even as Christ had for the Church and gave himself for it. They had been warned not to eat of the fruit of tree of knowledge of good and evil; for if they did they would surely die (Gen. 3:3-5). Yet Eve had been deceived by the enemy; Adam, not so. Adam chose to eat the forbidden tree knowing he was

¹⁰ McGee, J. Vernon. *Thru The Bible*. Thomas Nelson: Dallas; 1981. Vol. 1, pp. 21-22.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 22.

willfully disobeying the Lord. We might say, his eyes were wide open. He realized that Eve, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, this woman whom he loved more than life itself, was now separated from him. Yet he and she, together, were humanity. Somehow he realized that in order to provide for her redemption, he too had to become sin as well. He could only hope for God's forgiveness and their redemption. And indeed, upon God's first encounter with the couple after the transgression, He makes allusion to the coming redeemer.

To the serpent—as an agent of Satan—who had beguiled Eve, God said, *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel"* (Gen.3:15). Of course, as Scripture unfolds, both the conflict and the wounds are explained in greater detail; but this is the first indication of the sacrifice Jesus would endure to provide for man's redemption.

To the woman God said, *"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in sorrow you shall bring forth children; and your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you"* (v. 16). Thousands of years later, the Apostle Paul commented on the birthing process and its complicity in salvation: *"Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing"* (1 Tim. 2:14-15). And so it was, from the loins of woman came forth our Savior, the Lord Jesus. Born of a virgin, the second person of the Godhead entered creation as a man—a perfect man without sin, without inheriting Adam's sin, nor his death. Yet, Jesus willingly gave his life as a sacrifice to satiate the penalty righteousness demanded for man's sin: for Adam, for Eve, and for all their descendants, all of us who will simply accept his gift.

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. . . . For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his

name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Isa. 7:14; 9:6).

Lastly, the Lord dealt with Adam, condemning him to a life of hard labor which would then be followed by the death penalty.

Because you have hearkened unto the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree, of which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat of it: cursed is the ground for your sake; in sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you; and you shall eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, till you return unto the ground; for out of it were you taken: for dust you are, and unto dust shall you return (Gen. 3: 17-19).

In the very next verse, something truly telling takes place. It is Adam's immediate response: *"And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living" (v. 20).* There is no hint of bitterness. No resentment for the sacrifice he made or the punishment he received. He had nothing but love and respect for the woman.

This is the meaning of love, when Paul insisted: *"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" (Col. 3:19).* The term for bitter, πικραίνω (pikraino), speaks of being embittered, exasperated, angry, indignant, and irritated. Adam exemplified this concept. His sacrifice was done from a willing heart; it flowed forth naturally, without a second thought. Even after receiving the harsh punishment of death, he had no regret, no bitterness, only love and admiration, as once again he affirms his clear understanding of Eve's equality to himself. Earlier he had confirmed this equality by acknowledging that she was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh; now he declares she is *"the mother of all living."*

Women of Prominence

While there is a preferred paradigm, it can be flexible if need be. There have been many women in Scripture who held positions of authority or preeminence in society. This is so, because although the model is for male leadership, it is just that, a model, a paradigm, a template. It is not an issue of moral law. It is not (as were the Ten Commandments) written in stone. It is the preferred arrangement due to the order of creation and Eve's deception. However, when necessary, the female is perfectly capable of stepping up to this role, as the following leaders exemplify.

- Miriam, the sister of Moses was a prophetess (Ex. 15:20).
- Deborah was a charismatic leader of God's people, a prophetess and judge over Israel who called into duty an army of 10,000 soldiers. Her military general even refused to advance in battle without her presence (Jd. 4:4-8).
- Hannah, the mother of Samuel, was unsurpassed in all Israel as far as to her intelligence, devotion and fervor for the Lord (1 Sam. 1 & 2).
- Huldah and Noadiah, each a well known prophetess (2 Ki. 22:14; 2 Chr. 34:22; Neh. 6:14); even kings and priests sought the advice of Huldah.
- Anna and the daughters of Philip, the evangelist, were prophetesses (Lk. 2:36-37; Acts 21:8-9).
- Priscilla, along with her husband Aquila, was a 1st century missionary, a church planter, and a teacher of the gospel who traveled extensively with Paul and one in whom he placed much trust (Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19).

- Even the wicked Queen Jezebel illustrates the power to which a woman could rise in ancient Israel (1 Kg. 16 through 2 Kg. 9).

Final Thoughts

Clearly the natural order is for the man to be the leader, the head of the family; but there are a couple of caveats. Along with the responsibility of leadership is the responsibility to love. It is a leadership of love not oppressive legalism. Secondly, this leadership model can be flexible; especially when the male abrogates either of his responsibilities to lead or to love. Even in Scripture this model has been judiciously overturned when necessary.

What is not flexible is the equality that exists between man and woman, nor the need each has for the other. Furthermore, it is completely illogical and ungodly to equate the role of either with the qualitative value of either; for as we have already read: *“God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them”* (Gen. 1:27).

Any religious sect that seeks to identify itself as Christian, yet holds women in lesser light than men, does so sinfully and ignorantly, perhaps incorporating the ungodly cultural practices of its environment; but the sect does not do it because it is the Christian way, for it is not Christian theology. Unlike the Jews, who have been passing down biblical precepts for thousands of years, converts to Christianity generally come from very ungodly cultures. Even during the formative years of the ancient Jewish culture, the Hebrews struggled with this issue. Every time they mixed with and became influenced by the surrounding ungodly nations, they allowed themselves to descend to ungodly standards; and each time the Lord punished them for their wayward behavior.

Those who claim Christianity, yet hold women in disregard are either spiritually immature or simply

hypocrites. New converts will struggle with their old man and their old ungodly ways. Learning to apply biblical principles often takes time. But if they are truly seeking to follow Christ, to be godly, to be righteous, they will abandon their old ways and practice the biblical way. The biblical way, the way of Judeo-Christian theology, is one of equality: equal partners with different roles; each, to equally love and respect the other for their contribution to this indivisible union of male and female.

Chapter Two

To Love

While Scripture does teach that men are to be leaders, it also teaches this leadership is to be exercised in love. The husband is to cherish his wife all the days of her life. It is not sufficient merely to woo her with affection at the early stages of courtship, only to neglect, take for granted or, even worse, abuse her later. *“Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25)*. It is equally clear the wife is to love her husband. The apostle said, *“teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children” (Tit. 2:4)*.

It is rather interesting that different Greek terms are used for each. Not that there is a different kind of love, one for the husband and one for the wife, but that, in these texts, different aspects of love are emphasized. However, this emphasis cannot be taken too far, for certainly both the husband and the wife are to care for the other with a complete love that incorporates all aspects of the relationship. That being said, let us consider these different terms and the possible implications from the text.

Agapao

Paul used the term ἀγαπάω (agapao) for love, when he told the men to *“love your wives.”* It is a term generally associated with a sacrificial love. Thus he added, *“even as*

Christ also loved (agapao) the church, and gave himself for it". This is the same term he used in the oft quoted 1 Corinthians 13. However, as the passage shows, this love is something greater even than sacrifice, for at one point he essentially says even if I sacrifice my body but I do not have love (agapao) it is for nothing. Taking the text as a whole, he defines his term as a sacrifice that springs from a tender, caring, warm and cheerful heart.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long, is kind, does not envy, does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. And now abide faith, hope, love, . . . the greatest of these is love (1 Cor. 13).

Using this text as a rule, it can be said with confidence that a self-centered person truly makes the worst mate; for a self-centered person, man or woman, will not and cannot truly love another. Love speaks of self-sacrifice, and one who loves only himself will not sacrifice himself for another. This person, this self-centered person, is a coward who cares only for self-preservation. Pity the person who chooses a self-centered person for a mate; for heartache and sorrow will be close companions.

In the Colossians passage Paul says, "*Husbands, love (agapao) your wives, and be not bitter against them*" (Col. 3:19).

As discussed in the first chapter, the husband is to make certain sacrifices for his wife; but they must be from a willing heart, without second thought or regret. If the husband begins to view his sacrifice as an unwanted duty, or becomes embittered at his loss, his actions are not done in love and therefore (as pointed out in 1 Corinthians 13), are of no real value.

Lead by Love

This love is what drives a man to get up and go to work every morning to a job that he might not particularly care for, or for which he might be overqualified. How many times have we heard the story of the well educated immigrant (a doctor, a professor, an engineer, etc.) arriving in America only to find his education is of no value here. So he takes any job they he can get, his education, his laurels, his pride, is laid aside for he is compelled to provide for his wife. It is his love for her that makes him save every penny he can that he might buy her a special item she needs or simply desires. This is what makes him put her needs and desires before his own. This is what makes him happy, simply to see her happy. This is what leads him to lower the toilet seat.

The man who has no desire to provide for, or to protect, or to make his wife happy, is the man who has no love for his wife. Paul has very harsh words for such a man: *“if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”* (Tit. 5:8).

The husband who flaunts his headship role as a qualitative superiority which allows him to make demands and lay down arbitrary law, is also a man that does not love his wife. Regardless of how attracted he might be to her physically, regardless of how dependent upon her he may appear, if he exploits his headship in this manner, he does not love her; he merely uses her to meet his needs.

The husband's leadership is to be exemplified by his love, even as Christ loves the Church. This implies, indeed

requires, a special relationship, a constant affection that flows from a sincere and pure heart. Overlooking any of her imperfections or failures, just as Christ sees the Church through his sacrificial blood, the husband sees his wife, as it were, through rose colored glasses. She is perfect. Not that he is unaware of her flaws (for all of us, both male and female, have plenty of them), but that he overlooks them. In his eyes she is like no other; she is his beloved.

Christ's love for the Church is a sacrificial love in which he gave his own life: "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*" (Eph. 5:25). But, notice the reason for Christ's sacrifice,

That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:26-27).

Beyond overlooking imperfections, and even beyond forgiveness, such as Peter's explanation that love covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8), the husband's love, like that of Christ's for the Church, provides an example that will influence his wife's character. For, as explained in the last chapter, Eve's role was to help, to respond to Adam's leadership. This is not to say that the husband holds his wife in his hands like a potter does his clay, but simply that the wife responds to the husband's love. When the wife is loved and cherished in the manner in which the apostle speaks, she revels in it, is enraptured by it, grows into it and naturally seeks to return it. Thus, like the Church, she is sanctified by it. Not in the final sense as standing spotless before the Lord, but in the here and now, consecrated, set apart and venerated in the eyes of her husband.

In like manner, local church leaders are exhorted to exemplify holiness and to teach sound doctrine, "*you be an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in*

spirit, in faith, in purity . . . Take heed unto yourself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this you shall both save yourself, and them that hear you (1 Tim. 4:12; 16). The leader, be it in the church or the family, sets the example, the congregation, the family, the wife respond accordingly. In this way they are sanctified in the practical sense, as being set apart from the world.

When the husband provides this manner of loving leadership his wife responds as does the wife in Proverbs 31. I love this proverb; every time I read it I am reminded how blessed I am, how good God is to me. For, if ever a woman emulates the woman in this proverb, it is my wife. It describes her to the smallest detail. Often, when contemplating our relationship, I literally stand in awe of her.

The Words of King Lemuel's Mother

Proverbs 31:10-31 (NIV)

A wife of noble character who can find?
She is worth far more than rubies.

Her husband has full confidence in her
and lacks nothing of value.

She brings him good, not harm,
all the days of her life.

She selects wool and flax
and works with eager hands.

She is like the merchant ships,
bringing her food from afar.

She gets up while it is still night;
she provides food for her family
and portions for her female servants.

She considers a field and buys it;
out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.

She sets about her work vigorously;
her arms are strong for her tasks.

She sees that her trading is profitable,
and her lamp does not go out at night.

In her hand she holds the distaff
and grasps the spindle with her fingers.

She opens her arms to the poor
and extends her hands to the needy.

When it snows, she has no fear for her household;
for all of them are clothed in scarlet.

She makes coverings for her bed;
she is clothed in fine linen and purple.

Her husband is respected at the city gate,
where he takes his seat among the elders of the
land.

She makes linen garments and sells them,
and supplies the merchants with sashes.

She is clothed with strength and dignity;
she can laugh at the days to come.

She speaks with wisdom,
and faithful instruction is on her tongue.

She watches over the affairs of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Her children arise and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:

“Many women do noble things,
but you surpass them all.”

Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

Honor her for all that her hands have done,
and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

Love as You Love Yourself

The apostle continues his argument, explaining that the husband should love and care for his wife even as he cares for himself. Quoting the Genesis passage, he reminds us that in marriage the two have become one flesh.

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband (Eph. 5:28-33).

But the self-love he speaks of here is not the selfish, self-centeredness discussed earlier. It is vastly different from the childish demands of a spoiled, egotistical narcissist. Here, Paul speaks of the natural nurturing care one provides to his being.

No man in his right mind hates himself, no matter how physically impaired he might be. One does not abuse or even neglect his own flesh; it would be unnatural, ungodly, indeed, masochistic, which, by definition, is not sane. He might wish he had a different body, a stronger or more appealing body, but when it comes right down to it, he takes care of that which he has. He provides for its wellbeing, its needs, and its comfort by any means he can.

The husband's leadership then, is that of a love that gladly makes sacrifice when necessary, cherishes, respects,

protects and provides for his wife's welfare. In this way he honors and appreciates her as an equal, yet more delicate, partner, as Peter said: "*husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered*" (1 Pet. 3:7). This is *agapao* love.

Phileo

When Paul admonished the women "*to love their husbands*" (Tit. 2:4), he used the term *φιλανδρος* (*philandros*), which is generally associated with the kindness and warmth that naturally arises for someone for whom you have great affection. He tells them to foster this same love for their children. Obviously, this is not to say the wife's love for her children is the same as it is for her husband, for certainly, as observed in other passages, the love between the man and the woman is something far different than that for the children. But in this aspect it is similar: to have a kind and friendly heart that genuinely enjoys and values the other's company.

The difference between these two terms (*agapao* and *phileo*) was exhibited when Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me more than these?" Jesus used *agapao*.

To which Peter answered, "Yes Lord, you know I love you." Peter used *phileo*.

Then Jesus asked him a second time, again using *agapao*, and Peter answered again using *phileo*.

When Jesus asked Peter a third time, "Do you love me" he used *phileo*.

At this Peter grieved, because Jesus seemed to be questioning his affection and devotion, his *phileo*. But then Jesus foretold of Peter's eventual martyrdom, essentially telling Peter: Yes, you will demonstrate your affection, your *phileo*, with your sacrifice, your *agapeo* (John 21:15-17).

Phileo expresses a more personal, intimate relationship than that of *agapao*. While in the realm of one's less intimate

relationship to society, *agapao* is the greatest love; as far as personal relationships, *phileo* transcends and necessarily encompasses *agapao*. So that it is possible to have *agapao* without having *phileo*; that is, to be devoted and sacrificially committed without having a deep personal affection, such as having love for one's country. But on the other hand *phileo*, by definition, includes all the aspects of *agapao*, yet on a more personal and intimate level. In this respect *phileo*, often simply translated friendship is a higher form of love. If you recall, earlier, Jesus had said a "*man gives his life for a friend (phileo); you are my friends if you do what I say*" (John 15:13-14).

An important point to make is that although the Ephesians passage emphasized a man's love, *agapeo*, for his wife, this does not preclude a man's love, *phileo*, as well. *Phileo* is a necessary aspect of a successful marriage. This is demonstrated in the Greek Septuagint when it is used to translate the Hebrew אהב ('*ahab*). Here, the context even lends to its meaning a bit of the concept conveyed by the Greek term *eros*:¹²

Let your fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving hind and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and be ravished always with her love (LXX Prov. 5:18-19).

Discussing the grace by which we have been saved and how then we ought to respond, Peter used both these terms for love when he exhorted his readers to diligently add to their "*faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness (φιλαδελφια, philadelphia); and to brotherly kindness charity (αγαπη, agapee)*" (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

¹² The Greek ἔρως (*eros*), from which we get the English *erotic*, speaks of physical attraction, infatuation, even physical pleasure. It accounts for love at first sight and that giddy feeling in the gut when you hold hands with the one of your desire.

If these concepts apply to the church members at large, how much more do they apply to the marriage?

Although the Greek *eros* is not specifically used in Scripture, its concept is discussed, especially in the Song of Solomon. Nevertheless, if a marriage is to be a healthy, functioning unit, it must consist of that special *phileo* which incorporates both *agapao* and *eros*.

One Flesh

Marriage is a wonderful thing. It is the first institution established by the Lord. This alone makes it special. Solomon (generally considered the wisest of the wise) said, “*He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor of the Lord*” (Prov. 18:22).

But marriage is more than a cozy relationship between lovers, more than a mere legal contract, more than a civil ceremony, more than a religious duty, more than a partnership. It is a living, loving union, a mystical fusion in which each nourishes, cherishes, and esteems the other more than himself or herself, for in marriage the two become “*one flesh*.”

This unique union is truly distinct from all other relationships one could possibly have. It is unlike those relationships we might have with acquaintances, business associates, close friendships and even blood relatives, from parents and siblings to aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents—those blood relationships that carry such a powerful, visceral bond that we often have deference even for those whom we do not particularly care for. As the colloquial observation says, “*blood is thicker than water*.” But the bond of marriage transcends all these relationships so that it is closer even than that of blood. Adam did not speak flippantly when he said: “*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh*” (Gen. 2:24).

Similar to an academic discussion of love, simply discussing or attempting to define this unique relationship of being *one flesh* does not do it justice. Like love, but even more difficult to comprehend, this being *one flesh* is something that must be experienced to be truly appreciated. Even then it is impossible to fully articulate.

Unfortunately, too many marriages never experience this mystical union. Too many marriages never achieve this unique union of being *one flesh*. Their bond simply never matures, never grows to its full potential; and without this bond marriage can be the source of great sorrow. Many couples suffer a weak relationship, painfully remaining together—at least legally—for the kids, for the church, for their reputations. Other marriages simply dissolve in divorce as the partners often casually move on to other marriages. And some, though relatively few, achieve this special bond but manage to fracture it and let it fester until it too ends in divorce. Those in this last category experience a loss from which they can never fully recover. This festering wound makes it very unlikely that either will or can enter another truly meaningful relationship. For if their failed marriage was a genuine bond—closer even than blood, a relationship in which they were as one flesh—dissolving it for either would truly be like cutting off their right arm.

The Lord spoke of this same wound with Israel, His estranged wife. So that the prophet Hosea might understand how he felt, God instructed him to take an unfaithful wife that he might experience the pain the Lord Himself felt for Israel (Hosea 3:1). Hundreds of years later, even as the crowds shouted his praise, while others plotted his death, Jesus lamented the soon destruction of Jerusalem. It is one of the two times we see him cry: at the tomb of Lazarus and here, at the destruction of Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, the Lord's estranged wife:

when he came near, he saw the city and wept over it; saying, I tell you, if you had known in this day, even you, the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For . . . your enemies . . . shall not leave in you one stone upon another (Luke 19:41-44).

No! The divorce of those who have truly developed this special bond of being *one flesh* will never fully heal.

Acts of Love

Let me offer a few observations concerning those relationships that have never truly matured to the experiential status of *one flesh*. Although they were once “in love,” too many married couples wake up one day and realize they do not particularly like each other. Their once steamy relationship started with a strong mutual physical attraction for each other. The Greek term is *eros*. Soon they were making small compromises and sacrifices for each other. This is *agape*. The devotion and sacrifice grew once the children came along but each had their own set of friends; neither really caring for the other’s, so that as time passed they spent less and less time together. The initial flame with which their relationship began had faded. Finally, they came to realize they did not really like each other anymore.

The probable truth, however, is that they never did really like each other, not beyond the physical attraction anyway. More than likely, they never actually took the time necessary to get to know each other in an intimate, friendly, *phileo* way. And what little they had learned of each other, in a deeply personal way, was not very attractive, so they merely dismissed it because the steamy relationship or *eros* was good. The mutual sacrifices and benevolence of *apageo* was encouraging, but a cherished, deeply devoted

friendship of *phileo* was never there. If it had been they would not be entertaining their present thoughts of disdain.

I believe one of the greatest reasons for divorce is that spouses fail to learn to love each other in the *phileo* sense. That is, they never develop an intimate, deep seated, like for each other. Their habits and personality quirks begin to irritate each other until at last they conclude they simply do not like each other. It is at this stage of the relationship, when their sacrifices become a duty, that the end is near.

The loving friendship of the *phileo* nature does not come easily; it does not come without effort. It is not like the infatuation and love-at-first-sight aspects of *eros*, and it is more than the loving devotion of *agapao*. *Phileo* is attained only by intimacy. It requires exposing imperfections and sharing dreams. It is that close interpersonal contact in which feelings and emotions and thoughts and desires are known and mutually understood.

The following very apt quotations concerning marriage and friendship are worth pondering.

Marriage is like twirling a baton, turning handsprings, or eating with chopsticks. It looks easy until you try it.¹³

.....

Some people make enemies instead of friends because it is less trouble.

.....

Friendship teaches you many new behaviors: loyalty, forbearance, self-restraint, and a lot of other qualities you wouldn't need if you simply had no friends.¹⁴

¹³ Helen Rowland, Reader's Digest, June, 1994, p. 130.

¹⁴ Unknown author.

A friend is someone who knows everything there is to know about you but likes you anyway.¹⁵

.....

Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts, nor measure words, but to pour them all out just as they are, chaff and grain together knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and then, with the breath of kindness blow the rest away.¹⁶

.....

By friendship you mean the greatest love, the greatest usefulness, the most open communication, the noblest sufferings, the severest truth, the heartiest counsel, and the greatest union of minds of which brave men and women are capable.¹⁷

And finally, Aristotle: "Friendship is a single soul dwelling in two bodies." Other romantics have called this "soul mates," and it might well be said of marriage. Indeed, all these observations about friendship are amplified when discussing the conjugal *phileo* relationship of marriage which incorporates both the *agapao* and *eros* love, for herein the two are one flesh.

¹⁵ Unknown child's statement.

¹⁶ E. C. McKenzie as quoted by George Eliot in *Today in the Word*, July, 1989, p. 28. However the quote has been attributed to others.

¹⁷ Jeremy Taylor.

Speaking Kindly

Seeking to understand what caused marriages to fail, researchers studied many couples over the course of decades, retracing the winding paths of those who eventually separated all the way back to their wedding day. What they discovered was somewhat disturbing. None of the factors they had expected to make a difference seemed to make any difference: not how “in love” the newlyweds were, not how much affection they showed, not how much they fought or what they fought about. What they found was surprising: in the early days of the relationship, both the successful marriages and the failures seemed very similar.

However, as psychologists, Cliff Notarius, of Catholic University, and Howard Markman, of the University of Denver, studied newlyweds over the first decade of marriage a subtle, but telling, difference at the beginning of the relationships became apparent. Of those marriages that would ultimately succeed, 5% of the comments made about each other were insults. Of those that would ultimately fail, it was 10% and, as the decade passed the gap increased until the failing couples were speaking five times as many cruel and negative comments at each other as were the happy couples. Notarius concluded, “Hostile putdowns act as cancerous cells that, if unchecked, erode the relationship over time, . . . In the end, relentless unremitting negativity takes control and the couple can’t get through a week without major blowups.”¹⁸

If nothing else, this small study emphasizes the important of words of love. It illustrates how important Paul’s exhortation is for the husband to love and sacrifice for his wife without bitterness, without regret, without anger or indignation (Col. 3:19). We see how important it is to speak as Solomon does to his bride, “*O my dove, your are in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see your*

¹⁸ Notarius, Cliff. U.S. News & World Report, February 21, 1994, p. 67.

countenance, let me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is comely” (Song 2:14).

The Key to Marriage

This then, I believe, is the key to the successful, happy marriage. It centers upon creating a bond that is closer even than that of blood—a relationship that grows into the concept of being “one flesh.” This is achieved by pursuing that special, intimate *phileo* relationship which incorporates and transcends both *eros* and *agapao*. The resultant bond is so tight the two truly become as one flesh.

This relationship, this special friendship, this love, has to be fostered. It has to be nurtured. It takes time and effort. Beyond the love-at-first-sight nature of *eros* beyond even the obligatory sacrificial love of *agapao*; *phileo* is that deeply personal, heart rendering affection shared by each from the depths of their very souls.

Chapter Three

To Honor

It is not just wives who are to be honored. In all stages of life the woman is to receive deference. Sons are to honor their mothers, and revere their aunts. Brothers are to respect their sisters. Husbands to love their wives and men, at large, are to protect and provide for the women who cannot provide for themselves.¹⁹ Such biblical teachings negate any qualitative or quantitative megalomaniac thoughts of male superiority. Qualitatively, the male is to honor the female as an equal. Quantitatively, rather than extolling his more powerful physical nature, the male is given the onus of protector and provider.

A number of societies have a quasi-matriarchal nature about them with the mother being disproportionately revered within the immediate family structure. A few curious things, however, about such social structures is that often only one's own mother is revered in such a manner, and it is typically the sons of the family who hold their mother in near worship. Other women are not held with any special regard; indeed, they are often treated as second class citizens. It is a conundrum: honor your own mother but disregard your neighbor's mother or sister or wife.

¹⁹ See, Ex. 20:12, Lev. 18 & 20; Eph. 5:25; Ps. 146:9.

Typically, in such social structures, even the son's own wife is devalued, in that the son will always take his mother's side in any conflict; and there will be conflict, for the mother will seldom approve of the wife her son has chosen.

Such relationships are grossly disproportional. Yes, one is to honor his mother, but it is also true that the man is to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife as they become one unit. A menacing mother, especially one who is nearly worshipped, is a sure recipe for divorce.

Honor Your Mother

That being said, it is natural, it is righteous, it is godly to honor one's mother. Indeed, as Paul pointed out, it is the first commandment with promise: "*Honor your father and mother, . . . that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth*" (Eph. 6:2). Solomon spoke many times of honoring one's father and mother.

My son, hear the instruction of your father, and forsake not the law of your mother:

For they shall be an ornament of grace unto your head, and chains about your neck (Prov. 1:8-9).

A wise son makes a glad father:

but a foolish man despises his mother (Prov. 15:20).

He that wastes his father, and chases away his mother, is a son that causes shame, and brings reproach (Prov. 19:26).

Hearken unto your father that begat you, and despise not your mother when she is old (Prov. 23:22).

As we grow and mature the means by which we honor and respect our parents necessarily changes. As children, father and mother are the law givers, the authority figures whom we are to obey without question. Later, our parent's role slowly turns into that of an advisor, someone who

knows us intimately, like no other, and who is intently concerned for our wellbeing.

As we enter middle age ourselves, and our parents are now elderly, we often become their caregiver, providing for and assuring their comfort and security. Sometimes, we might even have to assume authority. But this does not alter their parental status; still we are to honor, respect and have deference for those who brought us into this world.

Children, Parents and the Last Days

To honor and respect one's parents is natural. It is godly. It is a commandment of the Lord; therefore it comes as no surprise that our enemy would attack on this front. Solomon spoke of a time when children would have no regard for their parents: *"There is a generation that curses their father, and does not bless their mother"* (Prov. 33:11). He also spoke of the judgment upon such offspring.

*Whoso robs his father or his mother, and says, It is no transgression;
the same is the companion of a destroyer (Prov. 28:24).*

*Whoso curses his father or his mother,
his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness (Prov. 20:20).*

*The eye that mocks at his father, and despises to obey his mother,
the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it (Prov. 30:17).*

Woe unto those who dishonor or mistreat their father or mother, for they shall be held accountable. Sadly, such children, without reverence or deference for their parents, will be commonplace in the last days before Christ's promised return. Jesus warned that as it was in the days of Noah so shall it be when he returns (Mt. 24:37). In Romans chapter one, Paul paints a vivid picture of the antediluvian

civilization. It is not a pretty picture, but is strikingly similar to our current civilization.

The current social conditions and the rebellious state of the youth (on a global basis) are just a few of the many indicators that we are in the last days. We are told to expect many things in the last days: the return of the Jews to their promised land, Israel suffering the scorn of its surrounding nations, a movement toward a one-world government, an increase in wars and threats of war, increased natural disasters, the rejection of God as the Creator, a widespread moral decay and the collapse of civility. But of special concern to our topic is the lack of familial bonds. Concerning the antediluvian society, which we are told will be emulated in the last days, Paul writes:

God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful (Rom. 1:28-31).

Of special note is that they were “*disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful*” (vv. 30-31). This description is most telling. Matthew Poole suggests the idea of being disobedient to parents extends to the political as well as the natural. He also observes that the term “*without understanding*” *συνεσις* (sunesis) is very similar to “*without conscience*” *συνειδησις* (suneideesis), and thus carries a similar meaning.²⁰ This same term is used earlier in the passage to speak of their foolish hearts: “*they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not*

²⁰ Matthew Poole’s Commentary on the Holy Bible. Commentary on Romans 1.

as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (v. 21).

Barnes explains, this phrase expresses the general lack of honor, respect and attention that is rightfully due to parents. No doubt, the children's aforementioned pride and haughtiness naturally lead to this disregard for their parents. He then considers what this disregard means for the aged parents.

It might also be felt that to provide for them when aged and infirm was a burden; and hence there would arise disregard for their wants, and probably open opposition to their wishes, as being the demands of petulance and age. It has been one characteristic of heathenism everywhere, that it leaves children to treat their parents with neglect. Among the Sandwich islanders it was customary, when a parent was old, infirm, and sick beyond the hope of recovery, for his own children to bury him alive; and it has been the common custom in India for children to leave their aged parents to perish on the banks of the Ganges.²¹

While it is not our custom in the Western World to leave our parents to die on the banks of a sacred river, it is customary to leave them to die in the lonely rooms of a nursing home. Not that the nursing home itself is at issue; for often the aged parents have conditions with which their children do not have the necessary skills or resources. It is not the nursing home per se, but the leaving, the virtual abandoning of them there. How many nursing home residents seldom, if ever, see their children, their grandchildren, once they have been left in its hallowed rooms?

²¹ Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible. Commentary on Romans 1.

We see also that this generation will be “*covenant breakers, without natural affection.*” Beyond merely ‘not keeping their word’ they likely never had any intent to keep it in the first place. The term for “*covenant breakers*” is a strong negative participle that speaks of dealing treacherously with contracts or treaties.²² While the phrase “*without natural affection*” is specifically speaking of being “*hard-hearted towards kindred.*”²³ Such evil denies a basic attribute of humanity. Being created in the image of God, it is natural to harbor affection for others, especially for family members. This aspect of human personality is imparted to us from God. It is vital to our identity. Yet these evil hearts deny it.

The Dishonor of Family

Furthermore, Paul knew this same malevolent mindset would creep into the church in the last days, and he warned us to beware.

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

This evil (this lack of natural affection for one’s own family) has been seen in various cultures throughout history. Some cultures have gone so far as to make human sacrifice of their own family members, their own children, to their

²² Strong's Greek Dictionary.

²³ Ibid.

various pagan idols. In the following extended passage, Barnes highlights some of these historic pagan cultures.²⁴

The attachment of parents to children is one of the strongest in nature, and nothing can overcome it but the most confirmed and established wickedness. And yet the apostle charges on the heathen generally the want of this affection. He doubtless refers here to the practice so common among heathens of *exposing* their children, or putting them to death. This crime, so abhorrent to all the feelings of humanity, was common among the heathen, and is still. The Canaanites, we are told, Ps 106:37-38, “sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan.” Manasseh, among the Jews, imitated their example, and introduced the horrid custom of sacrificing children to Moloch, and set the example by offering his own, 2Ch 33:6.

Among the ancient Persians it was a common custom to bury children alive. In most of the Grecian states, infanticide was not merely permitted, but actually enforced by law. The Spartan lawgiver expressly ordained that every child that was born should be examined by the ancient men of the tribe, and that if found

²⁴ No doubt as some read these horrific accounts, they will compare it to Abraham’s near sacrifice of Isaac. But there is a vast difference. Abraham was obeying the Creator, who had proved himself via direct communication and fulfilled promises. Furthermore, in that it was merely a test, he stopped Abraham before the deed was done, whereas these cultures sacrifice their family on the mere basis of cultural superstition, and unlike Abraham’s Lord, their idols do not intervene to stop them.

weak or deformed, should be thrown into a deep cavern at the foot of Mount Taygetus. Aristotle, in his work on government, enjoins the exposure of children that are naturally feeble and deformed, in order to prevent an excess of population. But among all the nations of antiquity, the Romans were the most unrelenting in their treatment of infants, Romulus obliged the citizens to bring up all their male children, and the *eldest* of the females—proof that the others were to be destroyed.

The Roman father had an absolute right over the life of his child, and we have abundant proof that that right was often exercised. Romulus expressly authorized the destruction of all children that were deformed, only requiring the parents to exhibit them to their five nearest neighbors, and to obtain their consent to their death. The law of the Twelve Tables, enacted in the 301st year of Rome, sanctioned the same barbarous practice. Minucius Felix thus describes the barbarity of the Romans in this respect: "I see you exposing your infants to wild beasts and birds, or strangling them after the most miserable manner," (chap. xxx.).

Pliny, the elder, defends the right of parents to destroy their children, upon the ground of its being necessary in order to preserve the population within proper bounds. Tertullian, in his apology, expresses himself boldly on this subject. "How many of you (addressing himself to the Roman people, and to the governors of cities and provinces) might I

deservedly charge with infant murder; and not only so, but among the different kinds of death, for choosing some of the cruelest for their own children, such as drowning, or starving with cold or hunger, or exposing to the mercy of dogs; dying by the sword being too sweet a death for children." Nor was this practice arrested in the Roman government until the time of Constantine, the first Christian prince.

The Phenicians and Carthagenians were in the habit of sacrificing infants to the gods. It may be added, that the crime is no less common among modern pagan nations, no less than 9,000 children are exposed in Pekin in China, annually.²⁵ Persons are employed by the police to go through the city with carts every morning to pick up all the children that may have been thrown out during the night. The bodies are carried to a common pit without the walls of the city, into which all, whether *dead or living*, are promiscuously thrown (Barrow's Travels in China, p. 113, Am. ed.).

Among the Hindoos the practice is perhaps still more common. In the provinces of Cutch and Guzerat alone the number of infantile murders amounted, according to the lowest calculation in 1807, to 3000 annually; according to another calculation, to 30,000. Females are almost the only victims (Buchanan's Researches in Asia, Eng. ed., p. 49. Ward's View of the Hindoos). In Otaheite, previously to the conversion of the people to Christianity,

²⁵ Barnes published this work in 1870.

it was estimated that at least *two-thirds* of the children were destroyed (Turnbull's Voyage round the World in 1800, 2, 3, and 4.). The natives of New South Wales were in the habit of burying the child with its mother, if she should happen to die (Collins' Account of the Colony of New South Wales, p. 124, 125.). Among the Hottentots, infanticide is a common crime. "The altars of the *Mexicans* were continually drenched in the blood of infants." In Peru, no less than two hundred infants were sacrificed on occasion of the coronation of the Inca. The authority for these melancholy statements may be seen in Beck's Medical Jurisprudence, vol. i. 184--197, ed. 1823. See also Robertson's History of America, p. 221, ed. 1821. This is a *specimen* of the views and feelings of the heathen world; and the painful narrative might be continued to almost any length.²⁶

In that there is a tendency to romanticize many of these ancient cultures, while at the same time condemning the Christian culture, I felt this lengthy quotation well worth the effort to put things in perspective. Admittedly, the modern Christian culture has issues; for, as predicted, sin and sinners have crept into our midst twisting and misrepresenting issues of holiness. But this is a far cry from the outright evil characterized in these ancient cultures, which the world so desperately wants to admire.

On the other hand, despite their atrocities, it should be of little surprise that the world romanticizes these ancient cultures, for this same lack of natural affection is prevalent today as it was then. It merely takes a different form. Beyond the abandoned elderly, as mentioned earlier, in the

²⁶ Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible.

United States alone, thousands of babies are aborted daily, about one every 26 seconds. Worldwide tens of thousand of innocent babies are aborted every day, nearly 80 every minute.

Remarkably, as Paul observed, many of these same people care more for animals than they do their own kind; they have “*changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator*” (Rom. 1:25). In their twisted logic, they think nothing of aborting babies, who are created in God’s image, yet they adamantly oppose any perceived mistreatment of animals and even the capital punishment of murderers.

Of course, the mistreatment of animals is not a good thing; but one should expect that if there is concern for animals there will be even greater concern for humanity. Yet, such is not the case in this modern world of secular humanism where the creature is given deference over the human. As for capital punishment, God himself has commanded it to be so for murderers, for human life is sacred, created in his own image. It is the penalty for their crime, but just as important, it is designed to protect society from those who have proven themselves capable of such a crime.

Once again, we see the great deceiver at work, setting forth distorted arguments based upon half truths and false premises: society lets the murderers and tree frogs live, for killing is wrong; but women can destroy all the human embryos they like, for they have a right to have control of their own bodies. Ironically, those who make these twisted arguments are, generally, also those who believe there are no absolutes and, therefore (though they are loath to admit it), no morals; yet they base their twisted arguments on their appeal to morals—albeit, twisted morals.

We are also told this generation will be “*implacable and unmerciful*” (v. 31). Implacable speaks of a bitter, stubborn lack of forgiveness; “those who will not be reconciled where

there is a quarrel; or who pursue the offender with unyielding revenge.”²⁷ Unmerciful, of course, is to be destitute of compassion, such as the general lack of concern for the outcasts, the poor, the infirmed, the elderly, who are easily forgotten, left to depend on the charity of someone other than one’s self.

It is not that all parents and children in these last days lack this natural affection and respect, but enough of them do, so that, if it were a disease it would be deemed an epidemic. Several factors have brought our current generation to equal the pitiful state of the antediluvians. One of the primary factors is the widespread acceptance of the big bang hypothesis and its subsequent offspring, evolution. In that it teaches a self-determined material universe void of a personal designer, the logical conclusion must be the abandonment of metaphysical absolutes; thus, the abandonment of morals, for in this scenario they must be the imposed metaphysical conceptions of certain individuals.

This nonsensical worldview is also alluded to as the mindset of the antediluvian world. Notice the downward spiral in their morals, once they refused the Creator and chose, rather, to reverence the creation itself.

the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has shown it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves

²⁷ Ibid.

to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet (Rom. 1:18-27).

It does not take a great philosopher to realize that if there is no Creator to whom one must answer, if man is himself the highest order of being, if there is no afterlife, then one's own selfish desires are primary; no one else, nothing else, matters. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die and the ride is over. Thus, there is no such thing as loyalty, affection, morals, or even love; these are simply tools employed for manipulating circumstances to one's personal benefit. No doubt, those in the last days who exemplify this dreadful mindset (without natural affection and determined to please no one but themselves), have grown to be so due to their desperate worldview, which is the logical conclusion of the supposed big bang and its subsequent scheme of natural selection.

Provision

There is, however, a Creator, the one and only true God in whose image man is created. Upon man's disobedience (which he exercised by his own freewill), man not only lost

his standing with God, he also brought upon himself all the evils that befall humanity. God had warned him such would be the case if he disobeyed. But the warning did not dissuade him; still he did the very thing God told him not to do. Therefore, the question “Why did God allow this (*fill in the blank*) to happen?” is completely invalid; for man, not God, is the responsible agent for all the bad things that happen.

Nevertheless, in his love for man, God provided for his redemption by sending Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead, to pay the penalty that righteousness demands. For this reason, Jesus entered His creation. Being born of a virgin mother, he was a perfect man, without sin, not subject to the penalty of death that righteousness demanded for sinning against God. Yet he sacrificed his life, taking upon himself the punishment that was rightly our own, thereby satisfying the demands of righteousness. But he, unlike us, was victorious and rose to life three days later; in this he secured both salvation and glorification for all who simply believe in his work and accept His forgiveness.

Upon death every soul will meet the Creator. Woe unto those who have not placed their faith in Christ, for “*it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*” Sadly, although Christ’s death has provided for God’s mercy, so that no one needs to stand before their Creator without impunity, still many refuse his forgiveness which extends to all, but is given only to those who accept it.

God is merciful; He desires all to repent; He desires all to avoid the punishment His righteousness demands. This is why he paid the price himself. His concern is such that even His very last words in Scripture lovingly extend his invitation.

The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

Chapter Four

To Defend

Virtually every culture in history (other than Judeo-Christian) has devalued women and shown contempt for widows, orphans, and the weak in general. Those who call themselves Christians yet practice such deprivation are not exhibiting godliness; they are not following biblical standards. For, as we read, an aspect of righteous behavior and true worship is to care for the underprivileged.

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy (Prov. 31:8-9).

Specifically, concerning widows and orphans we read,

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction (Jam. 1:27).

In this way we imitate our Lord, who has always been a defender of the weak.

You shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If you afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword;

and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless (Ex. 22:22-24).

He executes the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loves the stranger, in giving him food and raiment (Deut. 10:18).

You shall not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge (Deut. 24:17).

The stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within your gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand (Deut. 14:29).

Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy (Ps. 82:3).

Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow (Isa. 1:17).

Care for the Widows

Not only did the Lord tell us to care and provide for the widows and orphans, he gave ancient Israel precise instructions for procuring the resources. Israel was to allow the underprivileged to glean the crops, so at harvest, a portion of field was left for the poor.

And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, neither shall you gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, neither shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God (Lev. 19:9-10).

When you cut down your harvest in your field, and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the

fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive tree, you shall not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow (Deut. 24:19-21).

This practice is highlighted in the story of Ruth, which also highlights the role of the kinsman redeemer, גא'ל (ga'al), exemplified by Boaz. Naomi's husband and two sons had recently die leaving Naomi and her daughters-in-law without support. Upon returning to her homeland with her daughter-in-law, Ruth, she seeks support from the family.

When her husband's nearest kin declines the task, Boaz, steps up to provide for the widows. As her husband's kin it was his right, even responsibility, to fill this role of kinsmen redeemer. That is, if the widow so desired; for in Israel, unlike other cultures, women had the right to accept or reject a man, even in arranged matches (Gen. 24:58).

Jesus' Respect for Women

Aside from the years of apostasy (as was the case when Jesus visited them), the history of Judaism is replete with respect for women, widows, the weak, and the underprivileged. Jesus demonstrated this tenderness and courtesy to the women who approached him. When a Canaanite woman pleaded for mercy, that the demon might be cast out of her daughter, the disciples, still in their training, wanted her sent away. But Jesus engaged her in conversation, saying, *"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* When the woman persisted, he answered, *"It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."*

To which she replied, *"Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."*

Then Jesus answered, *“O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish”* (Mat. 15:22-28 NASB).

In our modern culture, which in recent years has become more sensitive to the diminished status of women, we might understand Jesus’ address *“O woman”* as disrespectful; but such is not the case. Nor was he disrespectful at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, when Mary, his mother, informed him that the host was out of wine; to which he said, *“Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come”* (Jn. 2:4). The circumstances are similar in both situations. Each of the women had asked Jesus to do something that was not in accord with the timing of his mission. Although the Gentiles would eventually be evangelized, it was not Jesus’ mission at this time. And although Jesus would soon reveal his deity by performing miracles, it was not yet time. Yet, to each of the women he gave a mild, yet tender and respectful rebuke and then fulfilled their requests. It is ignorance or perhaps even an evil heart that attempts to read disrespect into these conversations.

Jesus also demonstrated such respect and a tender heart toward the woman who anointed him with oil. When the disciples found fault with her waste, Jesus not only defended her actions, but memorialized her for all time.

Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble you the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For you have the poor always with you; but me you have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you,

Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman has done, be told for a memorial of her (Mat. 26:6-13).

The World's Disregard for Women

It is a curious thing that while Judeo-Christian theology produces the only cultures in history that truly respect the female as man's equal, these are the cultures most hated by women's activist groups. Yet, throughout the world billions of women are, and historically have been, grossly mistreated by every culture but those which follow biblical standards.

What follows in the next few paragraphs are but a few examples of the ungodly attacks perpetrated on women by various pagan cultures. One such atrocity reported by the World Health Organization is female circumcision, which is practiced in some twenty-eight countries in various regions of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. An estimated 140 million women and girls have been mutilated by this ritual which can be nothing less than demonically inspired. Beyond being solely an issue of male dominance (that they might control the female's sexuality) apparently, many of the women within these cultures approve of the practice.²⁸

Then there is the tradition of infanticide which has been practiced in virtually every ancient, non Judeo-Christian culture. Baby females have always been a prime target. In the 3rd century BC, the Chinese philosopher, Han Fei Tzu, wrote: "As to children, a father and mother when they produce a boy congratulate one another, but when they produce a girl they put it to death."²⁹ Although male babies in China were not immune to infanticide, especially among

²⁸ "Female genital mutilation". World Health Organization, Feb 2013.

²⁹ Yu-Lan, Fung. A History of Chinese Philosophy. Princeton University Press: 1952, p. 327.

the poor, by the time of the Ming Dynasty in the Middle-Ages, it was used almost exclusively on female.

Other abuses are found in the fundamentalist interpretation of Islamic Law which forbids women to work outside the home or even to leave their home without the company of a male relative. Strict dress codes are enforced for all women, and young girls are not allowed to go to school. Any offender is punished. The Honor Code that exists in various Middle Eastern cultures is oppressive to all women. If a woman is even suspected of bringing dishonor to her family she is subject to severe punishment, ranging from imprisonment to death.³⁰

Widows Worldwide

The world's many millions of widows especially are targets of mistreatment. It has been argued,

there is no group more affected by the sin of omission than widows. They are painfully absent from the statistics of many developing countries, and they are rarely mentioned in the multitude of reports on women's poverty, development, health or human rights published in the last twenty-five years.³¹

They are virtually neglected by social researchers, international human rights activists, their governments, and even the various women's movements.

In various parts of Africa, the widow could be made to endure an assortment of horrendous cultural and ceremonial atrocities. Depending upon her location, she might be made to eat kola-nut placed on her husband's dead body, and to drink impure, poisonous concoctions used to wash her

³⁰“Widowhood: invisible women, secluded or excluded,” United Nations, Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Dec. 2001, p. 7.

³¹ Ibid. pp. 2-3.

husband's corpse. She might be made to sleep with the dead body, and expose her naked body outside the house both morning and evening during the mourning period, which could last for years. She might have to shave her hair and not be permitted to bathe for many days. She is considered unclean upon the death of her husband and not allowed to touch any object for fear of defiling it. She could be made to scratch her body with sticks to avoid further defilement. Her meals will be cooked in old pots rather than those used by other members of the family, and she will be made to sleep on old mats placed on wooden planks that can be burned at the end of the mourning period. She will be stripped of property and inheritance by her husband's kin and forced out of her matrimonial home. Her young children will have to drop out of school to find work due to the poverty they now endure because of being deprived of their fathers' resources. Female children especially are discriminated against, even if the dead father's kin allocate some resources for children, the female is not likely to see any of it.^{32,33,34}

India has the largest recorded number of widows in the world – 33 million, 10 percent of the female population, . . . only about 10 percent of widows marry again. . . . Indian society, like all patriarchal societies, confers social status on a woman through a man; hence, in the absence of a man, she herself becomes a nonentity and suffers a social death. *Sati* (widow burning) is the ultimate manifestation

³² Idialu, Ethel E. "The Inhuman Treatment of Widows in African Communities," Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria, Current Research Journal of Social Sciences 4(1): 6-11, 2012

³³ United Nations General Assembly, 1981; UNICEF, 1998.

³⁴ Idialu, Ibid.

of this belief. Widow remarriage may be forbidden in the higher castes, and remarriage, where permitted, may be restricted to a family member. Further, a widow, upon remarriage, may be required to relinquish custody of her children as well as any property rights she may have. If she keeps her children with her, she may fear they will be ill-treated in a second marriage. Indian widows are often regarded as “evil eyes”, the purveyors of ill fortune and unwanted burdens on poor families. Words in the vernacular are crudely pejorative: “witch”, “*dakan*” and “whore” (similar verbal abuse is common in Bangladesh as well as in some countries in Africa). Thousands of widows are disowned by their relatives and thrown out of their homes in the context of land and inheritance disputes. Their options, given a lack of education and training, are mostly limited to becoming exploited, unregulated, domestic laborers (often as house slaves within the husband’s family) or turning to begging or prostitution. The sexual and economic exploitation of widows, abandoned by their families to the temple sites . . . has been sensationally documented in the media. Thousands of India’s widows live in abject poverty and degradation in these centers. . . . Younger widows are forced into prostitution, and older ones are left to beg and chant for alms from pilgrims and tourists. Older widows may have lived the greater part of their lives in these temples, having been brought there as child widows many years before.³⁵

³⁵ Widowhood: invisible women, secluded or excluded, *Ibid.* p.6.

In Bangladesh, many widows have no alternative but to work as unpaid domestic servants for relatives; others are forced into homelessness. Arranged child marriages still occur in many areas and, because the age difference can be so great between the husband and wife, child widowhood is widespread. The widow's daughters are considered economic liabilities and therefore, generally given away in similar marriage arrangements. They are unlikely to be well received by their husband's male family members. Eventually, they often "find themselves child widows in a hostile setting, encountering abuse or eviction. Illiterate, young, and vulnerable, they may be passed on to a series of older, frail, or disabled men, thus enduring serial widowhood."³⁶

Bangladesh, like Nepal, is allegedly a major centre for trafficking young girls to the brothels of India. Widows' daughters who are without male protectors and not enrolled in school are especially at risk to this trade. The numbers of young Bangladeshi girls disappearing in this way is purportedly reaching astronomical proportions.³⁷

In Sri Lanka, war widows, who are multiplied on both sides of the never-ending conflict, suffer severe poverty and marginalization as well.³⁸ Impoverished widows in Pakistan are supposed to receive a small pension, called *zakat*; however, due to corruption those with the greatest need are often neglected. Here too, their deceased husband's male relatives deprive them of resources.

Due to decades of conflict, in various regions of South-East Asia, such as Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia and Viet Nam, the number of widows is enormous. These widows

³⁶ Ibid. p.7.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

are often herded by gunpoint into camps or must seek refuge in the hills. They are voiceless victims of abuse, ostracized by their communities and often even by their own families. Homeless and malnourished, they are prime victims of violence, sexual harassment and rape, especially by the soldiers. Many turn to prostitution for survival, or fall prey to human trafficking, which is common in many developing nations. This thriving sex industry seems, for many widows, their only option of employment. Some are so destitute they even sell their daughters to these traffickers.³⁹

There is a contrasting scenario in Latin America and the Caribbean, versus the African and Asian countries. Although the devalued status of women exists, it is not so horrific.

Unlike the situation in Africa and Asia, widows in Latin America and the Caribbean are not subject to contradictory plural legal systems. It is rather the machismo, or male chauvinism, that has kept many women in subordinate roles and discriminated against, especially in education and employment opportunities. Women's low status throughout their lives is reflected in the poverty and isolation of widowhood when they become old, and the family has migrated and split up.⁴⁰

This contrast is likely due to the historic influence of Christianity. These Latin cultures have learned enough from Scripture to know that woman is equal to man and should be treated with dignity; however, the dark sinful heart of man still exists. So that while recognizing the value of

³⁹ Ibid. p.10.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

women on one hand, on the other they struggle with ungodly, unbiblical concepts of qualitative superiority. The result is a twisted male chauvinism – a perverted view of the concept of male leadership, which biblically, is to be provided by love not domination.

Yet another contrast exists in Eastern and Central Europe, another society that has an ancient but virtually lost history of Christian influence. Here too, the biblical concept of equality had once spread throughout the land with the gospel. However, as future generations turned from or distorted biblical teachings (as was the case in Latin America) the sinful nature of the human heart gained control. Once again, women, and especially widows, became devalued, even discarded entities.

The economic, societal, and political breakdown in many of these countries in recent decades has led to the early demise of many men due to alcoholism, suicidal depression, and combat in their many wars. The result has been an increase in impoverished widows and children. Many of these children, whose widowed mothers are either unwilling or unable to care for them, have turned to the streets for a life of crime. In turn, there is a “rising incidence of robbery, assault and rape against both young and old widows.”⁴¹ As in Latin America, although there is often verbal commitment from the governments to provide for these widows, the resources are seldom allocated. In many cases, even the soldiers’ widows do not receive their pensions. And once again, many of these helpless, impoverished women turn to the sex trade for survival.

Today, millions of the world’s widows, of all ages, endure extreme poverty, ostracism, violence, homelessness, ill health and discrimination in law and custom. A lack of inheritance and land rights, widow abuse and

⁴¹ Ibid. p.11.

the practice of degrading, and life-threatening mourning and burial rites are prime examples of human rights violations that are justified by “reliance on culture” and “tradition.”

Widows, of all ages, are often evicted from their homes, stigmatized and physically abused – some even killed. Widowed mothers, as sole supporters of their offspring, are forced to withdraw these children from school and to rely on their labor. The daughters of widows may suffer multiple deprivations, increasing their vulnerability to abuse.⁴²

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A WorldPublicOpinion.org poll of 17 nations around the world finds a widespread perception that widows and divorced women are treated worse than other women. In only two countries do a majority say that there is no discrimination against widows and in only one country does a majority say there is no discrimination against divorced women.⁴³

Modern Western Women

As mentioned earlier, the devalued status of women is one of the first signs of moral decay. The farther a culture gets from God the less value it places on the woman until at last she is routinely humiliated and mistreated. This may take place in a number of ways: financial deprivation, physical attacks, psychological abuse and even (as was the

⁴² “Widowhood: invisible women, secluded or excluded”, Ibid. pp. 2-3.

⁴³ Kull, Steven, et al. Worldpublications.org Staff. “World Public Opinion on the Treatment of Widows and Divorced Women”, The Program of International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland, June 23, 2008.

case in the antediluvian world, and is once again the case in modern Western civilization), being swindled.

One of the most dishonorable schemes perpetrated on modern Western women today is perpetrated by other women. Various organized efforts encourage modern women to pursue liberation from the old, worn out morals that have been passed down since time memorial. Women are enticed to step over the intuitive moral boundary of their very own conscience and to explore the supposed freedoms it brings. It is the same worn out rebellion that many doomed civilizations have experienced, defying God and the intuitive morals he has imparted to us: *"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us"* (Ps. 2:3).

It is just as it was in the Garden. The serpent said to the woman, *"has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? . . . You shall not surely die: For God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."* (Gen. 3:1-4). After being lured into disobedience, she gave the food from the forbidden tree to the man, that he might taste it as well. Such is the darkened heart of man, ever encouraging others to wallow in the mud with him. Later, of course, Eve admitted, *"The serpent beguiled me"* (Gen. 3:13).

Women in the Ancient World

The antediluvian moral decline seemed to accompany a growing disregard for marriage. Lamech was the first man mentioned to take two wives, and by Noah's time, polygamy had degenerated into the promiscuous mixing of women with fallen hybrid, alien beings. While Genesis merely says *"the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose"* (Gen. 6:2), the book of Enoch spoke of this infraction in detail. These were inter-

racial marriages between the Watchers (angelic beings) and human females. The fallen Watchers sought forgiveness from the Lord but none was given. To them were born a generation of giants, Nephilim, a hybrid race of half human half fallen angelic beings. As they multiplied so too did widespread immorality of unspeakable imagination. Finally, God destroyed the world with the flood. The spirits of the Nephilim were left to roam about, for (as God explained to Enoch) they were neither of heaven nor earth. These are what we know today as demons, those who possess persons and inflict great harm.

Scripture indicates that hybrid races such as the Nephilim resurfaced after the flood. Beyond the brief antediluvian statement that, *"There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that"* (Gen. 6:4), the Israelites encountered various civilizations sporting giants, who presumably, were also some sort of hybrid being. These are the nations God told them to utterly destroy as they entered the Promised Land.⁴⁴

The ancient Empires of Greece and Rome were no different in their mistreatment of women than they were with their vulgar treatment of children.

The greatest Hellenic philosophers declared that it would radically disorganize the state for wives to claim equality with their husbands. Aristotle considered women inferior beings, intermediate between freemen and slaves. Socrates and Demosthenes held them in like depreciation. Plato advocated community of wives. Substantially the same views prevailed in Rome. Distinguished men, like Metullus and Care, advocated marriage only as a public

⁴⁴ See, Gen. 6:1-4, Num. 13:33; Deut. 2:11, 22, 3:11, 13; Josh. 12:4, 13:12, 15:8, 17:15, 18:16, Enoch 7, 8, 10, 22.

duty. More honor was shown the courtesan than the wife.

Chastity and modesty, the choice inheritance of Hebrew womanhood, were foreign to the Greek conception of morality, and disappeared from Rome when Greek culture and frivolity entered. The Greeks made the shameless Phryne the model of the goddess Aphrodite, and lifted their hands to public prostitutes when they prayed in their temples. Under pagan culture and heathen darkness woman was universally subject to inferior and degrading conditions.⁴⁵

Women in Judaism

How different all this is from Jewish history and biblical teaching in which women, daughters, wives, mothers, and widows are cared for. In Mosaic Law, daughters were provided a dowry as their part of the inheritance. If there were no sons, the estate passed to the daughters. If a daughter of inheritance decided to marry outside the tribe, her husband had to take her name. Unmarried daughters were cared for by the eldest son.⁴⁶

Although the practice of multiple wives invaded Judaism, Scripture gives no sanction to this practice. Genesis makes it clear that monogamy was the divine ideal. The regard Mosaic Law has for the woman goes far beyond anything among the surrounding Gentile nations. The law sought to safeguard women from the sensual disgraces that were so prevalent among the Egyptians, Canaanites and other Gentile cultures. Although polygamy was practiced by some of the patriarchs, primarily due to their desire for children, it never received divine consent or approval. Even

⁴⁵ I.S.B.E.

⁴⁶ See, Num. 27:1-8, 36:6-9; Neh. 7:63; Gen. 31:14-15.

kings were forbidden to have multiple wives. Both the practice of polygamy and that of having concubines were resultant to the corruption Israel allowed into their midst by mixing with the surrounding nations. Furthermore, it is evident that those who practiced this less than ideal policy of polygamy encountered the many troubles it generates. Thus, you shall reap what you sow.

Mosaic Laws regarding chastity and divorce were designed to protect the sanctity of marriage. Hebrew women, unlike any of the surrounding cultures, had the freedom to choose a husband; even if the marriage had been arranged, the woman could reject it. And if the new husband mistreated the bride, rejecting her after the wedding, there were laws to deal with him accordingly.⁴⁷

Among the Hebrews, woman administered the affairs of the home with a liberty and leadership unknown to other oriental peoples. Her domestic duties were more independent, varied and honorable. She was not the slave or menial of her husband. Her outdoor occupations were congenial, healthful, extensive. She often tended the flocks (Gen. 29:6; Ex 2:16); spun the wool, and made the clothing of the family (Ex. 35:26; Prov. 31:19; 1Sa 2:19); contributed by her weaving and needlework to its income and support (Pr 31:14,24), and to charity (Acts 9:39). Women ground the grain (Mt. 24:41); prepared the meals (Gen. 18:6; 2Sa 13:8; Josh. 12:2); invited and received guests (Jg. 4:18; 1 Sam. 25:18 ff; 2 Ki. 4:8-10); drew water for household use (1 Sa 9:11; Josh. 4:7), for guests and even for their camels (Gen. 24:15-20). Hebrew women enjoyed a freedom that corresponds favorably

⁴⁷ See, Gen. 24:58; Lev. 18:6-20; Num. 30:3-16; Deut. 17:17, 22:16 ff.

with the larger liberties granted them in the Christian era.

Additional evidence of woman's social equality [within the Hebrew culture] comes from the fact that men and women feasted together without restriction. Women shared in the sacred meals and great annual feasts (Deut. 16:11,14); in wedding festivities (Josh. 2:1-3); in the fellowship of the family meal (Joh 12:3). They could appear, as Sarah did in the court of Egypt, unveiled (Gen. 12:11,14). Rebekah (Gen. 24:16; compare Gen. 24:65), Rachel (Gen. 29:11), Hannah (1 Sam. 1:13) appeared in public and before suitors with uncovered faces.

Every decline in her status in the Hebrew commonwealth was due to the incursion of foreign influence. The lapses of Hebrew morality, especially in the court of Solomon and of subsequent kings, occurred through the borrowing of idolatrous and heathen customs from surrounding nations (1 Ki. 11:1-8).⁴⁸

Final Thoughts

Biblical theology is such a drastic contrast to the non Judeo-Christian cultures (both historic and present day), which are governed by the darkened heart of humanity. What is it other than evil that could cause rational, sensible beings to neglect, despise, abuse, and even kill their own? How different and opposed such atrocities are to Scripture.

Regardless of who is perpetrating these abuses, no matter how religious they are, or how pious they make themselves to be, they are not following biblical principles, Judeo-Christian principles. They are not Jewish; they are not

⁴⁸ I.S.B.E.

Christian. Judeo-Christian theology, biblical theology has nothing but honor and respect for the woman who “created in the image of God,” is in every way man’s equal. Indeed, “*the woman is the glory of man*” (1 Cor.11:7). Any teaching or practice contrary to this is of the enemy, the deceiver, Satan.

Let us close this section with a few verses that remind us who the woman is, of her importance, and of the honor she deserves.

God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them . . . and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created (Gen. 1:27; 5:2).

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (Gen. 2:24).

He that loves his wife loves himself (Eph. 5:29).

The woman is the glory of the man (1 Cor. 11:7).

Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman (1 Cor. 11:11-12).

Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God gives you (Ex. 20:12).

Say unto wisdom, You are my sister; and call understanding your kinswoman (Prov. 7:4).

Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother (Mat. 12:50).

You shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child (Ex. 22:22).

Part Two

Divine Attributes

Introduction

Having discussed the equality of the male and female, both created in the image of God, we now turn our attention to further understanding just who God is and how it is that man (male and female) is created in his image. That man is created in the image of God is a startling statement. If it were made by man alone, it would be nothing short of arrogance. But this is God's proclamation, which makes it a most profound concept with inferences so wondrous that full comprehension is not really possible. But that which we can understand is most telling. It allows us to know both ourselves and our God more clearly.

Unfortunately, relatively few ever take these inferences to heart. Even within the Christian community, the majority never seriously consider what it is to be made in the image of God. I have never heard a sermon on the subject. Oh, it is mentioned as a matter of fact, but to delve into its implications is a subject seldom broached.

Not only are the inferences of this concept rarely considered, it is apparent that the majority of the population does not even understand the basic concept of what it is for man to be made in the image of God. Sadly, even most church members do not appreciate this concept. To illustrate this point I cite a survey I conducted while doing doctoral work in seminary. I had been concerned for sometime about the various leadership roles in our modern

Western evangelical churches. The title of my doctoral project was *"The Pastoral Neglect to Provide Leading Laymen with a Basic Foundation in Theology."* To further research this topic I surveyed pastors and leading laymen of their choice within numerous churches from a certain conservative and evangelical association.

I expected to find a minority of pastors providing theological and ministerial training to their lay leadership. Likewise, I expected to find many lay leaders to be unqualified, as far as theological knowledge, for their tasks. However, the results were more staggering than I would have ever imagined.

I found that 97% of the leading layman regularly prepared and taught Bible classes, and 78% believed they were qualified to provide spiritual counsel. Although admitting to having very little training for these tasks, most of the lay leaders believed they were qualified, nevertheless, to perform them. However, their ignorance betrayed itself at the end of the questionnaire when asked three simple, but pertinent, theological questions. I did not attempt to stump them by choosing particularly difficult topics. Rather, I chose subjects that have a special concern to anyone who teaches Bible classes or gives spiritual counsel. Put simply, I chose subjects that anyone doing what they did should know cold. First, why does God allow evil? Second, what is meant by the doctrine of total depravity? And third, what does it mean that man is created in the image of God?

I did not expect lengthy theological treatises or even biblical references. I merely wanted to see if these church leaders and teachers had a general understanding of the things they were teaching. The results were astounding. Only 24% were able to answer the question as to the image of God. A mere 16% correctly answered why God allows evil; and no one, not one, could define the meaning of total depravity. Overall, these leading laymen, these spiritual advisors and pillars in their respective churches, had only

13.5% correct answers, and no one answered all three questions correctly.

Although not comprehensive or conclusive, this small research project had shed light on a great and shameful display of ignorance within the leadership of our local church bodies. Sadly, our churches are largely filled with lay leaders who have little or no training for the task set before them. We might say they are the modern Nicodemus. How is it that they are teachers of the church and do not know these things?

They do not know these things because their pastors do not teach them these things. Yet, this is the responsibility of the trained leadership, to nurture and train would-be leaders in the faith that they, too, can effectively fight the enemy and teach sound doctrine to the membership. This means theological training as well as training in ministry, character, and spirit. However, my survey revealed that only 3% of the pastors provided hermeneutical training for their church leaders, less than 20% provided lessons in theology, and only 7% provided guidance in spiritual counseling.

If most of the church leaders do not understand what it is to be made in the image of God, it is more than likely that parishioners in general do not understand either. Yet, understanding this concept is extremely significant for leading a mature, spiritual life; for this is what it is to be Christ-like.

In this section we shall consider what it means to be created in the image of God, as well as many of the implications and responsibilities this status, which is unique among all of God's creations, necessarily infers.

Chapter Five

Man's Splendor

Man (in the majestic sense, speaking of the species—both male and female) is complex, different from other terrestrial beings as well as celestial angels. Indeed, man is truly unique among all of God's creatures. For man is made in the image of God. In theology we call this doctrine, *imago Dei*. But what does this mean? Man created in the image of God. The concept is so significant that God gave it emphatic importance by repeating it several times in the book of Genesis.

Many earthly and heavenly creatures share various limited characteristics of godlikeness, but none, other than man, possess a full complement of God's communicable attributes.⁴⁹ For example, gorillas are very familial animals with rather complex social structures. Their intelligence, however (as far as contemplating and deciphering complex problems), is rather limited. Angels, on the other hand, have great intelligence, but they have no social structure, not in the familial sense. For they are individually created; they do not procreate, and therefore cannot experience familial ties. The concept of familial bonds, while intellectually

⁴⁹ Communicable attributes are those godlike characteristics that God has imparted to his creation. These, as well as God's incommunicable attributes are discussed in chapter seven.

understandable, must be foreign to them in an experiential sense.

As such, they cannot fully appreciate (in the respect of familial sensibility) the sacrificial work of Christ. To them it is a mystery that God would step into his creation, and then sacrifice himself to redeem it. This is the love of family, the love of familial friendship, the sacrificial act of agapao, to lay down one's life for another. They could have no experiential knowledge of Christ as our kinsman redeemer. Thus, Peter said:

Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

The word picture here is that of the angels stooping down to take a close, investigative look into these things by which they are puzzled. The entire gospel of redemption is a mystery to them. Dr. Barnes' comments are worth reading:

There are great and difficult questions about the whole subject of forgiveness, which an angel could easily see, but which he could not so easily solve. How could it be done consistently with the justice and truth of God? How could he forgive, and yet maintain the honor of his own law, and the stability of his own throne. There is no more difficult subject in a human administration than that of pardon;

and there is none which so much perplexes those who are entrusted with executive power.

The way in which pardon has been shown to the guilty here would excite their deep attention. It has been in a manner entirely consistent with justice and truth; showing, through the great sacrifice made on the cross, that the attributes of justice and mercy may both be exercised: that, while God may pardon to any extent, he does it in no instance at the expense of justice and truth. This blending of the attributes of the Almighty in beautiful harmony; this manifesting of mercy to the guilty and the lost; this raising up a fallen and rebellious race to the favor and friendship of God; and this opening before a dying creature the hope of immortality, was what could be seen by the angels nowhere else: and hence it is no wonder that they hasten with such interest to our world, to learn the mysteries of redeeming love. Every step in the process of recovering a sinner must be new to them, for it is unseen elsewhere; and the whole work, the atonement, the pardon and renovation of the sinner, the conflict of the child of God with his spiritual foes, the supports of religion in the time of sickness and temptation, the bed of death, the sleep in the tomb, the separate flight of the soul to its final abode, the resurrection of the body, and the solemn scenes of the judgment, all must open new fields of thought to an angelic mind, and attract the heavenly inhabitants to our world, to learn here what they cannot learn in their own abodes, however otherwise bright, where sin, and

suffering, and death, and redemption are unknown.⁵⁰

Addressing both animals and angels in the same context is by no means meant to imply they are equal. Their similarity, as far as we are concerned in this work, is simply that neither is human, and therefore, not made in the image of God. Certainly God's holy, celestial angels hold a vastly higher station than do terrestrial animals, but even their station is vastly different from that of man, who is created in the image of God. Yet, to an even greater degree, indeed, to an infinite degree, man's station is vastly removed from God's. While God possesses both communicable and incommunicable attributes to the infinite degree, to man, God has imparted only his communicable attributes, and these, to a limited degree. This is what we speak of as *imago Dei*, created in God's image.

Later, we will discuss these attributes (both communicable and incommunicable) in detail. For now, suffice it to say, that by stating it several times in Genesis, God emphatically declares that man is made in his image. Clearly, *imago Dei* does not speak of our corporal existence, for God is spirit. Man cannot be created in God's physical image, for God does not possess a physical body. Nor does *imago Dei* imply that God is weak or sinful as is man. Man was created good; he was innocent, without sin and righteous before his Creator. Being created in God's image speaks to our immaterial or metaphysical being, our person.

As such, man is created with a two-fold nature: that which is material (the physical body) and that which is immaterial (that which is after God's image). Lewis Sperry Chaffer points out that:

The first record of man's creation chronicles with sublime simplicity a most difficult theme,

⁵⁰ Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible, 1 Pet. 1:12.

namely, that man shares the animal existence and yet in a special sense is made in the likeness of God, and it is in every instance said to be the triune Elohim who thus creates.⁵¹

*"God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7); which Chaffer observes is literally "breathed into his face the breath of lives; and man became a living soul."*⁵²

Freewill and Personality

Having been created in God's image, man possesses will—the ability, even the responsibility, to make choices. But this freewill is more than the ability to make choices. It is the inescapable necessity to make moral choices. Both freewill and the innate moral choices it must decide are universal to all of humanity; and they (as well as other attributes) separate man from beast. The same basic morals have permeated every known society throughout the recorded history of man. To deny this is foolish.

Name one culture that truly believed it acceptable to rape anyone, steal from anyone or murder anyone they so desired. To ascribe these restraints to mere learned behavior is ignorance. The choices that must be made between our many and various impulses are too many and too diverse, and are made at too young an age, to be learned behavior. Furthermore, the acceptable decisions (by both the personal conscience and society at large) in these various scenarios are universal. Such innate personal knowledge with unanimous peer expectations could not be learned behavior. The dilemma for the atheist is that neither the universality nor the nature of morality itself (to act upon one impulse for

⁵¹ Chaffer, vol. II, p. 136.

⁵² Ibid. p. 144.

moral reasons and to deny another for the same) can be explained by the hypotheses of the big bang and evolution.

When man chose disobedience, he did so of his own volition, exercising his own will. God had no complicity in man's choice. God is eternally good, true, and righteous; each an aspect of His eternal character in which the image of man was created.

All that is good in man is true of God to the infinite degree. Yet, in one act of moral disobedience, by exercising the will of his godlike personality to defy his Creator, man inherited the nature of evil. So that all that is evil in man is opposed to his godlikeness.

The good in man stems from his godlike nature, while the evil stems from this carnal nature he acquired in disobedience. With his intellect man knew what the limits were; and via his sensibility he made the rational determination, by exercising his own will, to step over the line, to disobey. This is personality in action.⁵³ As such, we must take note that it is man's will, and aspect of his being created in the image of God, the *imago Dei*, that provides him the ability to disobey his Creator and, thereby, to become the very thing that is diametrically opposed to his Creator.

Nevertheless, it must be understood that even in his disobedience man did not forfeit his Creator's likeness. Although he did place it in jeopardy, for the totality of his godlike characteristics, that which is *imago Dei*, was immediately challenged and brought under attack by his newly acquired, carnal, sinful nature. Henceforth, man's life would be filled with the tension of his confused dichotomous existence: the never ending struggle between the innate, fundamental attributes of his sinful nature, and the innate, fundamental attributes of his godlike nature. It is to this dichotomy, and the struggles that necessarily accompany it, to which Paul refers.

⁵³ Chaffer, vol. I, pp. 185.

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom. 7:14-24).

The Metaphysical Man

When discussing *imago Dei*, it is imperative to understand that man is *created* in the *likeness* of God, man is not God, nor is man God's equal. Although there are certain attributes of God that none other than man possesses, at the same time, there are aspects of God's person that even man does not and cannot possess. In chapter seven we will discuss God's various attributes: some are communicable (these we possess), others are incommunicable. Man cannot possess God's incommunicable attributes; these are intrinsic to God alone. God alone is self-existent, unchanging, and infinite. God alone is the unity of persons sharing one divine nature. These are properties man can never possess. They are solely the intrinsic properties of the divine.

Within the realm of the metaphysical (or the immaterial man, as theologians prefer to discuss it) is the spirit and soul of man. Here, within this metaphysical realm of the spirit and soul, resides man's life and his personality: self-consciousness, intellect (knowledge, wisdom and veracity), sensibility, self-determination, and morality. Morality consists of goodness, holiness, and righteousness. Goodness is defined by love, grace, mercy, and longsuffering. Holiness is the intrinsic desire to separate from evil, while righteousness is the instinctive aspiration to conform to the standard, to follow the law. Although his body will soon die, man's spirit and soul, man's personality, that which is *imago Dei*, lives on through eternity.

Dr. Cook defined personality as a unity of intelligence (by which the soul knows), sensibility (by which the soul feels), and will (by which the soul chooses).⁵⁴ These three, acting in unison, must have the freedom to direct via the intellect, to desire via the sensibility, and to make rational determinations via the will.

Logically, each faculty (knowing, feeling and willing) rises from the previous: first the soul knows, then it feels, and finally it acts. At the same time, because knowing and feeling are activities of the soul, neither is possible without willing. Although each faculty is transient, in that two are likely to concede as the third dominates in a certain action of the soul, still, all three faculties are resident and required. The soul always acts with motive. Sometimes there are conflicting motives. It is the strength of the will that determines which motive will influence its final action.

Likewise, each faculty necessarily affects the others. A repeated action of will provides direction to both the intellect and the affections; furthermore it establishes a

⁵⁴ Cook, W. Robert. *Theological Foundations*. Personal text from classroom notes at Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Portland, OR, 1986, ch. 10.

constant pattern for the will itself.⁵⁵ As such, we are exhorted to willfully assume actions of holiness. *"Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 2:5) . . . and *"be holy for I am holy"* (Lev. 11:44). When our soul wills to act in holiness, our knowledge and sense of holiness increase; likewise, if our soul wills to act immorally, our knowledge and sense of immorality increase as well. It is to this regard that Scripture speaks of becoming servants of sin versus servants of righteousness (Jn. 8:31-36, Rom. 6:15-23).

Always, these faculties of personality, these attributes that make us like God, are ever under attack by our enemy, Satan, and the unregenerate world he controls. The intellect (the soul knowing) is attacked by various fables and half truths set forth as reality, designed to confuse and corrupt the knowledge of the truth. The unregenerate society argues these fables so convincingly that many believers are tempted to accept them.⁵⁶

Man's sensibility (the soul feeling) is also attacked by the unregenerate worldview, so that selfishness and unkind behavior is encouraged. Today, the medical world even medicates patients, whom they have deemed depressed or hyperactive, placing them on addictive psychotropic and antidepressants to dull their senses. Making them feel less emotion and masking one of the very qualities that makes us like God. Furthermore, there is a constant barrage of societal and peer pressure to repress and disregard the innate sensibilities toward such choices as homosexuality, divorce, euthanasia and abortion.

Freewill (the soul choosing) is under attack as well. Here, the unregenerate worldview argues that man has no moral obligation to choose one path versus another, one behavior versus another. The free agent is free of moral

⁵⁵ Chaffer, vol. II, p. 196.

⁵⁶ The current popular fable being the big bang and evolution. No doubt, the next fable will be the belief in aliens from a far away galaxy seeding the earth with life.

restraints. It is the argument of existential philosophy, in which man lives in the moment, pursuing and fulfilling the desires of the heart as he sees fit.

In general, the human personality itself is ever under attack by the unregenerate worldview as, one way or another, it seeks to undermine personality, to make it something less than it is. For in reality, this attack upon personality is an indirect attack on God. If human personality can be made something less than an impartation from the divine, then the divine can be made something less as well, or even something not at all. Such is the logic behind the attack. Thus, the ever present push to accept such issues as homosexuality, abortion, euthanasia, etc., all of which degrade personality to an amoral status.

But once the dehumanizing of personality takes place, the pendulum will swing far beyond the desired goal of mere personal preference, for it will keep swinging all the way to amorality. Thus, C. F. Henry argues:

If personality is no longer the unique feature of human existence, humans can with impunity be treated as economic chattel, sex objects, experimental guinea pigs, and much else, for no divine imperative or human necessity exists for treating him [sic] as something qualitatively different. Then respect for personality is lost, the basic values essential to the human family are also readily dissolved.⁵⁷

.....

It is, therefore, not an overstatement to say that “in view of its implications for man and the world the question whether God is a personal

⁵⁷ C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, V. p 150. As quoted by Cook *Ibid*, ch. 10.

being is therefore of fundamental importance."⁵⁸

Body, Soul, and Spirit

This unity of intelligence, sensibility, and will is common to all personalities, be they human, angelic, or divine.⁵⁹ But there are certain attributes of God's personality that only the divine and the human have in common.

One essential meaning of the statement that man was created 'in the image of God' is plain: it is that man is in some way and in some degree like God. Even if the similarity between man and God could not be defined more precisely, the significance of this statement of the nature of man for the understanding of biblical thought could not be over-emphasized. Man is the one godlike creature in all the created order. His nature is not understood if he is viewed merely as the most highly developed of the animals, with whom he shares the earth, nor is it perceived if he is seen as an infinitesimal being dwarfed by the enormous magnitude of the universe. By the doctrine of the image of God, Genesis affirms the dignity and worth of man, and elevates all men—not just kings or nobles—to the highest status conceivable, short of complete divinization.⁶⁰

It is the metaphysical (non-material) man that can be described as person; *imago Dei* is the quality of the human

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Chaffer, vol. I, pp. 185.

⁶⁰ Clines, D. J. A. "Thy Image of God." Tyndale Old Testament Lectures, 1967, *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968) p. 53.

personality.⁶¹ It is this intangible, yet very real, aspect of our being that makes each of us who we are; that makes each of us an individual personality; that makes each of us like God.

Man possesses a complete array of the integral attributes of personality, as does God, his Creator. But unlike the eternal God, who possesses these characteristics to the infinite degree, man, who is finite, possesses them to a degree somewhat less than infinite. Also unlike God, who transcends creation, man is intimately linked to creation. The corporeal aspect of man is made from the earth itself. Man is simultaneously of the earth and of heaven, of the terrestrial and the celestial; thus, man is body, soul and spirit.

As such, the possession of these attributes goes beyond the concept of mere custody or retention; for as they are with God, these characteristics are intrinsic to man's nature. Dr. Cook makes this clarification:

The personality is not to be construed as a separate part of man apart from his nature; rather the elements of personality . . . are to be understood as qualities of the immaterial part of man's nature; they are properly functions of the spirit administered by the soul through the body.⁶²

Feinberg explains:

It has in mind the will, freedom of choice, self-consciousness, self-transcendence, self-determination, rationality, morality, and spirituality of man.⁶³

Chaffer points out that in the passage in which the Lord *"breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a*

⁶¹ Cook, ch. 21.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Charles Feinberg, "The Image of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 129: 515, p. 246; as quoted by Cook, W. Robert. p. 373.

living soul" (Gen. 2:7), life is a plural noun, and it is literally God breathed into his "face" the breath of "lives"; and man became a living soul.

That breath from God was a rational soul and spirit, which was as far removed from other forms of life that are in the world as God is removed from his creation. This inbreathing was an endless life—a life not subject to death, even though, as a penalty for sin, the body dies.⁶⁴

The endless life to which Chaffer refers speaks to the eternal existence of each human soul; where that soul shall spend eternity is a separate issue. This "divine inbreathing," which created the immaterial, living soul of man is more a transfer than a creation. In that, "It is an impartation from the Eternal One."⁶⁵ To this thought, Cook added:

As we analyze the immaterial part of man we discover two parts and so we discover that mankind is man: body, soul and spirit. . . . From a functional standpoint, that is in light of the daily operations of our personalities, we are polychotomous. Thus, we see that we are man (male and female): material = body = flesh, blood and bone + immaterial = soul + spirit (mind, heart, will = conscience).⁶⁶

Man is formed from the earth, the same dust from which the beasts are made. Various species within the animal kingdom (here, a reference to earthly, non-human creatures of all kinds) share certain characteristics that identify with both the human and the divine; however, only man shares in all of the various communicable personal attributes intrinsic

⁶⁴ Chaffer, vol. II, p. 144.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p.160.

⁶⁶ Cook, Part 3, p. 367.

to God; for “*God breathed life into man and he became a living soul*” (Gen. 2:7). In man, both spirit and flesh, heaven and earth, are joined to make a living soul, a person who is simultaneously of the terrestrial and of the celestial. Nothing sets humans apart from animals more than the concept of person and all that personhood entails. Humans, male and female, are persons; animals are not.

It is within our personality that our mental, moral, and social likeness to our Creator exists. Without the attributes of personality, we would be but complex corporeal entities, void of self identity.

Conscience

Kant considered the activities of the metaphysical man to come from the faculties of intelligence, sensibility and will; however, as many theologians have pointed out, the human conscience is yet another vital faculty of the immaterial man that must be included.⁶⁷

The conscience is of utmost importance. It is an aspect of humanity not shared by the animal kingdom. After man’s fall from innocence, “*the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil*” (Gen. 3:22). This, of course, is that part of personality that discerns moral issues, convicts when offended, and rests quietly when satisfied. The conscience of fallen man (which includes the entirety of humanity) is compromised, but everyone has one. It can be bruised, damaged, defiled, seared and turned permanently evil from continuous offense, but it is there. Even the sociopath has a conscience, although it is irreparably derelict from sustained offense, which typically starts early in life.

When man turns to God, accepting the forgiveness he offers through Jesus Christ, man’s conscience, as well as his entire personality, is reborn, made alive to God and to matters of the spiritual. The conscience of this regenerate

⁶⁷ Chaffer, vol. II, pp. 192-3.

man, in whom the Holy Spirit now dwells, is more complex. Now, alive to God the believer's spirit desires to do right and the conscience is purged. Not that the believer has no memory of sin, but that sin is no longer held against him. The Holy Spirit communes with the spirit of the believer and empowers him/her to do the right thing. If the believer sins, the Holy Spirit is said to be grieved by the immoral actions (Rom. 8, 9:1; Heb. 10:1-2; Lk. 1:35; Ps. 32:3-4).

A good conscience is mentioned six times in the NT. It speaks of a heart free from self condemnation (1 Jn. 3:20-21); in this respect it is a witness (Rom. 9:1). But the believer's conscience can also be wounded, as Paul admonished the Corinthians: *"when you sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ"* (1 Cor. 8:12). Chaffer speaks of conscience as such:

The faculty of conscience is one of the major manifestations of the immaterial part of man, and doubtless no other faculty reflects more fully that which is in likeness to God. . . . Conscience is not subject to the will, but rather sits in judgment over the will and other features of the life of man. The unity of man's being is none the less real regardless of the various elements in his immaterial nature—soul, spirit, heart, flesh, and mind—and regardless of the various modes of expression of that immaterial nature—intellect, sensibility, will, memory, and conscience. All these elements and manifestations perfectly articulate to form one experience which is called life. The mind may generate thoughts, the spirit may discern the value of thoughts, and the soul respond to thoughts, but the conscience judges thoughts in respect to their moral worthiness. Naturally but little that is

experienced by man is moral in character and therefore the conscience is not exercised. At times and as occasion demands, conscience may become a torment, a lash, which is all but unbearable. In this, God seems to be more or less identified by every individual. He knows that God knows what he knows. Conscience is little concerned with fact, as the case may be, that other people know what constitute its burden.⁶⁸

The strictly material scientist has no answer for this metaphysical reality that is an inherent characteristic of mankind, an attribute common to all. The subject brings silence to even the most dogmatic proponent of the big bang and evolutionary hypotheses; for how does one (speaking only from the material world) account for a universal metaphysical reality that one's self also experiences? As such, evolutionary proponents generally refuse even to discuss the issue, or any such issues of metaphysical reality. The fact that the same rudimentary moral issues of human conscience (lying, stealing, murder) are common to all, is yet another deeply troubling topic for the ardent proponents of a purely material universe.

Although every human possesses a physical body, personality is also a vital aspect of defining humanity; for the human consists of body, soul and spirit. As such, to neglect the metaphysical personality, only to focus on the physical nature of the universe, is to be less than honest with the subject of origin and existence.

⁶⁸ Ibid. pp. 197-8.

Chapter Six

The Significance of Imago Dei

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 air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26-28).

It should come as no surprise that understanding the significance of being created in the image of God is extremely important. Its significance lies on different levels. On an intellectual level it provides us a more complete understanding of our Creator, in that we are able to discern some of his characteristics. On a collective level, it sets mankind apart from the rest of creation. On a social level it places male and female as qualitative equals. And ultimately, on a practical level, it provides a means to answer perhaps the most important and most asked

question throughout the recorded history of man: What is the meaning of Life?

Searching for the Meaning of Life

I started contemplating the meaning of life when just boy, about 10 or 11 years old. I remember this because I would lie on the rooftop at night pondering the heavens, contemplating how vast they were and how insignificant I was in the midst of it all. Then I pondered the meaning of it all. Who are we? How did we get here? What is our purpose? What is my purpose?

Sooner or later, everyone who possesses even a modicum of intellectual prowess ponders this subject. Innate to our very existence, deep within our souls, each of us intuitively seems to realize that the answer to this question is intrinsic to our very happiness.

Some find the answer early in life; some find it later. Others never discover it. Some, in despair, finally give up the search all together. Still others continue to search diligently for meaning—willing to experience anything that might fill the emptiness within their soul: religion, the niceties of life, fame or simply the recognition and appreciation of peers, perhaps some degree of power or material success; spouses are had, children are bred, fortunes are made, even empires are created, yet to no avail.

The occasional and even sustained elations that often accompany this search are ephemeral, transient, as are the objects of the pursuit itself. Being chained to this temporal material world, any joy attained is completely unable to satisfy the happiness desired by the eternal immaterial soul. For true happiness—that which soothes the eternal soul—can only be achieved by eternal joy. And the first step to realizing eternal joy is to know the meaning of life. But even then, this knowledge must be put into action if this eternal happiness is to be attained.

Ever Before Us

I speak of “finding” and “knowing” the answer to the meaning of life, but these terms are not exactly correct. That we accept the answer is more accurate, for the answer is always before us. That God exists need not be proved, for *“the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork”* (Ps. 19:1).⁶⁹ That man is fragile and inconsequential in the light of this vast and wondrous creation is more than obvious to even the slightest intellect. As the Psalmist observed: *“When I consider thy heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained; What is man, that you are mindful of him? . . . O LORD our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth!* (Ps. 8:3, 9). As Paul observed, that we should submit ourselves to this Creator is intuitive, it is fundamental to our being: *“the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another”* (Rom. 2:15).

The problem is not finding the answer to the meaning of life, the problem is accepting it. We do not want to accept it. None of us do. Our inherent sinful nature precludes it. Yet the answer to man’s unending quest is so obvious that God declares we are without defense: *“for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being*

⁶⁹ Discovering himself in the midst of a wonderful universe and being the highest order of its physical creatures, man would naturally seek to understand his own origin as well as the origin of all existing things. Because nature does not reveal the creation of man and tradition would not be a reliable source of information, it is reasonable to expect that God would reveal the essential facts about man’s creation in the Bible and the creation of man is clearly taught in Scripture. Because the origin of man is a natural subject for human inquiry and speculation, those who have tried to answer the question apart from Scripture have made numerous attempts to explain the origin of man. These conflicting accounts demonstrate that man has no certain information about his origin apart from what the Bible can give, and only in Scripture can one expect to find a complete and accurate account. Chafer, Lewis Sperry. *Major Bible Themes*. Zondervan Publishing House; Grand Rapids, Michigan, 13th edition, 1980 (p. 165).

understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20).

Yet, rather than accept the obvious, we fabricate implausible fantasies. The ancient Western world concocted Greek mythology, while the Eastern world had Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, etc. Our modern world is more sophisticated: aliens in UFOs have seeded the planet with life; or, for the more scientific minded, there is the big bang and evolution hypothesis, in which everything comes into existence from nothing by its own nonexistent energy.

Whatever the popular fable might be in a given time and culture, society is diligently encouraged to accept it and conform to its tenets, for there is comfort in societal corroboration, it lends an air of validation to the ruse. Of course this communal pressure to conform to the ruse extends to the religious community as well. This is the legalistic mindset that accompanies wayward theology. The further the Israelites (God's chosen people) strayed from him the more they relied on legalism. This reached its climax when the Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees had their promised Messiah put to death. It has been no different with Christianity. The farther a particular sect gets from the simple truths of the gospel, the more they rely on legalism as an outward display of piety. This is entirely understandable in that it is only natural for man to substitute truth with a more flattering falsehood.

As for the those who reject even the idea of a Creator, this passion to avoid the obvious—that the heavens declare the glory of God and that his law is written in our hearts, as evidenced by our own conscience—is so strong that even some of the brightest intellects in society submit inconsistent arguments to promote the veracity of their fables. For example, I recently read "*A Brief History of Time*" by Stephen W. Hawking, a renowned physics professor known as one of the greatest minds of the twentieth century. Immediately, in the first chapter, his inconsistent argumentation is blatantly

apparent. Discussing the scientific search for a theory that unifies the general theory of relativity with quantum physics,⁷⁰ he postulates that “if you believe the universe is not arbitrary, but is governed by definite laws, you ultimately have to combine the partial theories into a complete unified theory that will describe everything in the universe.”⁷¹

Now this statement, in and of itself, is fine; however, Hawking is arguing this from his position that the universe began with the big bang. How, I ask, does he get from the arbitrary chaos of that supposed explosion to the current highly ordered system before us, which most definitely is governed by the laws of physics which he studies? To simply dismiss this supposed conversion from arbitrary chaos to highly sophisticated order is a great leap in logic and is inconsistent with his greater point, the history of the universe.

The fact of the matter is that he must avoid this most important issue (the change from chaos to order), because it not only does not fit his worldview, it dismantles it. For, how does inorganic, non-intellectual, chaotic matter (that, by the way, suddenly, sprang into existence out of nothing) assume the precision of the most advanced machinery? No one would ever consider this possibility in something even so simple as a clock – it arranged its own gears and bushings and tightened its own spring that it might track time; never mind that these parts would first have to create themselves. Yet, they think nothing strange of proposing this for our infinitely more complex universe.

Then Hawking postulates that if a complete unified theory exists, it would establish our actions. The theory

⁷⁰ Although each theory (general relativity and quantum mechanics) is profound and consistent within itself, they are currently inconsistent with each other.

⁷¹ Hawking, Stephen W. A Brief History of Time-from the big bang to black holes. Bantam Books, 1988, p 12.

would determine the outcome of our search for it! . . . should it determine that we come to the right conclusions from the evidence? Might it not equally determine that we draw the wrong conclusions? Or no conclusions at all?"⁷²

Without getting into the veracity of this statement, the problem with his logic is that he is confusing the material, mechanical universe with that of the non-material, metaphysical reality of human intelligence, and assuming the unified theory of the physical universe can predict the actions of the metaphysical intellect; all this, without directly addressing the metaphysical reality, because it too is not a topic of discussion among material scientists.

Lastly, in his first chapter (and of great significance to our topic), is his argument as to the importance of searching for this unified theory, which, he confesses, is humanity's unending quest to discover our own significance.

The discovery of a complete unified theory, therefore, may not aid the survival of our species. It may not even affect our life-style. But ever since the dawn of civilization, people have not been content to see events as unconnected and inexplicable. They have craved an understanding of the underlying order of the world. Today we still yearn to know why we are here and where we came from. Humanity's deepest desire for knowledge is justification enough for our continuing quest. And our goal is a complete description of the universe we live in.⁷³

Again, this statement is fine, in and of itself; however, it is inconsistent with Hawking's worldview. He wants to

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid. p 13.

know everything about the universe except how it came to be a highly structured system; for this highly ordered universe he diligently studies is inconsistent with the chaos of his supposed big bang by which he assumes it began. Furthermore, the universal human understanding of which he speaks, in which “people have not been content to see events as unconnected and inexplicable” points directly to intelligent design, which his philosophy so adamantly opposes.

Thus, once again I quote the Lord’s declaration, “*the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse*” (Rom. 1:20).

Speaking of this modern fable (the big bang and the subsequent hypothesis of evolution) Lewis Sperry Chaffer eloquently explains:

Had they anything which they were willing to put in its place, thinking men would not tolerate a system which offers not one proof for any claim which it advances. The act of bringing man into being is an achievement of stupendous proportions. To make man to be the result of an accidental evolutionary process springing from some supposed primordial germ—which itself cannot be accounted for apart from a Creator—and all this as a pure imaginative fancy without so much as a shadow of substance on which it may rest for proof, bears all the marks of mental desperation and bankruptcy of ideas. Yet those undemonstrable notions are passed over upon the world under the patronage of education and science. To the unregenerate mind, to which God is wholly lacking in reality,

the problem of origin is not solved by the statement that God created man. How desperately unreal that revelation is to all such men substitute in its place. It would be revealing to such teachers if, having aroused all the humanity and sincerity that is latent in their beings, they would inquire why they reject God as Creator.⁷⁴

The Meaning of Life

The meaning of life, and thus the key to realizing eternal happiness within the soul, is to acknowledge and obey the Creator. After experiencing nearly every empty pleasure one could imagine, King Solomon finally understood and accepted this truth:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil (Ecc. 12:13-14).

Although created in the image of God, our forefather, Adam, chose disobedience. This willful defiance corrupted his nature and compromised his status with his Creator. Thus, as his descendants, we too are corrupt, for we have all inherited his same sinful nature. Just as Adam attempted to hide from the Creator after his insubordination, so too do we seek to hide from him; for darkness runs from light. Thus, it is not natural for fallen man to acknowledge God, his laws, his authority. For the same reason, it is not natural for man to acknowledge the answer to the meaning of life, for in our fallen state we are at enmity with everything it implies. But

⁷⁴ Chaffer, Lewis Sperry. Lewis Sperry Chaffer Systematic Theology. Dallas Seminary Press. Fifteenth printing, 1983, vol II, pp. 130-2.

there is hope. God has bridged this divide. He has provided for our redemption and for our change of heart.

By his grace, some accept this redemption. In so doing, we accept the answer to the meaning of life and, consequently, realize the eternal happiness every soul so desperately desires. The sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, provides for each man's reconciliation with God and his reinstatement to the state of righteousness; thereby making way for the eternal happiness of the eternal soul. We begin to realize this happiness once we accept his gift of redemption. Then, as we consider and act upon the meaning of our existence, growing ever more like him, our happiness grows even greater.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:4-10).

.....

Blessed [happy] are the pure in heart: for they shall see God (Mat. 5:8).

.....

Blessed [happy] is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing (Mat. 24:46).

.....

Whoso looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed [happy] in his deed (Jas. 1:25).

Eternal Happiness

I am a happy man. I have achieved several milestones in life, earned various degrees, won a few trophies, received a few awards, held positions of authority and have lived comfortably in one of the greatest countries ever established. I have the most perfect wife, wonderful children and grandchildren. I have been blessed with various talents and abilities and have received a fair amount of praise from diverse sources. Of course, all these things are nice. It is good to be recognized from time to time, to set and achieve goals, to be comfortable, to love and be loved. But I have never been tempted to let any of this go to my head, to be puffed up, as if I were something special or better than others.

Somehow, as far back as I can remember being conscious of such things, I have harbored the knowledge that I am flawed—that I do not always do the right thing. This intrinsic knowledge that I, as well as everyone else, suffer varying degrees of imperfection has demanded my reverence for others, regardless of their inabilities or lack of accomplishments. At the same time, this same knowledge has forbidden me from being a respecter of persons, so that I have never been particularly awestruck with the abilities, achievements or credentials of the more gifted. That is not to say I do not appreciate their talents and gifts, or my own for that matter; for certainly what they bring to the human condition is to be appreciated, but appreciation is not the same as veneration.

Because we are all human, all in the same boat as it were, I have never been star struck, never been one to seek autographs. Indeed, I am not overly impressed with my own gifts and achievements; that is, I am not impressed so as to be self-inflated as if I am the generator or cause of these faculties. I am, however, extremely thankful, for I do consider them a gift from God.

I do not mean to belittle anyone's gifts and talents, including my own, but merely to present a balanced, perspective. No matter how gifted, powerful, popular, talented, rich, or beautiful any of us is, still we are human. Still we soon become dust. Thus, it is not the quantity or quality of gifts and talent possessed, but what we do with that which we have been granted. And this is a most frightening reality. It is painful to contemplate, for I cannot dismiss all the time I have wasted not putting my gifts and talents to work for the Lord . . . the times I have let them lie dormant as I pursued my own ephemeral distractions. May God have mercy on me.

It was not until my teenage years that I heard the gospel for the first time. Instantly, my sinful nature was exposed; I knew I did not measure up to the holiness of God. I repented, asked God for forgiveness and pledged my life to Jesus. So that, while achievements, commendations, comforts, loving and being loved are nice, since that time it has been my Lord's favor I seek. Because I am still bound to my sinful nature, I am not always successful, but I know His favor is there, that he is there, that he forgives. It is my Lord's favor that brings peace to my soul. It is my Lord's favor that makes me a happy man. As I grow and I become more like Jesus, His favor intensifies. This is the meaning of life, to seek our Lord's favor. It is the duty of man, to glorify our Creator with obedience, thereby allowing him to work

through us. This is spiritual life.⁷⁵ It is the duty of man to be like Jesus.

Having then answered this most important question, as to the meaning of life, let us now regress and consider who God is; that is, what characteristics have been revealed. In so doing, we will more fully appreciate him, ourselves, our neighbors, the meaning of life and, thus, the happiness we seek.

⁷⁵ Because the unsaved man is spiritually dead, that is his spirit is separated from the Spirit of God, he is represented as one in whom the soul rather than the spirit is dominant (1 Cor. 2:14). This means that his personality will in turn be naturally (psuchikos) oriented. The saved man is represented as one in whom the spirit is dominant, and when the spirit is controlled by the Holy Spirit, he is called a spiritual man. When the spirit is dominant, the personality will be spiritually oriented. However, if the believer allows the old nature, the flesh (in its ethical sense as the seat of sin), to dominate his life, he is viewed as a carnal man whose personality is self-oriented rather than Spirit-oriented. Consequently, to all outward appearances, the carnal man will seem to be much the same as the natural man in his thoughts, feelings, and choices. Cook, W. Robert. p 365-6.

Chapter Seven

Revealed Truths Concerning Our Creator

Scripture tells us much about God, but we do not and cannot know everything about him; much is still a mystery. One of my theology professors, W. Robert Cook, Th.D., explained it as such.

In the final analysis God cannot be defined. A description of a partial nature may be given of the known characteristics of God but this leaves his essential being unexplained. The following statement, inadequate as it is, is offered at least as a working definition: God is a self-existent, self-conscious personal being, who is the origin of all things, and who transcends the whole creation while being immanent in it.⁷⁶

Although we cannot know everything about God, he, nevertheless, has revealed enough about himself that we have all we need to trust him, to desire a relationship with him. Furthermore, in that we are created in his image, it

⁷⁶ Cook, Theological Foundations, "Definition of God."

behooves us to understand, as much as possible, everything he has revealed about himself: who he is and how it is that we are made in his likeness.

God is Spirit

A primary revelation is that God is a spirit, neither male nor female. As such, when we refer to God by the pronoun *he*, we use this term in the personal, generic sense, rather than the masculine specific sense.⁷⁷ In this respect, at least grammatically speaking, the pronoun's employment is similar to the common majestic use of *man* to reference all of humanity rather than its narrower reference, which speaks merely of the male gender. Such is the nature of communication; whether written or verbal, regardless of the culture or language, or of its time in history, always, context determines meaning.

As the absolute spiritual being God possesses life within himself. It is his personal energy and the source of being, for both himself and for others: "*as the Father has life in himself; so has he given to the Son to have life in himself*" (Jn. 5:26). Jesus declaration that "*God is Spirit*" (Jn. 4:24 NASB) is significant. As Dr. Cook points out, in this text, πνεῦμα ο θεος (pneuma The God), *God is spirit*, spirit is without an article, thereby

emphasizing the nature or quality of 'spirit' rather than the personal identity of 'a spirit.' This is not a statement to the effect that God is of that genre of beings known as spirits. It is not a reference, therefore, to the Holy Spirit. . . . This is an affirmation that God is transcendent, pure person (in contrast to one who is a compound of matter and spirit or that which is only matter and therefore finite). He is

⁷⁷ Ibid.

unlimited by space and time and must be understood in spiritual terms.⁷⁸

The anthropomorphic notions often used in Scripture to describe God (the hands of God, the arms of God, the eyes of God, etc.) are analogous. They do not imply God is a corporeal being as we are, but that he is capable of doing the various things indicated by the anthropomorphic metaphors. *“God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”* (Jn. 4:24). Yet, *“he that planted the ear, shall he not hear: he that formed the eye, shall he not see?”* (Ps. 94:9).

It is only natural that we use familiar language, speaking in familiar terms, to convey characteristics of God about whom, otherwise, we could have no understanding. Analogy and metaphor have always been legitimate forms of communication.

Although we must not project anthropomorphic features onto God in such a manner that we view him as one of us, only bigger and stronger and better, etc.; at the same time, because man is created in the image of God, God is to be understood in the light of those human attributes of person that are fashioned after God’s likeness. It is not that God is like us, but that we, in finite degree and other than our sinful nature and corporeal bodies, are like him. We are personalities, like our Creator. Chaffer explains it as such:

This procedure is according to an essential principle of science, namely, that things which manifest the same qualities are the same in fact. Nothing is clearer than that personality is a unity. It gathers all its past into itself by the faculty of memory, its present by its immediate consciousness, and its future by its method of planning and by the faculty of anticipation. Apart from the recognition of this unity of all

⁷⁸ Cook, W. Robert. *The Theology of John*, p. 40.

parts in one personality there could be no analysis of human life or any science of psychology. Animal life, into which man can penetrate only to a limited degree, owing to his inability to place the animal consciousness in the light of his own, presents no evidence of rational intelligence, freedom of choice, or purpose in worthy ends which belong to personality.⁷⁹

Our Immanent and Transcendent God

Scripture clearly speaks of God's immanence and his transcendence; or, as Dr. Erickson has explained it, his being both near and far.⁸⁰ As for his immanence, we read:

Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? (Jer 23:24).

Yet, concerning his transcendence we are challenged:

Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwells on high, Who humbles himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! (Ps. 113:5-6).

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isa. 55:8-9).

Two passages in 1 Timothy show that "God is a substantial being all his own. He is distinct from the world, immaterial, invisible and without extension. He has none of the properties belonging to matter, is not dependent upon

⁷⁹ Chaffer, vol. I, pp. 184-85.

⁸⁰ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, I, 301.

matter, and cannot be discerned with the bodily senses.”⁸¹
Paul declared,

*unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only
wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. . . .
Who only has immortality, dwelling in the light
which no man can approach unto; whom no man
has seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power
everlasting (1 Tim. 1:17, 6:16).*

His immanence and transcendence, however, are not to be viewed as characteristics of God, but rather they are “indications of how God, in all of his attributes, relates to his world.”⁸²

Revealed Attributes

Throughout Scripture various characteristics or attributes of God are revealed. Some of the attributes we speak of as incommunicable; that is, God alone possess them. Others we speak of as communicable. These are manifest to various degrees in other beings. Of all created beings, man alone, being created in God’s image, possesses the full complement of God’s communicable attributes. That is not to say that man possesses them to the same degree as God, but man does possess them: God infinitely so, man to a limited degree.

We understand the entirety of these incommunicable and communicable attributes as those distinguishing features that collectively define deity, at least to the degree to which our limited comprehension is capable. They are objective characteristics of his nature. Understanding them is significant, for herein we begin to see who our Creator is and to realize more clearly the meaning of *imago Dei*.

⁸¹ Cook. Theological Foundations. Ch. 10.

⁸² Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, I, 301-2.

Dr. Cook defined attributes as essentials, properties that are “intrinsic to its subject.” They are “that by which a subject may be distinguished or identified.”⁸³ Berkhof explained God’s attributes as “the perfections which are predicated of the Divine Being in Scripture, or are visibly exercised by him in his works of creation, providence, and redemption.”⁸⁴ Dr. Henry also makes an important point: “Divine essence and attributes are integral to each other. . . . God's being is not the bearer of divine attributes; rather, God's essence and attributes are identical.”⁸⁵ And yet, as Herman Bavinck argues, although “every attribute is most certainly identical with God’s being, nevertheless the attributes are to be distinguished from each other.”⁸⁶ In the next few pages we will look into these characteristics of our God.

Man, being as he is always looking to categorize things, cannot refrain from attempting to classify God’s attributes. However, God, being as he is, defies classification. For the infinite cannot be cataloged by the finite, the one so far beyond the comprehension of the other.

Another tendency of man is to ascribe more credence or significance to one attribute over another. For example, some might assume that God’s love and mercy must outweigh his justice. But if we argue thus, divine holiness and righteousness become nearly meaningless.⁸⁷ Man is in no position to argue that one attribute takes priority over another; but as Cook writes:

it is folly to try to epitomize God in either of these attributes, or in any other, for that matter. No more can the infinite God be summarized in one of his perfections than he can be

⁸³ Cook, *Theological Foundations*. “Definition of Attributes”.

⁸⁴ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 52.

⁸⁵ Henry, C. F. H. *God, Revelation and Authority*, V. 119.

⁸⁶ Bavinck, Herman., *The Doctrine of God*, p. 129.

⁸⁷ Cook, *Foundation in Theology*, Ch. 10 “What is God Like.”

comprehended in a simple definition. Biblically oriented wisdom would seem to dictate that we preserve the tension created by the juxtaposition of these admittedly basic perfections.⁸⁸

Nevertheless, that being said, understanding the distinctions between the attributes does help us to think through them with more clarity.⁸⁹

The Incommunicable Attributes

The incommunicable attributes reveal God as the absolute being. There is none other like him; even man, who is created in God's image, is not like God in this regard. These attributes are aseity, immutability, infinity and unity.⁹⁰

Aseity

Aseity speaks to God's self-existence. As Erikson says, he is "the uncaused one." His very nature is to exist. It is not

⁸⁸ Cook, *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Cook, *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ The terms "essence" and "substance" are practically synonymous when used of God. They may be defined as that which underlies all outward manifestations; the reality itself, whether material or immaterial; the substratum of anything; that in which the qualities or attributes inhere. Both of these terms refer to the basic aspect of the nature of God; if there were no essence or substance, there could be no attributes. To speak of God, is to speak of an essence, a substance, not of a mere idea or the personification of an idea. Since there is a difference between the essence and the attributes of God, one is faced with the question of how to distinguish between them. We recognize that perhaps some of the so-called attributes are, strictly speaking, not attributes at all, but different aspects of the device substance. Spirituality, self-existence, immensity, and eternity are such. God is a substance. He is, however, not a material substance, but a spiritual substance. Jesus said, "God is Spirit" (John 4:24). Having no article in Greek, this statement defines God's nature as spiritual. Thiessen, Henry Clarence. *Lectures In Systematic Theology*. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, revised Edition, 1979 (p. 75).

necessary for him to will his own existence.”^{91,92} This is the meaning when God told Moses: “*I AM THAT I AM . . . Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you*” (Ex. 3:14). We transliterate this *I AM* from the Hebrew term יהוה (YHWH) as Yahweh, which we translate as Jehovah. It speaks to his absolute existence, to his self-existence, as well as to his covenant-keeping nature, which is made clear in the context wherein God references his covenant with Moses’ forefathers:

Certainly I will be with you . . . Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me unto you (vv. 12, 15).

None but God is self-existent; all other things that exist whether animate or inanimate, spirit or material, do so by and through him (Col. 1:17). God alone, the Creator of the universe, is the self-existent one; God alone is *I AM*.

Immutable

Immutability speaks to the invariability of his nature. God does not change; he is the same yesterday, today and forever.⁹³ *Immutability* has to do with infinity. It addresses his freedom from limitations, it “*implies that he is in no way limited by the universe or confined to it. . . . he is transcendent as well as immanent.*” God’s only limits are self-imposed limitations which are opposed to his character. For example, God is good, he cannot be not good.

⁹¹ Erickson, Millard. *Christian Theology*, Op. cit., I, p. 272.

⁹² See: John 5:26; Psalm 36:9; 94:8 ff.; Isa. 40:18 ff.; Jer. 2:13; Exod. 3:14-15; Rom. 11:33; Dan. 4:35; Rom. 9:19; Eph. 1:5.

⁹³ See: Ps 102:26-27; Ps 33:11; Pr 19:21; Jer 4:28; Mal. 3; Acts 15:18; Ro 9:11; Eph. 1:11; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb 4:13, 6:17; Jam. 1:17.

Infinity

Infinity yields three features in respect to God's being: perfection, eternity, and immensity. In perfection, we understand that God is complete, finished, without defect; his ways and works are without fault.⁹⁴ Another one of my professors, H. Crosby Englezian, Th.D., explained that

when we state that God is perfect, among other things we are acknowledging him to be a universal, absolute and eternal king who has created and controls and possesses all things, yet needing nothing which he has created. . . . Since God is perfect, it is impossible for any man to impose obligation upon him. Neither piety nor service obligates God.⁹⁵

As such his perfection qualifies all of the communicable attributes, which we will discuss shortly: power, holiness, love, truth, righteousness, knowledge, etc.⁹⁶

Eternity speaks of God's relationship to time. He is without beginning or end, "transcends all temporal limits and differs from time essentially."⁹⁷ Indeed, "he contains within himself the cause of time."⁹⁸ Henry writes:

There is a successive order to the acts of God and there is a logical order to his decisions, yet there is no temporal order to his willing. . . . He has from all eternity determined what he is now doing. Thus his actions are not in any sense reactions to developments.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Job 37:16; Ps. 29:7; Rom. 12:2; Ps. 18:30-32.

⁹⁵ Cook, Ch. 10. Ibid.

⁹⁶ Cook, Ibid.

⁹⁷ See: Gen. 21:33, Deut. 33:27; Ps. 90:2; 102:11-12; Is. 57:15; Ro. 1:20

⁹⁸ Cook, Ibid.

⁹⁹ Henry, Op. cit., V, 258. As quoted by Cook, Ibid.

Furthermore, eternity is not simply time without end. Time is something other than eternity. Time is created. God is not in time; he is not subject to that which he created for us. With this linear measurement we who are captured by time observe change; we see a past, a present, and a future. With God, there is no past, present, nor future. For him, time is a punctiliar event of his creation. He transcends it, thus knowing its end from its beginning, as well as all points in between. Yet, he is intimately involved in it. This is part of a great mystery to the angels: that God, in the person of Jesus Christ, would step into time to become not only a participant in his own creation, but the Redeemer of it.

Another aspect of infinity is his omnipresence. It speaks to God's relationship to space. Similar to his relationship to time, God transcends space; he is without special limitations. He is not in space; it is his creation: "space is in him and he fills space with his whole being."¹⁰⁰

Unity

The attribute of *unity* or *simplicity*, addresses the unique, qualitative oneness of God. There is but one divine nature who is God. This does not preclude the plurality of persons in the one God.¹⁰¹ Indeed, this unity of persons is immediately set forth even before man is created: "*God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*" (Gen. 1:26). The Hebrew term, אֱלֹהִים (Elohim) is a plural noun;¹⁰² thus, "*us make . . . our image*". Yet, this same Elohim adamantly proclaims to be one God, and the only true God: "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God [Elohim] is one LORD*" (Deut. 6:4);

¹⁰⁰ Cook, Ibid.

¹⁰¹ See: Deut. 6:4; 4:39; Is. 44:6; 45:5; Mk. 12:29; Jn. 5:44; 10:30; 1 Cor. 8:4; and Jm. 2:19.

¹⁰² "*Elohim* is probably best understood as being from the root meaning "the strong one." It is a plural word which renders it intensive and indicates fullness of strength or power. Hebrew grammarians some times refer to this as a plural of majesty. As the intensive form of the generic *El* it thus conveys the idea of genuine deity." Cook, Theological Foundations, "Definition of God."

and, *“Thus says the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God [Elohim]”* (Isa. 44:6).

Scripture makes it abundantly clear that there is but one God who consists of a unity of three persons who share the same essence: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Those who refuse to accept this biblical affirmation that the Godhead consists of a unity of persons, prefer to ignore the fact that Jesus claimed deity and that deity is ascribed to the Holy Spirit as well. Yet Jesus told John, *“I am the first and the last: I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore”* (Rev. 1:17-18).

Jesus also declared his identity to the leaders of Israel, but they were not receptive to the idea and, ultimately, it was his claim to deity for which they crucified him. When speaking with the Scribes and Pharisees on the Mount of Olives, Jesus twice claimed to be the *“I AM”* who spoke with their forefathers (Jn. 8:12, 24, 51-59). In the course of the conversation Jesus told them, *“I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life;”* but *“if you believe not that I AM, you shall die in your sins.”* He used the Greek term, εγω ειμι (ego eimi); the same term the Greek Septuagint¹⁰³ used to translate the Hebrew, יהוה (YHWH), in Exodus 3:14, when *I AM* spoke with Moses.

As the conversation heated up, Jesus challenged them: *“If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.”*

At this the Jews retorted, *“Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and you say, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Are you greater than our father Abraham, which is dead?”*

To which Jesus answered: *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.”*

But the Jews argued, *“You are not yet fifty years old, and have thou seen Abraham?”*

¹⁰³ The Greek version of the Hebrew Old Testament, translated about 250 BC.

Jesus responded, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I AM.*"

Clearly they understood his claim to deity and they had had enough of it, for they took up stones to cast at him for his blasphemy, but he escaped. Yet, an oft quoted passage from Isaiah clearly told them God would become man and live among us:

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel . . . unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Isa. 7:14, 9:6).

The gospels tell us Jesus fulfilled this prophecy:

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us (Mat. 1:23).

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life (1 Jn. 5:20).

Of course, Jesus also accepted worship. Both the apostles Thomas and John clearly worship Jesus (John 20:28; Rev. 1:17, 22:8-9), which is indeed blasphemous, if he were not in fact God himself.

Likewise, Scripture declares the Holy Spirit is equally God and ascribes to him all the aspects of personality. Clearly the names of God are attributed to him when the author of Hebrews references a passage in Exodus.

Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost says, To day if you will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the

wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years" (Heb. 3:7-9).

Which is a clear reference to Moses:

And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not? (Ex. 17:7).

Divine attributes are also recognized in the Holy Spirit: omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence. He is credited with creation, the working of miracles, and he too is to be worshiped.¹⁰⁴

That the Holy Spirit is also a person is evident by his intelligence and volition,

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you (Jn. 14:26).

Furthermore, he reproves, helps, glorifies, intercedes and executes offices specific only to a person.¹⁰⁵

There are many more passages proclaiming or ascribing attributes of deity to both Jesus and the Holy Spirit; however, it is not the purpose of this work to present an exhaustive apology for the Triune Godhead. It is sufficient for our purposes merely to acknowledge this truth that we might move forward to better understanding *imago Dei*.

The godhead consists of three persons who simultaneously manifest the divine nature. Scripture

¹⁰⁴ Omnipresence (Ps. 139:7; Eph 2:17-18; 1 Cor. 12:13); omniscience (1 Cor. 2:10-11); omnipotence (Lu 1:35; Ro 8:11); eternity (Heb 9:4); creation (Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; Ps 104:30), miracles (Mt 12:28; 1 Cor. 12:9-11) worship (Isa. 6:3; Ac 28:25; Ro 9:1; Re 1:4; Mt 28:19).

¹⁰⁵ See: Jn. 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-13; Lu 12:12; Ac 5:32; 15:28; 16:6; 28:25; Rom. 8:26; 1 Cor. 2:10-11, 13; 12:11; Heb 2:4; 3:7; 2 Pet. 1:21.

identifies these three persons as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; each equal in essence yet individual in person. These three persons are the one God. They are Elohim. They are Yahweh.

Undoubtedly, it is hard for us mortals to comprehend; indeed, Paul called it a mystery.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory (1 Tim. 3:16).

As feeble as it may be, I know of one phenomenon in nature that might help us to better comprehend this truth of the Triune Godhead. When water is placed in a vacuum tube and the temperature dropped to zero degrees Celsius, the water will simultaneously present in the form of a solid, a liquid, and a vapor. So then, while its nature, H₂O, remains constant, there are three simultaneous manifestations of it. In a similar but undoubtedly more complex manner, the singular self-existent, eternal nature of God is simultaneously shared and manifested by three separate persons. This illustration, however, breaks down once the conditions are changed (the temperature or the vacuum), at which time, depending upon the change, the H₂O will revert to but one of its manifestations. But God is not so. The Godhead is eternally one essential nature manifest in three persons.

The Communicable Attributes

In the communicable attributes we see God as a personal spirit. These attributes (imparted when God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” Gen. 2:7), are those by which man is created in his image. Yet even these divine attributes are experienced by man only to a limited degree.

Personality

As a spiritual being God possesses personality: intelligence, sensibility, spontaneous will and morality. He is able to objectify himself. As the self-existent, eternal personality, he possess self-consciousness and self determination to an infinite degree.

God's interaction with his creation demonstrates his personality. He encourages and answers prayer. He chides and reprimands. He bears witness and provides comfort and encouragement.¹⁰⁶

Intellect

Dr. Cook shows that the intellectual attributes of God's personality have ontological significance.

The laws of logic are the 'architecture' or organization of the divine mind. They are the systematic arrangement of God's mind or the way God thinks. . . . God is rational and the source of all rationality. And because he is the originator and sustainer of truth, all truth is one and self consistent.¹⁰⁷

God's knowledge is complete, perfect; it is omniscient: *"the LORD searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts"* (1 Chron. 28:9); . . . *"all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do"* (Heb. 4:13). He *"knows all things"* (1 Jn. 4:20). Thus, because God is omniscient our confidence in him is increased, for even though we know he knows our sinful past and depraved heart, we also know that, nevertheless, our position in Christ is unassailable and his forgiveness is inexhaustible.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ See: Rom. 8:15; Ps. 71:212; 103:9; Phil. 4:4-6.

¹⁰⁷ Cook, Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Cook, Ibid.

God's intellect also includes perfect wisdom; it is omniscient. Wisdom is the practical rather than the theoretical aspect of intellect. As such, God "sees all things in their proper perspective; thus he does not give anything a higher or lower value than what it ought to have."¹⁰⁹

God's perfect wisdom is the application of his perfect knowledge to the attainment of his perfect purposes so that he is glorified.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? or who has been his counselor? Or who has first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen (Rom. 11:33-36).

Just as we find comfort in God's perfect knowledge, so too we find comfort in his perfect wisdom. Because God is all-wise we are confident that the full knowledge he has of us will be used appropriately; his perfect wisdom guaranteeing that his perfect knowledge will not be utilized to exercise mere raw power, but the power he possesses is a disciplined and restrained power. Wisdom directs this power of knowledge to benevolent ends. For example, he wisely allows those experiences into our lives that will best conform us into the image of Christ and thereby glorify himself.¹¹⁰

Yet another aspect of God's intellect is veracity. He is the only God of reality. He alone is genuine. He alone is truth.

we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though

¹⁰⁹ Erickson, Op. cit., I, 290, as quoted by Cook.

¹¹⁰ Cook, Ibid.

there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many); but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him (1 Cor. 8:4-6).

the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation (Jer. 10:10).

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (Jn. 17:3).

Being true, God is also truthful; he cannot lie and therefore his Word can be trusted (Heb. 6:18; Rom. 3:4; Ps. 12:6; Jn. 17:17). With this truthfulness comes faithfulness. God will fulfill his promises. This is the foundation of our hope, our confidence that he will deliver even though we be unfaithful.

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: has he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (Num. 23:19). . . . If we believe not, yet he abides faithful: he cannot deny himself (2 Tim. 2:13).

God is faithful to himself. He cannot betray his own love and promises. Just as with Israel of old, so too with us today, God's pledge is not based on anything external to himself.¹¹¹

Know therefore that the LORD your God, he is God, the faithful God, which keeps covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his

¹¹¹ Cook, Ibid.

commandments to a thousand generations (Deut. 7:9).

Morality

God's moral attributes consist of his goodness, holiness, and righteousness. All that is good in all of creation has its source in God. This goodness is expressed in various ways: benevolence, love, mercy, grace and longsuffering. However, these features of God's *goodness* "are never exercised at the expense of another of his perfections."¹¹² Mercy, for example, would never replace justice. As such, God's justice demands that the debt of death be paid for man's sin. Mercy alone cannot dismiss this debt. This would offend justice.

Therefore, God's solution was to pay the debt himself. It is for this reason the second person of the Godhead entered into his own creation. Being born into the human race, he became one of us, yet without sin and thus free from the penalty of death. Then, in love, he willfully gave his perfect life to pay our debt, the debt of death, which his own justice demanded. This then allowed his mercy to flow forth as a gift, which he provides in his grace. In his benevolence, he offers this pardon to all: "*whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely*" (Rev. 22:17). Thus, it is essential for man to accept this gift. If man rejects this gift, God's mercy will not and cannot flow forth, and man is left to pay the penalty for himself, which he pays with eternal death. Yet, even though man, in his pride, snubs God and rejects his offer, God is longsuffering: "*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*" (2 Pet. 3:9). This gospel message is the goodness of God in action: love, mercy, grace, benevolence and longsuffering.

Stanley Ellisen, Th.D. (yet another one of my professors), explains that the purpose of God's longsuffering "is not to

¹¹² Cook, Ibid.

compromise with sin as allowing some kind of an indulgence . . . God does not overlook sin but looks beyond it."¹¹³

What if God, willing to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction? . . . that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy. . . ? (Rom 9:22-23).

Ellisen then explains that,

God's longsuffering relates primarily to his wrath (that is, the delay of his wrath), rather than to his love. It is simply an interposition of divine restraint, a delay of his wrath to accomplish other purposes. . . . with the interposition of God's longsuffering, God seeks to salvage and conform to his own image the vessels that receive his mercy. A second purpose, and perhaps the primary one, is the greater glory of God that is to result through the introduction of his longsuffering toward us.¹¹⁴

Furthermore, like a gentle father, patiently waiting for his child to grow and learn, God's longsuffering extends even to those believers who fall back into sin. Dr. Cook makes the following observation. When we are as children in the faith and persistent in disobedience, he is slow to move in judgment. He desires our repentance through discipline rather than our punishment as rebellious children.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Ellisen, Stanley. *"The Longsuffering of God," God: What Is He Like?*, compiled by Wm. F. Kerr, pp. 88-90

¹¹⁴ Ellisen, *Ibid.* pp. 88-90

¹¹⁵ Cook, *Theological Foundations*, Ch. 10

You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, my son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives. If ye endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby (Heb. 12:4-11).

Likewise, even when we are advanced in the faith and not attentive to holiness, his longsuffering provides for our deliverance.

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation (2 Pet. 3:14-15).

Holiness

Holiness is yet another attribute that (at least in one respect) has an ethical nature to it. Holiness is the concept of being separate. Morally speaking, God is separate from sin, which is moral evil. Just as each of God's other perfections are interrelated so as to qualify each other, so it is with

holiness. "Every action of God is grounded in his holiness. It is basic both to his goodness and grace as well as his justice and wrath."¹¹⁶ Then, in a non-ethical sense, as discussed earlier, God is essentially separate from creation. He absolutely transcends over it. This too is holy, that is separate: "*Who is like unto you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?*" (Ex. 15:11).

Righteousness

The attribute of righteousness is God's adherence to the law, the standard which relates to his own nature. In this respect it is closely related to holiness. As such, righteousness describes that which conforms to the norm, which is the character of God himself.¹¹⁷ It is an intrinsic quality in God as set forth by Jeremiah when he says, "*This is the name by which he will be called: Yahweh our righteousness*" (Jer. 23:6)."¹¹⁸ Furthermore, Cook continues:

Corollary to the fact that God is righteous is the fact that he does that which is right. Abraham appeals to this truth when he says to Yahweh, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18: 25); and, God himself says of himself, "I am Yahweh who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in those I delight" (Jer. 9:24). "Because God is righteous, measuring up to the standard of his law, we can trust him. He is honest in his dealings."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Kerr, *The Holiness of God*, Compiled by Wm. F. Kerr, p. 40. As quoted by Cook, ch. 10 *What is He Like?*

¹¹⁷ See: Ezra 9:15; John 17:25.

¹¹⁸ Cook, ch. 10. Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

Sovereignty

God's sovereignty consists of his sovereign will and his sovereign power which is omnipotent. By using the term sovereign, we recognize him as the highest, the absolute ruler in the universe.

God's sovereign will is free yet not capricious. It is his faculty of self-determination, an autonomy that is utterly "independent of everything outside himself." And it "is the final cause of all things."¹²⁰ His will consists of two aspects, the preceptive will (by which he sets forth principles that man might accept or reject), and his decretive will (which concerns his purposes) and by which, either directly or indirectly, he executes all things that come to pass.¹²¹

His preceptive will is seen in such passages as:

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself (Jn. 17:7).

His decretive will, on the other hand, is revealed in such passages as:

Our God is in the heavens: he has done whatsoever he has pleased, . . . Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will (Ps. 115:3; Eph. 1:9-11).

The other aspect of God's sovereignty, omnipotence his infinite power is employed to orchestrate his will. "His

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

power, however, does not extend to that which he does not will nor to anything which is contrary to his divine nature."¹²² God cannot contradict himself. He cannot lie, nor die, nor do anything opposed to his decree. God is consistent; he is not capricious, as he told Israel, "*I am the LORD, I change not*" (*Mal. 3:16*).

These, the communicable attributes of our God, are those perfections that God imparted to man when he breathed into his nostrils and man became a living soul. Herein, to a finite degree, is *imago Dei*. Herein, man, like God, possesses personality; it is fundamental, essential, to his being.

¹²² Ibid.

Chapter Eight

Man's Responsibility

Long before the Ten Commandments, way back in the Garden of Eden, God established certain responsibilities for man; responsibilities that coincide with *imago Dei*. Some have enormous consequences, others less so; nevertheless, they are responsibilities just the same. Of course the first responsibility (and the one that had the most significant consequence), was simply to obey God's one commandment to refrain from eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Being created in the image of God, man possesses freewill—the ability to make choices, to choose not only between left and right but also between right and wrong. When God instructed man to not eat of the tree of knowledge, immediately man was confronted with the inescapable necessity of making a moral choice, to obey or disobey his Creator. When man chose disobedience, an entire new set of circumstances unfolded, which generated more regulations and therefore more responsibilities for which man is accountable.

Man had been placed in charge of creation; he had named the animals and was given dominion over them. Upon his disobedience the nature of his dominion changed. He was sentenced to a life of labor, having to toil for the

food which theretofore was free for the picking. More changes and instructions followed his fall from innocence, and even more followed after the flood.

The animals he had named, now feared him. He was instructed to not eat their blood for it is the life thereof—something to be held with regard, even in that of the animals. To this regard, that is, the sanctity of life, he was also instructed to not murder a fellow human being, and if someone did murder another human, the murderer was to be executed for his crime. Both before and after the flood man was told to multiply and populate the earth.

As God's Word unfolded and man's knowledge of God increased, so too did man's accountability, for with knowledge comes accountability. This same principle holds true for each individual as it does for mankind; with knowledge innocence dissipates, being replaced by responsibility and accountability. For some of these responsibilities, Scripture provides direct instruction, for others, man must deduce his obligation from applicable fundamentals and principles of Scripture. Jesus and the apostles demonstrated many such applications.

Man's greatest responsibility is the same as it was for Adam: the obligation to obey, to reverence, and to love him whose image he bears. However, we like Adam, fail to fulfill this duty in its entirety. Fortunately, our God is merciful. But man also has responsibilities to himself, to his fellow man, to other earthly creatures to a certain degree, and even to the earth from which he was created, to which he will return, and with which God entrusted him.

In each of these obligations, man is ultimately responsible to God for all his works concerning them. As such, the first and greatest responsibility (to obey, love, and reverence God) is inclusive of man's obligations in all things; thus, it is merely for the sake of discussion that these groupings are set forth.

The Ten Commandments clarified obligations beyond those that had been revealed to Adam and to Noah. Some of these commandments apply directly to man's obligations to God, while others speak to man's responsibility to his fellow man. One of the commandments even speaks to a specific responsibility of Israel concerning God's covenant. In the years to follow, as God's Word was further revealed through the prophets, other precepts and obligations were revealed. In this respect, God unfolded information and responsibility to man in much the same way parents do with children as they mature. The older the children grow the more they learn about the world, about society, about relationships, about ethics, etc.; with this knowledge comes more responsibility. With this in mind, let us first consider some of man's responsibilities that apply directly to our Lord.

Simple Obedience

As already mentioned, the first obligation God gave man was simply to obey his mandate not to eat of the tree of knowledge. He warned that if they did eat of it they would die. As we are all too well aware, man disobeyed this first commandment. The resultant carnal and sinful nature straight away began to war with the original godlike nature, and this newly acquired sinful nature was subsequently passed along to all generations.

Of course, when God confronted the man and the woman about their disobedience, they attempted to shift the blame, Adam blaming Eve and, by extension, even blaming God: "*The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat,*" and Eve blaming the serpent: "*The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat*" (Gen. 3:12). But God would have none of this argument, for he had imparted personality to each of them, and this personality included freewill. Both had made conscious, intelligent decisions to eat of the tree. Both had considered their options with their intellect and

made rational decisions with their sensibility before exercising their will.

As God promised, man received the death penalty for this action. It was a physical death, in which the animated body would return to the earth from which it came, a spiritual death, being defined as separation from fellowship with God, and an eternal death, forever separated from God.¹²³

Singularity of Heart

While today, we do not have the tree from which to refrain, God has placed other responsibilities before us. Of great importance is man's obligation to have a singularity of heart concerning the Lord. *"I am the LORD your God, . . . You shall have no other gods before me"* (Ex. 20:2-3). Of course, the LORD is the only God; there are no others, he is without peer. This, however, does not prevent man from placing other beings (be they terrestrial or celestial) in God's place, that is, as far as one's personal devotion, allegiance and reverence are concerned. The concept of allegiance to God alone necessarily entails fear, emulation, service, love and praise.

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. . . . And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. . . . You shall fear the LORD your God; him shall you serve, and to him shall thou cleave, and swear by his name. He is your praise, and he is your God, that has done for you

¹²³ Physical death is incurred by the immediate imputation of Adam's sin, spiritual death by transmission of the sin nature (mediately), and eternal death when an individual departs this life without Christ. Cook, ch. 26.

these great and terrible things, which our eyes have seen (Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 20-21).

As Jesus acknowledged, this is the first and most important of the commandments, yet it is disregarded perhaps more than any other. Man has a natural desire to seek out and recognize higher authority. Children look to adults, adults look to experts, and experts look to other experts. While this is true for both physical and spiritual matters, it is the spiritual aspect that is especially significant to our discussion. Although every person has consulted authority since childhood, it is not an issue of insecurity or even immaturity; it is a matter of human nature. It is native to our intuition, ultimately, linked to our innate knowledge that we are not the Supreme Being in the universe. There is someone else with greater wisdom, knowledge and ability than oneself.

Of course, there is the occasional megalomaniac who likes to think he is supreme, but as his ultimate failure and death demonstrate, the only supremacy he exhibits is supreme psychosis. It is natural for man to look to authority, both terrestrial and celestial. No man, even the leader of a kingdom, is the ultimate authority. At last, everyone must answer to his Creator; deny it as we may, inwardly each of us knows this to be the case.

While it is natural for man to seek higher authority, particularly in spiritual matters, it is also natural for him to hide from righteousness. This aversion to righteousness is resultant to man's sinful nature; *"For every one that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved"* (Jn. 3:20). Therefore, unwilling to seek the Creator because it would expose his deeds, man seeks an alternative spiritual authority, an alternative god, something, anything less threatening to his conscience.

Throughout the history of man, having *other gods* is commonplace. Although Adam and Eve had walked and

talked with God, within a few generations, their descendants had largely turned from the Creator, choosing, rather, to follow divination and the half-truth spiritual mysteries taught by the fallen angels.¹²⁴ At last, there were so few who revered the LORD that he decided to flood the earth and start anew.

Civilization began again with Noah and his family. Yet once again, within a few generations the descendants of this righteous man had begun to drift from the Creator. About 1,000 years after the flood, Nimrod set himself up as a god, ruling over the kingdom of Shinar, building the tower of Babel and persuading the populous to follow him rather than dispersing about the earth as God had instructed.¹²⁵ It was at this time that God made his covenant with Abraham, a righteous man who worshipped only the LORD. The covenant was confirmed with Abraham's son, Isaac, and then again with Isaac's son, Jacob, also known as Israel.

While the Gentile nations continued along their paths of pagan worship, concocting the numerous false gods of various religions that have been passed down to us, the nation of Israel was set apart to be the guardians of truth: *"you shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that you should be mine"* (Lev. 20:26).

As it was before the flood, now, in the modern "post Christian world" (as some sociologists would call it), man himself is an object of veneration. Man has set himself up as his own god. For (as this reasoning must continue) in the secular world of evolution in which the universe exploded into existence from nothing, by its own energy, and from which man eventually evolved from primitive, spontaneous, self generating life forms, what being exists that is of a higher order than man? As such, man must be accepted and

¹²⁴ Quote Enoch. Also see Rom. 1.

¹²⁵ This is discussed in greater depth in ancient Jewish literature of Flavius Josephus.

praised in all his imperfections, which are not imperfections at all, since in this model there is no absolute perfection or morality, only continuously evolving creatures, the highest of which is at the top of the food chain and, therefore, adored.

But God is jealous of such thinking, and one day all who adhere to such teachings will find themselves standing before the Creator whom they have spurned. Here, they will remain speechless.

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has shown it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (Rom. 1:19-20).

No Graven Images

The act of making idols to represent God or any other being is great folly.

You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: You shall not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And show mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments (Ex. 20:4-6).

In essence, this commandment to make no idols, no graven images of anything to be venerated, including God himself, is very similar to the previous commandment to have no other gods before the LORD, God. But here, the emphasis is upon worship.

You shall not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them (Ex. 20:4-5).

Although a manmade graven image is simply an artifact, it is an artifact of superstitious mysticism. At best, it is a deflection—an inanimate, supposed intermediary between God and man. In reality, however, it merely averts the worshipper's attention from God, thereby, effectively displacing the worshipper's personal interactions with God.

Having reverence for anything other than God, even for a supposed image of God, is to divert the adoration that should be directed to God. God alone is to be worshiped.

Statues and pendants, to which worshippers pray, are prime examples of this offense. As the commandment makes clear, even graven images of the Lord are an offense; this, as such, would include images of Jesus. Yet, man being man, it is hard (even for believers) to observe this commandment. If confronted, one way or another they will likely justify their graven image: Jesus on the cross, Mother Mary, St. Jude, etc.

Many years ago, in our youthful exuberance, Rick Salvadori (a very good friend and beloved brother in the Lord) and I made an appointment with the local Catholic bishop to interrogate him about such practices. We asked, "Why the icons and the prayers to Mother Mary and the Saints?"

He said, "Boys, some people just do not have the faith you have."

It was obviously a flippant, patronizing answer, for here he was, in his mind, the mature, spiritual man of faith who actively prayed such prayers, yet he was telling us, two teenagers that we were the ones with superior faith. Of course, we left feeling as though we had won the debate,

although I doubt he ever gave us another thought the rest of his life. But the point is this: there simply is no justification for graven images and idols of any kind, especially those before which the worshiper bows.

Notice that as the text continues, God said he is very jealous in this regard, even linking such practices to those who hate him and extending their wickedness upon their descendants.

You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me (Ex. 20:5).

Also note the contrast: God shows mercy to those who love him and keep his commandments, *“And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments”* (v. 6).

Reverence for the Lord's Name

I was not raised in a Christian home; it was not a religious home of any sort. Yet I can recall, even as a child, the innate aversion I had to hearing someone curse and use God's name profanely. Inherently, I knew it was wrong. Later I learned, *“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain”* (Ex. 20:7).

One might think this commandment needs no further explanation. However, the offense of taking the Lord's name in vain extends beyond the brute vulgarity of blasphemy, profanity, and even cursing. The Hebrew term, שָׁוְיָ (*shav'*) *vain*, speaks of emptiness of speech, lying, and worthless conduct. As such, even mere idle, irreverent talk that uses the Lord's name is something for which man must answer. I cringe in dismay every time I hear someone exclaim, “Oh God,” or “Oh My God,” or “Jesus Christ” with

a tone that is clearly something other than praise. Such uses of the Lord's name are in vain.

Stewardship

Yet another responsibility man has to God, though it is often overlooked, is the stewardship of those gifts, talents, and resources placed in his trust. We might recall the parable of the traveling lord who entrusted his servants with varying amounts of coinage according to their particular abilities (Mat. 25:14-30). Upon the master's return, each servant was held accountable for the profits he had or had not gained. Those who had made a profit were praised, but the servant who made no profit (because he had simply hidden his coins lest they be lost) was severely rebuked, so that even that which he had was taken from him. In like manner, Jesus said, is the kingdom of heaven.

To each believer are given certain gifts and talents, each of us has a responsibility to use them for God's glory, to evangelize, encourage, serve, and to exercise whatever ability He has given us. When I think of all the time I have wasted in my life, this is a very sobering thought.

Man's Responsibility to Man

Man (again in the majestic sense of male and female) has many responsibilities to his fellow man, and we can rest assured there is a culture or an organized effort somewhere out there opposing each of them. For such are the schemes of our enemy, the great deceiver, to turn God's truth into a lie, and to make the lie seem natural or even righteous. Here are a few of man's responsibilities to his fellow man.

Humility

First there is the responsibility of humility, as signified by the man's intuitive modesty when confronted by the Lord after the fall: "*Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD*

God make coats of skins, and clothed them" (3:21). The initial nakedness of innocence was now a means of shame and dishonor, and the covering of this shame with skins of slain animals was doubtless a type, a foreshadowing, of the coming Messiah's death which would cover man's sin and redeem him. Thus, Adam Clarke observes:

It is very likely that the skins out of which their clothing was made were taken off animals whose blood had been poured out as a sin-offering to God; for as we find Cain and Abel offering sacrifices to God, we may fairly presume that God had given them instructions on this head; nor is it likely that the notion of a sacrifice could have ever occurred to the mind of man without an express revelation from God. Hence we may safely infer, that as Adam and Eve needed this clothing as soon as they fell, and death had not as yet made any ravages in the animal world, it is most likely that the skins were taken off victims offered under the direction of God himself, and in faith of Him who, in the fullness of time, was to make an atonement by his death. And it seems reasonable also that this matter should be brought about in such a way that Satan and death should have no triumph, when the very first death that took place in the world was an emblem and type of that death which should conquer Satan, destroy his empire, reconcile God to man, convert man to God, sanctify human nature, and prepare it for heaven.¹²⁶

Of course, opposed to such modesty are the nudist societies in the West. But there are also entire cultures, such

¹²⁶ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible.

as in Southern Ethiopia or the Naga sect of Hinduism in India, where nudity is considered natural.

Populate the Earth

There is the responsibility to multiply and populate the earth:

God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, . . . God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. . . . And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein (Gen. 1:27-8; 9:1, 7).

This is vehemently opposed by modern secular humanist philosophy which believes the earth is overpopulated. Even the modern world's movers and shakers, who meet regularly, known as the Bilderbergers (120 leaders from Europe and North America from such industries as government, finance, trade, and manufacturing, labor, education and communications), have an objective to dramatically decrease the world's population by about 80%.

Fidelity and Charity

There are civil responsibilities to care for the needy, to refrain from adultery, stealing and bearing false witness; and rather, to generally treat our neighbor as we would treat ourselves:

Open your mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy . . . You shall not commit adultery . . . You shall not steal . . . You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (Prov. 31:8-9; Ex. 20:14; Ex. 20:15; Ex. 20:16).

Of course there are whole civilizations that thrive on the offense of these commands. Numerous cultures discard their weak, and some even their elderly, as if they were trash. Adultery (which is glamorized in Western movies and television) is nearly the national pass time in many cultures. As moral relativism grows (which is due to the obvious logical conclusion at which one must arrive from the popular hypothesis of evolution), lying and stealing is a way of life for many. For in the absence of absolutes it is only logical that they should do and take whatever they want.

Murder and Execution

Yet another civil responsibility is to protect human life. There are two sides to this issue: while on the one hand we are told "*You shall not kill,*" which term, רצח (ratsach) is specifically speaking of murder, (Ex. 20:13); on the other we are told that if someone does commit murder that person shall be put to death: "*surely your blood of your lives will I require; . . . Whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man*" (Gen. 9:5-6). One is a personal responsibility to civilization; the other is government's responsibility to its people. Yet, somehow the secular community has turned these topsy-turvy, so that right is wrong and the wrong is right. They applaud the abortion of innocent babies (worldwide tens of thousands are aborted every day),¹²⁷ and at the same time vehemently oppose the capital punishment of murderers. In both cases they threaten the very existence of society.

Environment

Although it is not specifically stated, man also has a certain degree of responsibility to the earth. It is our domain, but it is God's creation. He is the landlord, we are merely the tenants. Man's failure to tend to this responsibility is

¹²⁷ Number of Abortions. <http://www.numberofabortions.com/>

brought to light during the Great Tribulation when the seventh trumpet sounds and judgment is passed upon those who have been destroying the earth.

your wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that you should give reward unto your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and should destroy them which destroy the earth (Rev. 11:18).

Answer for Faith

I should like to take a make a pertinent digression here. The issue at hand is mankind's responsibility, so I would like to quickly address an often overlooked responsibility of the believer in Christ. Scripture speaks of faith based on reason, and therefore the believer is charged with the responsibility of having a reason for his/her faith in Christ. Peter said,

Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ (1 Pet. 3:16).

Nothing in Scripture ever speaks of faith as some mystical, subjective, ambiguous conviction. If such a romantic fancy is the depth of one's trust in God, it will certainly fail when put to the test. This is not faith at all. Faith is born of evidence.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen . . . through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:1, 3).

There are four Greek terms that must be dealt with in this passage:

- (1) Faith, πίστις *pistis*: belief, trust, assurance, credence, fidelity, reliance upon.
- (2) Substance, ὑπόστασις *hupostasis*: (concrete) essence, reality; (figurative) assurance, confidence, substance.
- (3) Hope, ἐπιζομένων *elpizo*: expectation, confidence.
- (4) Evidence, ἐλεγχος *elengchos*: conviction, proof.

So then, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen" or, we might also translate it, "Trust is the assurance of things expected, the proof of things unobserved."

The Psalmist understood this reasoning when he exclaimed, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament His handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). This beautiful, highly ordered universe is deemed so strong an evidence for the existence of an intelligent Creator that a solemn warning is given to those who disregard it:

The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (Rom. 1:19-20).

This reasoning is the same as that employed by modern science. The idea of things that are observed being caused by things that are unseen is so common to science that the laws of physics are based upon this reality. Who has ever seen the forces of gravity or electromagnetism? Who has ever seen a radio wave? We can see their effects and measure outcomes with various devices, but we cannot directly observe them. Just as "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made," so too, scientists often understand the

visible by the invisible. This, by definition, is faith. Faith is not some ambiguous romantic ideal born of wishful thinking. By definition, faith is based on evidence. By definition, there is nothing blind about faith, at least not in the biblical or theological definition.

Nowhere in Scripture is anyone ever asked or encouraged to believe something for which there is no evidence, no reason; but sufficient evidence and reason there is. This highly ordered, complex universe is more than sufficient evidence to trust in the reality of an unseen, intelligent Creator.

If we direct the argument away from the physical, we can speak of other realities – the even more complex unseen metaphysical realities of the human condition: consciousness, love, deduction, and the very life force itself that brings animation. It is for these reasons that throughout the whole of recorded history, mankind, from children to some of our greatest intellects, have, and still do, reach the conclusion that God exists.

Conclusion

Of course man has other, specific, responsibilities, but all of man's responsibilities can be summed up in King Solomon's pithy wisdom. After having experienced every pleasure known to man at the time, he said,

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil (Ecc. 12:13).

The term יָרָא (yare') *fear* carries the idea of reverence. Such reverence is the first step of worship, which culminates in obedience, not mere lip service. Solomon realized that fulfilling (or conversely, not fulfilling) one's responsibility to God has direct implications to one's self, for soon every

man's works are revealed, and the doer of said works will be accountable for them.

So then, although the commandments and precepts God are many, they are not so many that we should have to carry an itemized list about, checking and double checking for an offense. Jesus made this abundantly clear when a Sadducee attempted to trip him up concerning his teachings and the law. The lawyer challenged Jesus, asking which is the greatest of the commandments. To which Jesus answered:

You shall love the Lord your God with all thy heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Mat. 22:37-40).

That being said, this does not mean that man need not be aware of specific obligations. Jesus was merely pointing out that each of man's responsibilities centers around his love for God and his love for his fellow man. If a man truly loved God with all his being and truly loved his fellow man as he loved himself, there would be no need to clarify any other commandments, because with such love, he would always do and say and think and be righteous. The problem is that man is a dichotomous being, possessing a sinful nature that interferes with his love for God, his love for his neighbor, and even, at times, his love for himself; thus, the need for additional instructions and commandments as to our specific responsibilities.

I should like to make one final comment concerning woman and thereby tie this study of *imago Dei* back to the first section. As noted above, Jesus said that to fulfill God's law we must love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind; and secondly, we must love our neighbor as we love our self. This neighbor of whom he speaks is our fellow human, both

male and female. We cannot show respect for one and deny the other.

God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them . . . and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created (Gen. 1:27; 5:2).