

In His Image

We read in Genesis 1:26 that *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:...”* Verse 27 tells us that *“God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”* In Genesis 2:7 we learn that *“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”* There is a wealth of insights to be gleaned from these verses regarding the nature of God and His creation. However, the purpose of this short study is to explore, and if possible understand as deeply as possible, the incredible implication of just one aspect of these verses.

What we are told is that man was made / created in the image and likeness of God. Of the many times I’ve read these verses in my study of Genesis, I never fully realized the significance of these words. The implication here is staggering! If man is in God’s likeness and image, does that mean that God is or must contain within His being, the prototype of that of which man is the image? What else can it mean? Therefore, intrinsic in God’s being is everything of which man is the image and likeness. Man is body, soul and spirit. Therefore, that of which man is the image and likeness must be, body, soul and spirit. When God said let Us make/create man in our image, He had to be speaking literally of all three components of man.

These intrinsic aspects of God could not have begun at creation. They are the eternal characteristics of who God is! We know this because God is unchanging. God made Adam perfect to the extent that He chose to project Himself in His image and likeness. It is obvious that to have been made perfect and in God’s image and likeness doesn’t mean that he became as God. Most certainly however, those likenesses included all three of these components of God. We may assume that they are at some lower level of fullness that is commensurate with the terms “image and likeness.” When God said “let Us make man in Our image and likeness,” what could be the nature of this prototype, if it is not

simply some significant aspect of God Himself? Certainly it had to encompass some high degree of the characteristics of both the “made” and “created” aspects of man.

As fallen sinful mankind, we are not what God created in Adam, even though we, who are redeemed have the propensity to be restored to something resembling Adam’s original state, with some added characteristics. That state will occur when we are glorified and given our incorruptible bodies. It’s evident that something added, because Adam, when created, was sinless only by virtue of the fact that he had not yet been tested. He later failed the one and only test that God imposed on him. That failure, that sin, relegated him, and all who would ever follow him, to physical death and also to eternal damnation, had God not provided a Remedy.

That first sin contaminated every person ever to be born. Thus, unlike Adam, everyone enters the world in a state of sin, which compounds daily throughout one’s life until and unless he or she hears and answers God’s call, and put their trust for deliverance in our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus. Those so blessed have all tasted the deliciousness of sin and chose to forsake the earthly pleasures it provides. In doing so they pass innumerable tests in response to the promise of the God that they have never even seen or heard, except through His written Word. Remaining in that sea of sin after coming to the saving faith, and resisting its continual temptings, will result in a person necessarily more proven and qualified for adoption into God’s family than was the pre-fall Adam.

At the end of the sixth day, when God had finished creation, He said of His creation, that it was very good (Genesis 1:31). What does “very good” mean, when God says it? It means perfect in every way. We learn this from Mark 10:18 where Jesus tells the rich young man that none are good, except God. Thus the only good there is, is God, and whatever He says is good. Everything He made was perfect in the order of its kind. Therefore man was made perfect after his kind. This means that He was made man in the image and likeness of God’s perfect Self. Image and likeness are terms that can vary considerably in absolute quality and clarity. Therefore it is not likely that we can accurately define the full extent of man’s image and likeness of the God. Nevertheless

through prayer and careful Spirit-guided study, Scripture may reveal more than what appears here on the surface.

As far as we can discern, when the Triune Godhead spoke those words quoted above from Genesis 1:26, 27, they were 100% Spirit with no discernable soul-like or physical components. Thus might we say, at least figuratively, that while it appears that nothing physical existed within the Godhead, there must have been something like a set of “blueprints,” that is design drawings and specifications of every infinitesimal detail of the physical man’s likeness waiting to be applied on that sixth day of creation Scripture tells us that God made physical man from the dust of the earth, which He had already created. Did He make him in accordance with some internally and eternally engraved blueprint and specifications? If not, what was it in the purely, timeless, non-material spiritual Godhead that could convey its image and likeness into the dust that became the physical aspect man? It was having spoken the word, and the God-breathed breath, that created the eternal soul / spirit, which endowed the dust-of-the-earth physical man with life.

Since, at that instance God created time as well as space and matter, there could not have been an eternity past. This is because the word “eternity” implies a time component that did not exist until God created it. The only way I see to reconcile the existence of God is to reason that He existed in the now. These words have no intrinsic time element by themselves until we assign one. God, who existed “outside” of time and space as we all know, would therefore must have existed only in the timeless “now.” That all seems fine, however, where is the “outside of time and space”, where God was. The above “specification” analogy may not be the best one with which to describe what happened, but it’s all I have until God provides a better understanding and articulation to better help explain this sweet mystery.

In Genesis 1:26, we learn that God decided to “make” man, in their “likeness and image, while in verse 27 He chose to “create” man in His own image. Is there a difference between that aspect of man which is made and that which is created? As already discussed above, the “made” part of man was the body. It was made of the “dust of the

ground” that is the physical material, the matter, the stuff that verse one told us was created, and which is described in verse 2. The soul and the spirit are both spirit in the sense that neither exists as a physical substance.

The soul is the seat of self-conscious life as distinguished from plants which have only unconscious life. It is the pinnacle place of life’s feeling, thoughts, sentiment and action. Every soul is unique as an individual being. In fact, it may be said that the soul is itself the person, housed temporarily in a corrupted body that will eventually return to the dust from which it was made. As such, the soul, through it fusing with the spirit, is made eternal and fully functional, absent the convenience of being housed in a body. All the soul loses when it sheds its body is its ability to interact and communicate with other souls who are yet in their bodies. It gains however, the ability to communicate with other bodiless souls.

As noted, the spirit is the component that gives the soul immortality, and other godly attributes. It is the intimate, inseparable fusion of the spirit to the soul, which assures the soul its eternal life. After physical death the soul /spirit will be absent its body for a while, after which it will be reunited with a body in its prime and identical to the one which died, except that it will have been transformed into an incorruptible state. The soul is the memory seat of all senses and feelings along with all accumulated knowledge and wisdom that it acquires through out the life of the body, and even beyond. Some may take issue with “identical” body claim. Of course it won’t necessarily be made up of the exact same carbon oxygen calcium, etc. molecules of which make up the mortal body. But these elements are all fungible. God will produce that body from the general supply of elements.

The elements that make up our living mortal bodies are continuously being replaced. Its common medial knowledge that essentially every cell in the body dies and is incrementally replaced about every seven years. Yet our bodies continue to look and function the same, but older and less efficient. The God who set this maintenance and replacement process in motion in order to preserve us for our earthly lifetime can surely

do this “total makeover” instantaneously when He makes our immortal, incorruptible bodies. While the immortal body will have the physical appearance of the original body, it’s likely that its construction will be quite different, as it must be in order to be immortal. Scripture tells us that “...*life of the flesh is in the blood*;...” (Leviticus 17:11) Mortal man’s life is dependant on the blood to sustain life. This essential component makes him very vulnerable and limited in his life span. The immortal man will have no vulnerable component that requires blood. God will have provided him with the perpetuating components which need only God’s loving power to keep them functioning eternally.

We might link this part of the spiritual system to the brain in which all of life’s information is accumulated, processed and stored. The soul in this case may be viewed as the back up center to which this information is moment by moment sent for preservation in anticipation of the likely decline and inevitable death of the brain. Thus the soul is the permanent dwelling place for all of the individual person’s accumulated information regarding his or her self and their life-long learnings and experiences. This information, along with the inherited genetic characteristics, defines their whole character, and who they are. As noted, the fact is that the soul is the person, and that the body is not essential, although a very desirable adjunct to the human personage.

We learn much that confirms this from the event in Sheol, about which Jesus reported in Luke 16:19-31. (See the study “The Richman and Lazarus”) There we learn that the soul, absent the body, retains its feelings, emotions and memory, along with its ability to learn, comprehend, and communicate with other bodiless souls. It also retains the ability to continue to utilize the five senses, commonly thought to be only available to, and utilized by the physical body. Man will eventually have his body restored to him in an incorruptible form, and then be provided with his eternal home. This is God’s gift, and fulfillment of His original plan and purpose. It is to have all of saved mankind with Him on the new earth that will follow the millennium. There, man will be in His image and in His eternal likeness as the tri-part sinless being consisting of body, soul and spirit.

Wait a minute, let's again look again at this! As already noted, if that is true, then there must be something more to this body and soul aspect within the Godhead. With God being all spirit, it seems reasonable to conclude that to have man remain only as a spirit would be a more fitting fulfillment of God's desire to have a family in His image and likeness! But that is not the case. For man, who is body, soul and spirit to have been made in the image and likeness of God, all three of these elements must in some way, be specific characteristics of God, even though the physical never manifests on earth as the Father or the Holy Spirit! God intends that all three components of man will dwell eternally with Him on the earth. Notice in Matthew 3:16, the Holy Spirit descended like a dove. It makes sense primarily because the Son of God/Son of Man will be there as our intercessor as He is now, from where He sits in heaven.

Again, animals have souls, that is unlike plants, they have consciousness of life. Animal's souls share a few of the basic characteristics of human souls. However, not having spirits, their souls are not immortal. They die with the body. Here we see the profound difference between man and animal. It is the Spirit, that is unique to man, which perpetuates life in both the soul and the body, and which transcends the mortal life. 1Corinthians Chapter 2 describes the spirit-to-indwelling Spirit communication that takes place in the redeemed man, a communication of wisdom, not possible for the unredeemed.

Scripture speaks of the soul and spirit as inseparable on some occasions, while in other places they are mentioned separately. When spoken of separately, their respective function sometimes seem to be interchangeable. This is because they are in fact inseparably linked, and function in unison with each other. To refer to one is tantamount to referring to the other as also being involved. Jesus said, "My Father and I are one, and if you have seen me, you have seen the Father." Might the soul / spirit union in man be characterized in a similar manner?

Throughout the Old Testament, we find evidence of the second person of the Triune Godhead appearing on earth. We call this a Theophany. He is always depicted as non-

descript, but clearly in the likeness of physical man, and one who, often is mistaken for a man. Scripture always describes angels who are assigned to earthly missions as also being in the same likeness of physical man and even mistaken for man. This adds considerable strength to the premise that the prototype of which man is in His likeness or image, is a valid expression of God Himself, but only within the Son Personage. Any manifestation of the Father, where mentioned in Scripture, is usually in some form of a cloud, or light, or thunder, or audible, but hidden voice, yet never as physical being.

We read of the Father, in His eternal spirit form, communicating audibly in Hebrew on at least two occasions. His hidden but clearly audible voice was most certainly heard at Jesus' baptism (Luke 22) and at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:5, Mark 9:7). Here God, the Spirit, makes an exception to the rule that bodiless spirits can only communicate with other bodiless spirits. The Father God spoke and was heard by living man. The Holy Spirit is of course, always depicted as pure spirit, and never in any physical or even audible form. The one symbolic exception is found in Luke 3:22 where we read that "the Holy Ghost descended like a dove upon Him..." Like a dove, not as a dove. This does not qualify as a physical manifestation of the Holy Spirit. It is mentioned only because some may see that event differently.

As already discussed, man was made from the dust of the earth. This speaks specifically of his physical structure. There is nothing here indicating soul or spirit. Then man was also created. Again, this speaks of his soul/spirit, which comprises the life force, that is the eternal non-physical component of his being. The "stuff," that is the dust of the earth had all the elements necessary from which to make man in that the dust had already been created. There was nothing in the dust from which to make the soul or spirit. Therefore a separate act of creation was needed. Adam's body was of incorruptible flesh and bones designed to last forever, as were his created soul/spirit components.

Sin destroyed the incorruptible aspects of his body converting them into a mortal flesh and blood person, thereby leaving him subject to physical death, a failing that all of humanity that followed him, would suffer. While remaining eternal, the soul also

suffered contamination from sin that could only be covered, but never be removed until the Savior would come to wash it away from those to whom the grace of salvation was given. The spirit of man may have remained relatively unscathed through all of this, but because it was then associated with the sin contaminated soul, it and therefore man, was no longer able to be intimately connected to the Holy Spirit, as it had prior to the advent of sin. The Spirit-to spirit connection and intimacy could not be restored until the Redeemer cleansed the soul. Then man's soul/spirit could be "at one" again with the Holy Spirit. Jesus spoke of this reconnection as the "peace that passeth all understanding."

Let us again consider the question regarding where was the physical prototype in the Godhead, let us examine some of the evidence we've been given in Scripture. We need to look at what it says about the appearances of God here on earth. As noted, we call these appearances, Theophanies, that is manifestations of God in what we call human form. Scripture makes it clear that this is the Son of God Personage from within the Triune Godhead. When we say "in human form" we are referring to His physical characteristics as being like that of man. To express it this way is demeaning to God, because what we are saying is that the Son of God Personage appeared in the image and likeness of man. It has been established that man exists as the image and likeness of God, and therefore can not be the prototype for the Theophany. To put it correctly we should say that the Son of God appeared on earth in physical form, revealing that portion of the Godhead that is the prototype of which the body of man is the image and likeness.

The eternal soul/spirit are united and take residency in man at the moment of conception. While they are inseparably united, they each have their individual functions. The soul at that point, is the residual of some of the individuals inherited traits, along with the potential and propensity for acquiring, accumulating and retaining every aspect of what the non-physical component of man will become. In fact, the soul/spirit is, and will forever be who man is, with the mortal body being but the provider of a broader spectrum of opportunities for spiritual growth and greater service to God.

While in the body, the soul will grow in experiences, knowledge, wisdom, character and all of the means by which eternal man will express himself during his mortal life. The soul component of the soul/spirit will continue this accumulated growth up to the time of death of the mortal body. Whatever he or she is at that moment will be carried to heaven and subject only to whatever God deems appropriate for the enhancement of their service in the eternal realm. As already noted, if God's image and likeness statement is to be taken literally, then intrinsic within the Godhead, there must exist in some form, body, soul and spirit, perhaps in the manner described above.

Now that we have wandered repetitively around the topic, and nibbled at some seemingly fertile ideas, let us see if we can harmonize and summarize what we know about the Godhead part, that is a pure 100% Spiritual Being who has not chosen to ever manifest in physical form, that is the Father and the Holy Spirit. We must seek to harmonize this with the image and likeness of what they called man. Is anything beyond the obvious, some deeper basis for concluding that the "body" aspect of man is derived from the "son" aspect of the Godhead? First, let's keep in mind that the Triune Godhead is the great I AM. He told Moses that His name was I AM that I AM (Exodus 3:14). He is the never changing God of the eternal present. How wonderfully succinct and precise was our wonderful God when He so identified Himself. I AM is evidence of His timelessness while now He continues on being in His created time domain.

Beginning in Genesis 1:3, we find that only the Trinity is speaking, and then only to one another. This occurs, until they have created Adam and Eve at which point, as recorded in verse 28, God spoke to them. These were the first recorded words ever spoken to man, and it began verbal communication between God and man that intermittently continued throughout the Old Testament period and on until the resurrected Jesus, the Son of God ascended into heaven. From then on, God speaks to us through His inerrant Word, the Holy Bible.

Who was it that spoke to Adam? Was it the Father from heaven, or was it the Son who came down from heaven to attend to His business here as a Theophany, that is in a

physical flesh and bones state, by means of which He could be physically seen and walk with Adam? Whether or not in this case it was a Theophany, Scripture gives us plenty of evidence that God the Son did, many times appear on earth in this manner. What we learn is that His physical aspects while on earth appeared to be no different than that of a typical man. Of course, in the Son of God there also existed the power to enlist multiple dimensionalities not available to mortal man. What a wonderful thing it is how God chose to manifest in the flesh. It is in fact, that portion of the Godhead which was the model that projected the image and likeness of the physical components of man! Thus we can see that even though the Son could not activate this physical aspect of His being, prior to creation, nevertheless it must have always been an inherent positional characteristic of His Being in His continuous now. It was only after creation did it become experiential rather than only positional. This explains how having been made in God's image and likeness is applicable to the physical aspect of man.

So what, if anything, did this little verbal "merry-go-round" exercise contribute to the obvious conclusion that the Theophany was the prototype God used to create the body aspect of man? For me, it was the realization that the prototype of which man is the image and likeness had always been within the Godhead in His "now". However, He could not and did not ever physically manifest as the prototype of man until God created the heaven and earth, at which point space/time came into existence. This for the first time, allowed that manifestation. Everything Adam saw and heard was the Theophany who had just breathed life into him.

What about the soul? How might we comprehend the soul as being in God's image and likeness? First, we must revisit what it is that defines the soul. As noted above, it is basically all of that which defines the person, and more specifically, it is the person. He is the sum total of all thoughts, experiences, emotions, feelings, knowledge, wisdom etc., that the person has accumulated since conception, and before. Under this thesis, and as previously noted, except for some heredity traits, the human soul starts off like a blank CD disc. As the growth experiences occur, these are accumulated and stored on the disc, and represent who the man is at any given moment. This was not the case with the first

man, because he was created by God fully developed and containing all of the basic attributes such as the ability to speak, read, write, comprehend, etc., but of course absent any “genetic memory” in his genes. He started as a fully equipped adult without having experienced growth, difficulty or stress of any kind, mental, spiritual or physical. Thus, as the first man, his soul was innocent, unique and simple in its composure, yet fully complete in his then assigned capabilities. After the fall these characteristics changed as sin grew and perverted these earlier qualities. All of his progeny to the end of the world suffers from, and with that perversion.

We know that God is all knowing and all powerful. God is the absolute and complete perfection of all thoughts, emotions, feelings, knowledge, wisdom, etc., that can possibly exist. Can we not say then, that by this definition, God Himself is, in this sense, the ultimate soul? We don't think of God as a soul. However, as we have defined soul, it is evident that who He is, also allows for that definition. In making such a comparison, we must hasten to say that the very best of any of these image and likeness characteristics in man are infinitesimal when compared to God. Nevertheless, in seeking a divine prototype for the made-in-His-image-and-likeness soul portion of the tri-part man, God Himself, in His omniscience can be considered as that prototype.

So what is the great breakthrough revelation, if any, revealed here? Nothing complex, once one recognizes that the elements which define the soul, while comparatively minute are nevertheless appropriately descriptive of the “image and likeness” nature of the Godhead. However, as we have already noted, when God created the soul of Adam in His image and likeness, He equipped it only to the extent He deemed appropriate to deal with the life He gave him. Thus it contained all of what ever God had determined was the appropriate amount of His image and likeness. This was the one and only such case. All of humanity which “grew out of his loins” began with a sin contaminated soul which we might conclude contained only a latent potential and capacity to grow in that image and likeness.

Finally the human spirit. Off hand the human spirit should be easy to somehow harmonize with the Holy Spirit, or perhaps with any aspect of God, who is all Spirit. What do we know, or think we know about the human spirit? As previously observed, man is the only soul that has a spirit. The spirit is that part of man that makes him eternal. All living creatures have bodies and souls. As with man, their souls define who and what they are both as individuals and as their kind. However, having no spirit, animals souls die when their bodies die. It is therefore at least one essential function and purpose of man's spirit that is to convey immortality to the soul to which it is inexorably connected at the moment of conception. The spirit of man also operates as the communication and control center through which all spiritual matters are dealt with, and particularly through which it is possible for the soul to have communion with God. All things that are "spiritual" in man, such as the awareness of God, and even the volition to pray to Him, as well as trying to be obedient, originates in the spirit, from which the soul acquires all knowledge related to God. This seems to be applicable only to redeemed man. Those who are unsaved, and will not be saved, will instead wander aimlessly in spiritual darkness, probably eventually being attracted by some demon-controlled idol whom they accept as their god.

Let's explore a little more of what Scripture tells us about the Holy Spirit to try to determine what manner of man's spirit may have been derived from His image and likeness. We learn from John 14:16 that the Holy Spirit as the Comforter replaced Jesus on earth when Jesus ascended to heaven. (Comforter: Greek word "*paraklets*" one called alongside to help.) Surely this aspect of the Holy Spirit is included in His image and likeness. However, from what little we know, with the Theophany in daily communication with Adam, it doesn't seem likely that this "Comforter" aspect was utilized in this manner until after the fall. The full extent of just how His image and likeness as the comforter may have benefited Adam after the fall is not evident. When Adam and Eve realized what they had done, and began to understand its ramifications, various degrees of fear, despondency, shame, regret and sadness must have afflicted them. Surely the comforting qualities that had been imparted to their spirits would have risen to the occasion, and tended to take away the sharpness of these stresses, reducing

the debilitating effects to manageable levels. Having inherited Adam's problem (sin) all of mankind since then has nevertheless been individually blessed with this aspect of the Holy Spirit "likeness" whether or not it is recognized.

While not part of the originally imparted image and likeness of the Holy Spirit, all who are born-again, that is those who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, get the "Real thing". Not only is the image and likeness aspect of the Holy Spirit incorporated in every human spirit as mentioned above, but the Holy Spirit Himself, comes to dwell in us! When in John 14:16 Jesus tells the apostles that He will send the Holy Spirit as their Comforter. He was to dwell permanently in them and in all persons who would become the Body of Christ. Thus we not only have His image and likeness qualities tempering our difficulties, but we have His whole potential living within us! What an incredible gift this is for the select group we call born-again Christians, that is the "Body of Christ", or "the church". For a study of what the indwelling Holy Spirit Himself adds to our being see the study called "Don't quench the Spirit."

As we continue to muse on the matter, there is yet another facet to the "image and likeness" of the Holy Spirit that we might consider. Besides dwelling in every saved person, there is a world-wide commission that is yet being fulfilled by the Holy Spirit, one which also has a personal application for every human being. That commission is described in 2Thessalonians 2:6-8 "*6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. 8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:*" He who now "letteth" is clearly the Holy Spirit. "Let" and "letteth" are translations of the Greek word, "*katacho*" which also means "to hold down in various applications, retain, seize on, withhold." The generally accepted way to express the meaning of these verses is to recognize that the Holy Spirit is the Restrainer," who has been, and is yet holding back, or restraining the otherwise uninhabited forces of evil in the world. At some point, "He who letteth," that is the Restrainer, will be taken

out of the way allowing the wicked and the wicked one, as well as Satan to have their brief hour on the world stage after which the Lord will destroy him and all wickedness.

Does the Restrainer aspect of the Holy Spirit apply to man's spirit being of His image and likeness? I believe so, and as an over simplification, it can be summed up in just one word, "conscience." That's what Adam and Eve experienced which caused them to hide themselves behind fig leaves after they became aware of even a small portion of what their sins caused. All mankind to this day has retained some measure of this originally created spiritual likeness. The Holy Spirit as the Restrainer has been holding back, and thus restraining Satan from doing even greater evils since the garden incident, and will continue to do so until the time when 2 Thessalonians becomes applicable, that is after the Rapture. It is the same image and likeness aspect of the Holy Spirit is expressed as man's conscience, and which restrains him from even greater evils than he now commits.

Is there any more to be said regarding our topic? I am certain that there is. However, for now, I've expressed everything that I feel I was given to share. I pray that while this relatively brief, but perhaps boring study, will because of the repetitions will prompt others to try to dig deeper and more extensively than I was given to do. If nothing more, I pray that this study will excite the reader to recognize how wonderfully, and with such loving care and unwavering purpose God has and is creating His eternal family!