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IMAGE OF GOD IN GENESIS 1:27

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ABSTRACT

It is Scripturally believed that all created beings are totally dependent on God, the Creator. Though man was a created being but was distinctively made in the image of his Creator. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them." (Genesis 1:27). Man was perfectly made to mirror the exact identity of God. God has an ultimate dominion over the entire creation. God is holy and righteous. God is a Spirit Being. Man, created in the image of God was made to have dominion over all other creatures created by God. Man an image of God was created to be holy and righteous. Unfortunately, the image of God in man was marred by his sin. Though the image of God in man was not completely lost, it was no longer function as it was intended. Man fell from higher ground where God intended him to be to that level where God did not intend him to be.

God had again in His infinite mercy, provided for us a way out. The true identity of God has been made known to us through Christ, a prototype of His image. Christ is a model of what man is supposed to be. He is one of whom the image of God is undiminished - One who is what all men are supposed to be. Man needs therefore to be conformed to the image of Christ.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

The conception that man was created in the image of God as it is clearly stated in Genesis 1:27, is the bedrock of the entire Scriptures. In man, God is to become visible on earth, because man was created in God's image. No other creature was reported to have been created in God's image. No graven image, no idols, no other creatures can be likened to God except man. So, to compare any other creatures or idols with the Supreme God is a sin.

Undoubtfully, God has an ultimate dominion over the entire creation (Psalm 22:28). Man as an image of God was made to have dominion or to rule over other creatures. He was to have dominion over the sea, over the birds of the air, over the livestock, over the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground (Genesis 1:26). Man was to have dominion over them all. It is no wonder the second commandment forbids the keeping and worshipping of idols (Exodus 20:3-4). Man was not to bow down to any other creatures or any man-made images. This, if he did so, "was a denial of his rightful place above the rest of creation and below only God."¹ These images made by

¹W.N. Wilder, My Project Supervisor, during project discussion, Ogbomoso: Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, 10 October 1998.

man could never catch the identity of God. Only man was created in the image of God to rule over all other creatures created by God. This power was given to man who only was made in the image of God.

Again, as it is clearly stated in the Scripture, man was very good at the time of his creation (Genesis 1:31a). Man was not corrupt; he was not sinful. Man was holy. God the Creator is holy (Psalm 99:5). God is righteous (Isaiah 5:16). Because God is righteous and holy, he was able to make man, his own image righteous and holy. At creation, man, an image of God, was made to have dominion over all other creatures; he was also made to be righteous and holy.

God is a Spirit Being (John 4:24). At the creation, having formed from the dust of ground, God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). While it is true that both man and animals were created living beings, it is only in man, who was made or created in the image of God that God breathed into his nostrils to become a spirit being. Man's spirit nature was as a result of his life being inbreathed from God. God as a Spirit Being is able to apprehend himself as Supreme Being. He created man in His own image; He created man a spirit being. It is that spirit in man that makes him to understand God the way He understands Himself as Supreme Being. And to have dominion or rule over all other creatures requires of man self-consciousness, intelligence and rationality.

It is the Spirit, in man, "the breath of Almighty, that gives him such understanding" (John 32:8). God is Spirit, and man who is created in His image must worship him in Spirit. Though man is now mortal, but the immortal nature of man will be fully attained at eternity (I Corinthians 15:44-49).

Man, as an image "of God" was created to have dominion over other creatures, he was perfectly made to be holy and righteous and was made a "Spirit being". However, due to man's disobedience to God (Genesis 3), ~~the~~ the image of God in man was tarnished; the image was defaced. Though the image of God in man was not lost has been marred by man's sin. Fallen man is still image-bearer of God, but the image has been tarnished. As a result, man could not comprehend exactly who God is and know exactly what He wants us to be. Fallen humanity does not reflect the image of God but rather distorts it, though he has not lost his capacity for God. He is still God's image-bearer.

Meanwhile, an ideal is required - an ideal that will illustrate what the image of God in man ought to be and is intended to be ultimately. God who has ultimate dominion, the righteous and loving God, has himself provided the solution. He has given to us a true image of Himself, his only begotten Son. God's own image of himself, came "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3). Yet he was without sin (Hebrews 4:15), but he became sin for us, that we might be declared righteous by God, through him. He is Jesus Christ. He is the

"exact likeness of God's own being" (Heb. 1:3).

The humanity of Jesus bears the exact identity of what God intends for us to be. Jesus is the true perfect image of God. He is holy and righteous. He is without sin. He did not succumb to the temptation from the devil as first Adam did. He is a true righteousness from God and through his obedience to God, "many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). God now requires from us that we should "be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be firstborn among many brethren". We need to put on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24).

Again, glory be to God Almighty who had foreordained us (we Christians) to be conformed to the image of his Son (Romans 8:29). As sons of God through Christ, we need to put off "old self" and be "made new" in attitude of our minds (Ephesians 4:22-23). And this our new selves are continually and progressively renewed in Christ. Though not yet totally "new", our standard should be Christ who is sinless and prototype of image of God, so that as we have been born in the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear likeness of man from heaven (I Corinthians 15:49). Then, our future will be glorious, because we shall be perfectly like Christ, a prototype of God's image.