

## The Divine Image

Man has always been curious about himself. This has led to many speculations about his origin and to varied views about his essential nature. The first chapter of Genesis presents a view which, although apparently simple, is profound, challenging, and richly suggestive.

### THE BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

“God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’ . . . So God created man in his own image” (Gen 1: 26 f). Taken strictly, this simply indicates the *fact* of similarity to God. But it is a natural extension of language to use “image” for the *content* of the similarity, that in which the likeness consists, the constituent qualities or powers in man which have some resemblance to aspects of God’s being.

This does not say that men are God’s image, as one Egyptian text did. Paul’s statement, “Man . . . is the image and glory of God” (1 Cor 11: 7), certainly cannot be taken literally. Man is far from the infinite, exalted majesty of God’s glory; the meaning may be that man can glorify God. Likewise, some modification is to be seen concerning image—perhaps that man has resemblance to God. And it is quite inadmissible to say: “There is a little bit of God in man,” or “Man is a mingling of dust and deity,” or anything of the sort—as has been done. God is God, and man is man; and never does the Bible hint at any slightest identifying of the two or any disregarding of their essential separateness or any confused thinking about man as a part of God.

Whether "image" is to be understood literally or figuratively has been much discussed. In most of its sixteen occurrences in the Old Testament, *selem* has the basic etymological meaning of a "material image"—for example, Num 33: 52; 1 Sam 6: 5. But sometimes it was used figuratively for a "mere empty semblance." Thus in Ps 39: 6, RSV has "Man goes about as a shadow"; and in Ps 73: 20, "their phantoms." In Ezek 23: 14, it refers to painted pictures; and while this does indicate outward appearance, it is not a solid physical substance. Therefore there is no a priori necessity to see a physical body as the significance here.

The word rendered "likeness" (*d'mût*) usually indicates resemblance in external appearance. But it is also used figuratively for any sort of similarity—for example, "tumult . . . as of a great multitude" (Is 13: 4); "they have venom like the venom of a serpent" (Ps 58: 4); the "as" and "like" represent this word. The two words "image" and "likeness" have essentially the same meaning in the Genesis passage. This is a clear instance of the synonymous parallelism that is such a frequent characteristic of the Hebrew Bible.

It is scarcely possible that the author simply referred to man's physical body, and said it resembled that of God. The statement that man was created in the likeness of God points in two directions. On the one hand, it indicates man's great difference from all other creatures on earth. On the other, it looks in the direction of God, and specifies that man's unique and distinctive quality lies in a certain similarity to God. In neither direction is a physical reference at all probable. The major differences between man and the animals are not merely physical. And in Deuteronomy, which most scholars recognize as antedating the Priestly material to which Gen 1 belongs, it had been indicated that God has no physical form (Deut 4: 12, 15). Anthropomorphic references to God's eye, hand, mouth, and so on are obviously figurative. And temporary manifestations in theophany are no evidence for a permanent bodily form. Sexual differentiation also militates against physical similarity to God; "male and female" is added after the words, "in the image of God" (Gen 1: 27). Even if the writer here may have had some background of a primitive myth or legend which ascribed a physical body to God, it seems clear that he reinterpreted or transcended it. It is possible, however, that the special aspects of man's body were included as a subordinate factor, though not the essential meaning; both the anthropomorphic expressions about God and the fact of the Incarnation show clearly that the human body is not alien or antagonistic to God.

Although one must always seek the original meaning of biblical statements, it is a serious question whether we are absolutely limited to the ideas

the original writer had. This involves the conception that is held of the processes of inspiration and revelation. When God seeks to communicate truth, he not only offers revelation but also enables man, at least in some degree, to receive it and to express it in words. But it seems that man often gets only a partial understanding of a great idea toward which God leads him. Thus it is scarcely possible that either Abram or the writer comprehended the full impact of God's gracious words recorded in Gen 12: 1-3. A valid and valuable meaning would be evident at once; but God intended a much richer significance, which would ultimately be realized. Compare also what was said by and about Caiaphas in Jn 11: 49-52.

Basic in this discussion is the conviction that, although the writer of Gen 1 probably did not completely comprehend the ideas embodied in the words he used, we are not restricted to the limited insights which he had. Rather, we can seek the great realities to which his words point; or, to put it another way, we should seek the truth which God meant and toward which he was leading the writer.

Our understanding of man's creation in the divine likeness therefore depends on our understanding of the nature of God. The fact of basic significance here is that God is a personal Being—not an abstract power, not a set of ideas, not an automatic source of rewards and retribution; not a mechanical source or center of energy, not an "it." Fundamental in this personal quality is self-consciousness. Whatever translation is accepted in Ex 3: 14, the self-consciousness of God is obvious. This is true of course in varying degree all through the Bible. This personal nature of God, moreover, manifests itself in many activities and relationships; the personal quality of the actions implies the personal quality of the Actor. This does not exclude the possibility that in some way God is superpersonal, so infinitely beyond human comprehension or imagination that even the most profound philosophic efforts cannot fathom the ultimate and total reality of his nature. But it does say that God is at least personal, that his nature definitely includes the various positive qualities and powers that characterize a personal being.

We therefore conclude that the likeness to God which characterizes man is essentially in the realm of personal quality. Before looking at specific details, we should note two general considerations in this connection.

The Bible does not explicitly analyze the nature of man. But it does say much about what man does and can do—thus implying a great deal about his nature. Therefore our study looks basically at capacities and powers, either actual abilities or inherent potentialities; and we are justified in seeking, from these significant clues, an understanding of the essential nature of man which is their necessary background. This approach emphasizes

a dynamic conception, not a merely passive or static one. But of course there must be an existent something that has the capacities and powers.

Man has a group of characteristics, above the mere physical level, which differ markedly from those of other earthly creatures. These characteristics have such a closeness of relationship among themselves, such an inner coherence, that they clearly seem to belong together and to constitute a unified whole; it is in this totality that the essential nature of the human person is to be found. Most of these qualities and functions have distinct similarity to some which God has revealed as being characteristic of himself. Therefore, in the absence of any specific biblical definition of the content of meaning in the phrase, "the image of God," it is reasonable to think that God intended us to see the higher or personal nature of man as a whole and in its various details as being indicated thereby.

#### DISTINCTIVE POWERS

From the functional standpoint, the fundamental aspect of the human person, and therefore of the divine image, is what may be broadly designated as the *psychological powers*. They are the essential prerequisite for the other six main aspects that will be surveyed—in fact, for all personal life.

Basic is the capacity for self-consciousness, the deep sense that "I am I," with clear differentiation from all else and with at least a considerable recognition of individual factors. As noted above, this is characteristic of God. A small degree of it is found in the higher animals. But in its profound richness and fullness, it is distinctive of persons.

The intellectual powers of thinking and reasoning function in many areas—for example, in perceiving cause and effect and extensive details of other relationships, in recognizing and classifying similarities and differences and far-reaching influences, in gaining and organizing astonishing amounts of information, in piercing below surface appearances and characteristics to inner reality, and in planning methods to achieve desired results. In Hos 6: 4, even God seems thus to seek an effective procedure: "What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?" (or, "What *can* I do?") Obviously these powers reach far beyond direct contacts, both in space and in time; for people can gain information and understanding concerning matters in distant locations, can project probabilities and expectations into the distant future, and can construct plans with reference to such remote things.

Language is an important factor in this. Unless ideas get expressed in words, they are vague and of little value; and only in words can they be communicated to other people. Words are essential also for identifying factual matters and for sharing information on them. In the Bible, God

frequently speaks—in contrast to the idols, which "have mouths, but do not speak" (Ps 115: 5). The fact that parrots, for example, can learn to pronounce a few words, rather mechanically, or that dolphins have some system of intercommunication, does not really detract from the distinctive importance of language for people.

Closely associated with linguistic ability is the capacity for abstract thought. This appears in religious concepts, such as sin, holiness, piety, and in a great variety of other ideas, such as gratitude, wealth, illusion, grandeur. It is seen also as men develop theories, trace out implications, reach logical conclusions, make mathematical calculations, and engage in many other areas of mental activity.

Another noteworthy power is the comprehension of values. Various levels of value are found in various relationships, experiences, achievements, and qualities. It is important to recognize values, to appreciate them, and to discriminate between the greater and the lesser, and thus to be ready to "seek first" the higher values (cf Mt 6: 25-33). The capacity for such thoughtful discernment of values is a significant aspect of the divine image—even though men often fail to get the true divine viewpoint or to evaluate accurately.

Without attempting to catalog all areas of intellectual powers, we should at least note the capacity for imagination, especially in the basic meaning of that term—getting clarity and pictorial vividness of conceptions; constructing mental images; also such imperfectly understood matters as mental telepathy and extrasensory perception.

The emotional qualities of persons are very significant. The higher animals can feel something of anger, of affection, and probably of pleasure. But feelings in people have a vastly deeper and richer quality, as well as a much broader variety. And emotional attitudes can be felt with reference to people with whom one has never had any direct contact; the outreach of both love and hate is potentially worldwide.

The powers of will are sometimes considered the most specific characteristic of persons. This involves the making of choices and determination and persistence in accomplishing chosen purposes. Here again, the transcending of space and time is noteworthy. Purposes can be formulated and actions undertaken or projected on a comprehensive social scale, and with reference to matters at great physical distance and far off in the future. Also to be noted here is the ability to strive for achieving the higher values, both for oneself and for others. This includes such efforts as those to gain fuller knowledge, to develop finer qualities of character, to grow in richness of fellowship with God, to deepen friendships, and to promote righteousness and peace. Man's will reaches its noblest expression in harmonizing with God's will.

Much discussion has been given to the "freedom" of the will. Actually this is not a good term to use; for the will is not an irresponsible, irrational something, independent of the other factors in the person, which makes a more or less blind stab at doing something. The will is the personal self acting in certain areas. There is a large degree of self-determination, or at least the capacity for it; this is true in spite of various limitations, both from strong outside influences and from inner defects. Thoughts, feelings, and desires tend to express themselves, to carry over into action. But this is not automatic. And if there is any conflict between various such influences, there is not a sort of mechanical struggle between them, with the strongest winning out. On the contrary, the person decides—wills—which particular motive or influence shall be given dominant place and shall express itself in action. Of course some persons (with a "weak" will) yield rather easily to various human influences, without aggressively asserting an independent choice; but others (with a "strong" will) vigorously assert and exercise the dominating power of personal choice, even against strong influences in an opposite direction. Testimony to the reality of such choosing is found in the constant personal consciousness that it would have been possible to act otherwise than was done in numerous and varied situations. And the Bible speaks frequently of important choices deliberately made, or called for—for example, Deut 30: 19; Josh 24: 15, 22; Is 56: 4; Lk 10: 42; Acts 17: 30.

Although the functional powers had to be surveyed first, the most profoundly significant aspect of human beings, when viewed qualitatively, is the unique capacity for *knowing God and having personal relationship with him*. Almost surely no mere animal can even have any idea of God—much less have conscious fellowship with him. The divine-human fellowship works in both directions. It involves revelation from God to man, the bestowing of various spiritual gifts and blessings, and God's calling of man into love and loyalty to him. On man's part, it involves prayer, worship, faith, devotion, aspiration, obedience. Man can even be God's friend (2 Chron 20: 7; Jas 2: 23). Man is one whom God loves, and who is destined (if he will accept it) for salvation through faith in Christ and for full spiritual communion with God. He finds his true self only in a free response to God.

Not only can there be intelligent communication between God and man but also God can establish both individual purposes and purposes of history in connection with man, and can work out such purposes in and through man. Man can be personally confronted with God's purposes and demands, and can make some sort of intelligent response to them. There is interaction; when God acts in human affairs, man is not a mere pawn that is shoved

but can participate meaningfully in what is done. Thus man not only has responsibility to God but also can cooperate with God.

The third highly significant aspect of persons is the *moral quality*. In God himself, this appears in establishing standards of righteousness, in acting in accordance with such standards, and in seeking to promote them among men. In man, it appears in conscience and some related functionings. Three areas of this ethical concern and activity are to be noted.

Conscience is, first of all, moral understanding, a functioning of the intellectual powers in the moral area. It is knowledge or opinion—whether accurate or imperfect—about right and wrong. There are many sources of such moral ideas. Basic for the Christian is the Bible, especially the teachings of Jesus and the Ten Commandments. Contributions come from teachings by parents and others, opinions of friends, ideas found in books and other reading, radio and TV, observation of the consequences of actions, and the results of social experience as expressed in custom, public opinion, and civil law, as well as reflective thinking on problems of right and wrong. Thus men come to recognize the reality of right and wrong, the fact that moral distinctions exist. And they can get both a conception of some general principles of the nature of right and wrong—of what they ought to do and ought not to do—and a set of ideas concerning the moral quality of various kinds of actions.

On such bases men form moral judgments with reference to individual problems or issues, and have the equipment to make (more or less) intelligent moral choices. The efforts at discriminating evaluation often are necessarily directed not at positive evil or good but at trying to decide which of two or more possible lines of action would produce the larger good. One's moral conceptions get applied also in evaluating the rightness or wrongness of the actions of others. This may not be exactly conscience—which deals, at least primarily, with moral aspects of one's own life—but it is part of this whole moral capacity. All this is unique for persons: an animal may learn that certain acts bring praise or reward, others bring censure or punishment—but that is far from a recognition of moral quality.

The second function of conscience is the moral imperative or dynamic. It is the sense of urgency that one ought to do the right and not do the wrong—a sense of duty and of obligation, constraining one to follow the conclusions reached by the moral understanding, to refrain from yielding to any blandishments and allurements that might come from possibilities that are deemed improper or unworthy, and to strive to accomplish the purposes that have been chosen. There is also the urgency to choose the greater good rather than the lesser, and to persevere in achieving it, in spite of the greater cost that may be entailed—either greater effort required or greater sacrifice

of what may seem desirable and may actually have real but minor value. Probably to be classified here also is the sense of concern about injustices and various sufferings endured by others, with the urge to do something to relieve or to help. Of course there is no compulsive power in these areas, but strong influence is exerted.

Various motives for obedience to the moral judgments that are reached may be adduced to strengthen this urgency—for example, the fact of God's will; grateful appreciation for God's goodness; the inherent rightness of right and wrongness of wrong; the beauty of love and kindness and the repulsiveness of evil; a sense of personal responsibility for one's conduct; the valuable results, to self and to others, from doing right; the disvalues from doing wrong, including the danger of suffering or punishment and the failure to attain worthy goals; good examples set by admired people, especially Christ; and warnings from bad examples. This sense of urgency often goes beyond the individual and reaches out to others, both to lead them to take moral issues seriously and to stimulate motivating influences in them.

In God there is probably never any struggle between tendencies to do good and to do evil, for "God cannot be tempted with evil" (Jas 1: 13). There are a few hints that God may consider actions that are improper or evil, but rejects them—for example, "How can I give you up! How can I make you like Admah!" (Hos 11: 8). But in general, since moral standards arise from and express his very nature, it would seem he does good automatically. Also, he is active to exert influence on men to choose and do the good and to avoid evil—both by direct commands and by various other motivations. The Spirit of God works to guide, inspire, and strengthen man in the good way and to dissuade from evil—for example, see Neh 9: 20; Ps 143: 10; Ezek 36: 27; Gal 5: 22 f. Man only very imperfectly reflects God's moral dynamic.

The third area of the functioning of a person in this realm is the moral judiciary. Conscience passes judgment on what has been done or left undone—either to condemn and give a sense of guilt and shame or to approve and give a feeling of satisfaction (cf Rom 2: 15). Such passing of judgment (just as the other moral functionings) reaches beyond oneself, to commend or to censure the actions of others. This third function also reinforces the second one; it becomes an influence in making succeeding choices rightly, and strengthens the urgency to persevere in the good.

The popular saying that conscience is the voice of God is scarcely accurate with reference to gaining moral ideas or condemning evil; at best, there would seem to be a sort of echo of God's voice, or concurrence with it. The idea is somewhat more probable in the urging of obedience. All

three functional areas have similarity to God's moral activity; but man often does not succeed in reaching the divine moral realities.

The idea has sometimes been advanced that the divine image means—or originally meant—moral and spiritual perfection. This is not said in Genesis, and almost surely is not implied. The absence of sin is not the same as moral perfection, which includes developed positive virtue. And the fellowship with God, though pictured as intimate at times, does not seem to have been full and complete. Even if the original state of man had included moral perfection—a special high quality associated with the basic fact of personal quality which was then lost—this was not the essential of the divine image. The New Testament references to the truly spiritual likeness to God which is the result of his saving grace (for example, Eph 4: 24; Col 3: 10) obviously say nothing about what man was as originally created. Available evidence indicates that man was endowed in creation with moral capacity, not moral perfection.

The fourth major aspect of man to be noted lies in the *social area*—the capacity for friendship and for sharing in mutual interests and activities with other persons. It would be possible to combine this with the second general area noted above (capacity for fellowship with God) under a general idea of interpersonal relationships; but the divine-human and the inter-human have significant differences, and each is important, so that it seems preferable to consider them separately. Just as God has active relations with persons (both human and angelic), so the divine image involves important relations with others.

Human social relationship is on a much higher level than such gregariousness and cooperation as are found, for example, in a hive of bees, a hill of ants, or a herd of elephants. It is distinctly different from any group organization of animals, in that it includes a more profound quality of conscious fellowship, without the need for physical propinquity, and planned activities on a vastly broader scale. In addition to the richness of the male-female and other family relationships, there are important community and national aspects and a great many significant associations in terms of specialized interests.

Men have responsibilities to their fellowmen as well as to God. God confronts us with them. They are ones whom God loves and for whom Christ died and rose again. We are to recognize and give careful attention to the divine image which characterizes all humans, and act appropriately, not only in matters of right moral conduct in dealing with them but also in feelings of respect for them, in kindly fellowship, and in active help.

Of the several distinctive aspects of man, the Bible makes most explicit mention of *supremacy over nature*. "Fill the earth and subdue it; and have

dominion . . . over every living thing" (Gen 1: 28). "Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen . . ." (Ps 8: 6 f). This is sometimes considered a result of the creation in the divine image rather than a part of its essence. But certainly such supremacy is characteristic of God himself; and so it seems appropriate to classify it as a real aspect of the divine image. Control over animals is stressed in both Bible passages just noted; but the language is general enough to be much more inclusive. This properly covers a multitude of factors in ordinary human life, as well as the whole vast realm of scientific achievement.

An important aspect closely related to the foregoing is *creativity*. God is always emphasized as Creator. Does man share in this power? In the absolute and primary sense, it is only God who creates; and in the Bible, only he is spoken of as creating. But in a secondary sense, this power has been conferred on man. It is found in three areas.

The first area is procreation, the producing of new human lives: "God said, 'Be fruitful and multiply'" (Gen 1: 28). Various characteristics in parents often reappear in children; and this is thought not to be entirely the result of postnatal influences. Thus there seems to be effective human participation in producing not only the body of a child but also the personality. Some believe that each individual self is a direct creation by God; and this is partly supported by Jer 38: 16. But inasmuch as even the body of an infant is said to be formed by God (for example, Job 10: 8; Jer 1: 5), all that can be taken as certain is that the ultimate power is God's; it is quite conceivable that he has delegated the actual direct exercise of this power to man. And the theory of traducianism is probably more widely held than is direct creationism—that is, that in the act of propagation, the soul, as well as the body, is produced by human instrumentality.

The second area in which human action is commonly called creative is art. Writers are said to create characters in novels and to create poetry; painters create pictures with new and distinctive qualities; sculptors create statues; architects create novel structures.

The third creative area is scientific invention, with the devising of new instruments and gadgets that have wonderful potencies. We seem to have no better word than "create" to designate such achievements that are characterized by newness.

There is one more distinctive and significant aspect of man that belongs in this analysis—the capacity for *immortality*. But that will be considered in the following main section.

#### THE INNER PERSONAL SELF

Occasional reference has already been made to the idea of the inner self. This crucial concept needs to be further considered. The materialistic idea has often been advanced that the varied activities of man are merely the more or less mechanical functioning of a biological-neurological organism, that man is just a bundle of reactions. But certainly there must be something that has adequate ability to react in the unique ways, a being with appropriate quality to have and to exercise the various special capacities and powers. Many actions, attitudes, and relationships of which only persons are capable have been noted above; and this implies that the actor is a distinctively personal being, far above a mere organization of psychophysical systems.

There is some value—but also some danger—in designating this personal being as a personality. This word is used with a variety of significances. There is the loose popular use for the degree of charm and attractiveness or of energy and forcefulness that a person has. Closely allied is a somewhat broader view of the particular individuality of a person, including such things as temperament, special interests and capabilities, habits, and traits of character. Such uses tend to divert attention from the deeper conception that a personality is a spiritual entity with distinctive powers and capacities of a personal sort. Because of such possibilities of confusion, it is probably better to use a term such as the "personal self" or the "inner self" for this more profound idea.

For this inner self, the word "heart" is sometimes used. The Hebrew words for "heart" occur eight hundred and fifty times in the Bible; the Greek word about one hundred and fifty times. Almost always these words actually refer to the mind and thought, the desires and the will, the moral character and conscience, the emotions, or the inner man in general—for example, Jer 31: 33; Mt 5: 28; Mk 7: 6; Lk 6: 45. Sometimes the writers may have used the word literally, thinking that the psychological functions operated through the physical organ. But this seems impossible in some passages; for example, no surgical operation is contemplated when God says, "I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek 36: 26). The same is true in the command, "Circumcise the foreskin of your heart" (Deut 10: 16). And no physical ill is involved in a "broken heart" (Ps 51: 17). In such passages, the completely figurative use, referring to the personal self, is inescapable. Even when the physical organ may have been thought of as seat or instrument, the emphasis is clearly on the personal self that functioned through it. And references to

God's heart must be entirely personal and spiritual in meaning, with no implication of anything physical—for example, Jer 3: 15; Acts 13: 22.

Attention must be given also to the word "soul." Sometimes objection is made to a religious use of this word, because undesirable associations from Greek philosophy may cling to it. But it is a prominent biblical word, occurring in RSV over two hundred times in the Old Testament and over fifty times in the New Testament. The picture is somewhat complicated by the fact that both the Hebrew *nephesh* and the Greek *psuchē* often have other meanings, such as "life," or "person," or various psychical powers or activities. So "my soul" may simply be "I myself," and often "soul" is to be understood as indicating a psycho-physical totality. But by no means is this always the case. Undoubtedly it sometimes means the moral center, the inner or spiritual self, with no reference whatever to the body—for example, "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul" (Ps 19: 7); "he whose soul is not upright in him" (Hab 2: 4). In fact, a few times the soul is put in specific contrast to the body. "Shall I give . . . the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Mic 6: 7). "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (Mt 10: 28). The statements in Jas 1: 21 and 1 Pet 1: 9 about saving the soul certainly refer to the inner personal self and carry no associated implication about the body. That the word came to be used of the spiritual self appears also in the references to God's soul in at least seventeen passages in the Old Testament—for example, in Ps 11: 5, "his soul" refers to God; and God says "my soul" in Lev 26: 30; Jer 12: 7. The term points emphatically to the personal being of God, certainly with no implication that a physical body is involved.

Because of possible ambiguity and confusion in the significance of soul and personality, "spirit" is a better word for the inner self—as often in the Bible—for example, "Blessed is the man . . . in whose spirit there is no deceit" (Ps 32: 2); "What person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him?" (1 Cor 2: 11). The spirit is contrasted with the body, even spoken of as independent of it—for example, ". . . for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved" (1 Cor 5: 5); "The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Eccles 12: 7). Some Greek influence is possible in this last statement. But there is at least a partial parallel in the word of Jesus as his body was dying on the cross—soon to be placed in the tomb: "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit" (Lk 23: 46). Similar is Stephen's word, as recorded in Acts 7: 59. Also, in view of the prominence of the Spirit of God, speaking of man's spirit emphasizes his close relationship with God.

There is further support, if any is needed, for the distinct recognition of the inner self: "Thou desirest truth in the inward being" (Ps 51: 6); "I will

put my law within them" [literally, "in their inward part"] (Jer 31: 33). Even God says, "My heart [literally, "my inward parts"] yearns for him" (Jer 31: 20; and cf, similarly, Is 63: 15). Certainly God was not thought of as having physical viscera, although that was the basic meaning of the word used in these last two passages; the supposed (human) seat of emotion had become an established symbol for the personal self.

From all this it is evident that the reality of the inner spiritual self, distinct from the body, was recognized and expressed in the Bible, even though not with perfect clarity and precision of language or with complete consistency; where unity is emphasized, it is a functional unity. The essence of the divine image is in this inner personal self.

The question may well be raised here whether infants, and idiots, have the divine image. When we think in terms of powers, either as actually functioning or as latent capacities, rather than of positive existing qualities, it is obvious that infants have the divine image. They are persons, with an inner spiritual self that can develop—they do not just gradually become persons. As for idiots, certain unfortunate conditions cause the inherent capacities to remain in a permanently undeveloped state in this life; but they are still persons, with an inner spiritual self. They too have the divine image.

With this background, the implications for the future may now be considered. Although there is some variation in the biblical evidence, the preponderant testimony indicates conscious survival. There are two alternative views. A very few passages, coming from a spirit of skepticism or hopeless discouragement, suggest annihilation (Job 7: 21; Ps 39: 13). However, so far as the wicked are concerned, it is inconceivable that a personal self would cease to exist at physical death and, then, that a righteous and loving God would perform what would amount to a new act of creation to produce a personal being, at the time of resurrection, in order to consign him to eternal suffering for the sin of one who formerly existed. Almost equally difficult is the idea of a new person inheriting the blessings promised to the godly.

There are several references to death as a sleep—for example, Dan 12: 2; Jn 11: 11-13; 1 Thess 4: 13-15. Also, there are a few statements that the dead have no knowledge, no experience of God, and therefore probably no consciousness (for example, Ps 6: 5; Eccles 9: 10); these are in terms of the semi-heathen idea of Sheol—a cheerless, sorrowful situation. And some scholars consider such statements determinative, and believe that between death and resurrection people are in a sort of coma—unconscious, dormant, inert.

But there are other passages that point strongly in the opposite direction. The significant message given several times in the Old Testament is that

the basic blessedness of fellowship with God will continue. It is said of Enoch that he "walked with God; and he was not, for God took him" (Gen 5: 24); obviously "he was not" means he was not on earth, he was gone—not that he ceased to exist. Apparently he went directly to a fuller fellowship with God. The same is true of Elijah (2 Kings 2: 11). The outburst of faith in Job 19: 26 is noteworthy: "Then without my flesh I shall see God" (this is the most probable translation of a difficult and possibly corrupt passage). The climax is in Ps 73: 23 f: "I am continually with thee . . . afterward thou wilt receive me to glory." Briggs, Fleming James, Oesterley, Terrien, Weiser, and other commentators see here the conscious survival of the person, a richer fullness of fellowship with God, a true life after death. Two other noteworthy passages in the Psalms transcend the popular idea of Sheol. The writer of Ps 49: 15 believed that God either would take him directly to himself, instead of letting him go to Sheol, or else would quickly deliver him from there. And Ps 139: 8 has the unique idea that God is in Sheol as well as in heaven, so that even there one would not be cut off from his presence. Conscious survival appears also apart from this faith in God. In the strange picture in Is 14: 9 ff, at least kings (not all of whom, surely, would be godly) are shown as speaking. Obviously none of these are subsequent to resurrection.

The New Testament has equally significant teachings. We note first the events of the Transfiguration: Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus. Later Jesus said that God is "God . . . of the living" (Mk 12: 27); and since he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they are living. The parable of Dives and Lazarus (Lk 16: 19–31)—though certainly we need not take all details literally—would have no point whatever if there were no continuing conscious personal existence for both the godly and the ungodly. Jesus said to the penitent thief, "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (Lk 23: 43)—obviously alive and conscious. The preaching to "the spirits in prison" (1 Pet 3: 19) almost surely was before the resurrection of Jesus; and of course those who heard him were conscious. Paul says, "To depart and be with Christ . . . is far better . . . [than] to remain in the flesh" (Phil 1: 23 f). This is important testimony to the distinction between the body and the personal self as well as to the continuation of the latter in conscious fellowship with Christ. This clearly points to immediate experience after death, not to a future resurrection situation; so also all these references. But none of them exclude or contradict a future resurrection, with an enriching transformation for the godly.

It is understandable that there is some opposition to using the word "immortality." This is partly because it has been contaminated by Greek philosophic speculations. Also, God "alone has immortality" (1 Tim 6: 16).

This, however, is to be understood as meaning that deathlessness is inherent only in God. But God can bestow this on man. In the New Testament this endowment is mentioned specifically only for Christians: "When the mortal puts on immortality . . . death is swallowed up in victory . . . God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15: 54, 57; cf also 2 Tim 1: 10). It seems that here immortality has practically the same rich significance as eternal life—that is, not merely existence beyond this earthly life, but the blessed condition promised to those who are in Christ by faith. It is not said whether this bestowal of immortality is at resurrection or previously.

On the whole, even though the word "immortality" has some New Testament use, it is probably better to avoid the difficulties and possible ambiguities that it raises (either of mere philosophical humanism or of the glorious eternal life and of timing) by using some expression (as partly suggested already) such as "the continued conscious existence of the personal self under the power of God." The Bible has no specific statement of how the ungodly are caused to continue existing—it just shows the fact, as has been noted above with reference to Dives, the kings in Is 14, and the spirits in prison; the term "immortality" is not applied to them.

There is no evidence that any subhuman creature has any life beyond this earthly life in the flesh. If one would assume that some animals do, it would be practically impossible to find a reasonable line of demarcation between those that do and those that do not. But it seems that all human beings have this capacity; and so it is to be seen as being included in the divine image.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS

The basic message in the creation story is echoed several times in the Bible. The divine image is mentioned twice more in Genesis—in 5: 1 and 9: 6. Probably Job 32: 8 refers to it. It is specifically stated in 1 Cor 11: 7 and Jas 3: 9. Most special is Ps 8. Someone has said that this is Gen 1 set to music—even though the distinctive words are not used.

These passages show that the divine image is a continuing reality and permanent value for mankind. There have been some attempts to limit it to the original creation and to claim that it was lost when man fell into sin—especially by those holding the view (rejected above) that it meant moral perfection. But both New Testament statements just mentioned indicate it as a present fact. Men *have* the divine image—they did not only previously have it. The essence of the divine image was not lost in the fall. It was damaged but not destroyed—defaced but not effaced. All the various

powers and functions were, indeed, weakened and perverted—spiritual, moral, psychological. But the basic reality remains, with the various capacities that make human life uniquely significant.

The divine image is the foundation of the whole religious philosophy about man. Herein lies the distinctive quality of human life. It is the basis of man's dignity and value, and also of his responsibility. It is this that both enables man to receive spiritual salvation and makes him worth saving. It makes his life here meaningful, and makes possible the outreach to continued and increased significance beyond this life.

The ethical powers that have been noted are essential for any real morality. This requires that choices of action can be made by exercising a rational and responsible volition. The person must not be a victim of determinism, with actions predetermined and completely controlled by inheritance, by previous experiences, by any material or psychic mechanism of absolute causation, or by any other compulsive force. Neither may a person be of such a nature that there would simply be blind, erratic, irresponsible, arbitrary actions according to mere whim or impulse or caprice, without intelligent purpose or motivation and regardless of previously established and existing character. Thus the whole range of psychical powers, and their specialized application in conscience, are needed. Also, for the higher levels of good, both the relationship with God and the social outlook are necessary. Thus extensive areas of the divine image are important for the proper moral functioning.

As this divinely given dignity of human nature is more clearly recognized, it becomes a valuable stimulus both to nobler effort and worthier living by the individual and to finer relations with others.