

IN GOD'S IMAGE

By

Curtis Dickinson

In his book, *Jesus Rediscovered*, Malcom Muggeridge tells of an interview with Dr. Christian Barnard and some other doctors: "Those terrible doctors I met on a television set with Dr. Christian Barnard laughed derisively when I spoke of a man being made in the image of God. What an image! What as God!, they jeered..."

The image-of-God concept challenges and denies the modern view that man is mere animal, a product of evolutionary-chance, and therefore without absolute morals and external directions. Yet, from the beginning, man was intended to be a reflection of the Creator. "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26). All of life is to be measured by that Divine purpose.

The church, in its frenzied effort to gain members by appealing to the world-view, has allowed the image-of-God doctrine to be sidelined in favor of ideas more acceptable to a generation trained in greed and pleasure. The modern message is "You're okay. We have a program suited to your needs."

Contrast this with the message of the early church, even the message of Jesus Himself. The first word of that message is "Repent." It says that we have marred the image, that we must approach God in poverty of spirit, in meekness, and that our greatest desire must be righteousness and our single purpose purity of heart.

God is righteous, so we are to be righteous. To follow Christ we are to deny ourselves, to always seek His way first, above all other considerations, because He created us to be in His image, and any deviation from His will means we will fall short of that image.

Life is a gift from God. Because of sin it is only temporal, but it is still a marvelous gift. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus we can look forward to a glorious life that is eternal, but whether in this temporal mortal life or the eternal immortal life to come, we are required to learn what life ought to be, what it is supposed to be, and this is summed up in the person of Christ, Who is the "very image" of God. "You that have seen me have seen the Father" (John 14:9).

The purpose which God declared in the creation of man has not changed. However unattainable it may seem, God will ultimately have His man in His own image. "We know that if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (I John 3:2). John doesn't leave it at that. "And every one that has his hope set on Him purifies himself, even as he is pure" (Vs. 3).

John says it matter-of-factly: each one who holds to the image-of-God hope "purifies himself." Of all things men seek today, purity must be near the bottom of the list! A suggestion of chastity may evoke howls of laughter by a modern comedian. But God is pure, and that's not funny. Jesus is pure, and we are His followers. One of the reasons we adore Jesus is because He walked through this corruptible world with temptations pressing every moment and yet remained pure! As a man he lived in the image of God.

It is just this challenge that causes modern man to jeer at the image-of-God concept. If it is the goal of man to be in God's image, then he ought to be doing something about it. He ought to be discarding the evolutionary-change model and reshaping himself after the original pattern. But this requires the pain of having to tear out by the roots the ugly wild hairs of self-direction, greed, lust and worldly pride.

It reminds me of something I saw one day while visiting the hospital. The nurses were trying to move a man from a hospital bed to take him for therapy. He was temporarily out of his mind and clutched fiercely to the guard rail. The nurses had to pry his finger loose one by one before they could take him for the treatment which he desperately needed. God would pry us loose from the false concepts of life and success to get us to accept His therapy, that He might make us into His image.

Being in the image of God has enabled man to accomplish things almost beyond comprehension: to communicate with the speed of light and travel almost as fast; to control the temperature and even modify the weather; and to create machines of destruction unlimited. It also gives man power to control himself and to have dominion over all created things. When man sees himself in the image of God, he uses all his abilities to produce good things, create beautiful art and music and turn all society Godward. Every facet of life becomes worship. (How foolish to see worship as confined to an assembly of saints on Sunday morning.) It is all sacred, whether one is digging a ditch or performing surgery, because we are God's creation to reflect Him in the totality of life.

The image-of-God doctrine is disregarded by many simply because they haven't seen any samples of it in the Christian community. But that may be due to several facts. (1) The doubters wouldn't know one if they saw one. (2) The more one progresses in his effort to be like Christ, the less notice the world takes of it. His works of charity and love are not broadcasted before men. (3) The skeptic will consider a Christian a failure for one or two flaws. Some flaw can be found in the very best person, but in spite of that flaw he may be making splendid progress in learning to be Godly. (4) As yet no one has attained that image. The apostle Paul readily confessed that he had not attained that goal, and so did John, who said, "we shall be like Him..." Future tense. He recognized that we are not like Him yet. Paul writes that after we put off the old man we "put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10). Gaining that knowledge is a slow process and one that is never finished in this present world.

We are responsible to purge ourselves from those impurities we know are contrary to the nature of God, it is not within our own power to make ourselves in the image of God. He is still the Maker. It is as we behold the glory of the Lord, that we are "transformed into the same image from glory to glory..."(II Cor. 3:18). Ours is to seek His face, to learn and do His will; it is His to transform us, and in the day of resurrection, to bring us forth in His image.

.....
Copyright © Curtis Dickinson. Formatted and Posted by Ken Fortier Ministries.
Permission is hereby granted by Mrs. Regina Dickinson to reproduce and distribute
Curtis' articles to as many as possible. This statement is to remain attached to this article
for permission to be valid. Vol. XXVII, Number 1.
.....