

### The Fall, Sin, and its Effects.

Reflecting on my father's sudden death a few years ago, I spoke in his eulogy that, "we are all created in the image of God, and when another who bears that image is taken from us, we ache." Every person attending that funeral, given the opportunity, could bear testimony to those things about their now deceased friend or relative that bore the distinct stamp of God's image. Whether kind deeds to people, creativity and prudence in business, or his way with his wife he, like all mankind, displayed in personal relationship some of the characteristics of his creator, which provoke people to wonder. Yet it is in the course of these "person" relationships that the effects of the fall and sin are immediately and unanimously manifest – first towards God, then towards other humans as an expression and consequence of the that first transgression. "Since these other human beings belong to their Creator, sinful movements against them or away from them offend God as well."<sup>1</sup>

In the Grimm fairly tale classic Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, the evil queen took regular delight in asking the looking glass, "who is the fairest of them all?" To her great delight the mirror regularly replied that indeed *she* was - until Snow White came along. The Queen's consternation upon discovery of one considered fairer than she was deadly, as the story goes. Of course there is no evil in God, but the illustration is helpful. God is pleased to look upon those who bear His image and have His own beauty and glory reflected back to Him. Sin is the mirror (man) telling God there is another more fair. Hence when the eyes of God go "to and fro upon the earth", He observes merely an

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<sup>1</sup> Plantinga, Cornelius Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*, p. 153

obscured reflection of Himself. His likeness is faded in man as result of the fall. In his *Systematic Theology*, Wayne Grudem delineates aspects of God - likeness in man including moral, spiritual, physical, and relational qualities. Each of these evidences distortion of the design intent for the manifestation of God's own glory and declaration of His unsurpassed worth. And if Ireneaus and those who share his understanding of God's design intent<sup>2</sup> are correct, then man has also befriended that evil which God desires man would overcome.

In the Old Testament the Spirit testifies that "each man did what was right in his own eyes". This moral state of affairs persists today (at least in western nations) as "moral relativism". The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil remains undigested. Men call evil good and good evil and emotional confusion supplants moral clarity. How else can we explain the tragedy of abortion? The traumatic stress of an unintended pregnancy engenders legislation that allows for the killing of an innocent human being. Men and women lie and cheat for ill perceived advantage. To get what one wants is more important than honesty and good reputation. Man gains the world and loses his soul. In the process, political, social and cultural factions vehemently oppose one another for status and priority, deferring to some moral grounding that their very positions deny exists. In this process we dishonor God and seek to imprint our own image on our opponents. Furthermore, other persons become a means to an end in a fractured society that esteems functionalism over being.

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<sup>2</sup> In part, the Irenaean view posits that God created humans in such a way that they would emotionally and spiritually mature through experience, and eventually overcome. In order to love good rather than evil, evil

Intended distinctions are blurred in the fallen world of sinful humanity. When God created mankind he created "them" male and female, with roles specific to each gender. Not only have men and women neglected these God ordained responsibilities; they have become altogether corrupt in the process. Hence we observe men neglecting to shepherd their families, and women usurping authority, both assuming roles detrimental to the development of godly men and women. Men have abandoned some very important posts in the lives of boys, and very often women are seen leading young male sports teams and scouting clubs organized by societies to help develop male characteristics critical for the survival of those societies. Homosexuality and other sexual anomalies thrive in this blurred reality, along with chauvinism and feminism.

Also, the complementary nature of these essentially different male and female beings attests to the unity among persons that God intended despite the obvious polarity of their individual constitutions. If two such opposites could "be one flesh" then surely the differences in skin color and other diversities could dwell together in "shalom." Yet observe the historical reality. Whites enslaved blacks. Blacks enslaved other blacks. Cultures clash in endless and deliberate acts intended to exalt one over another. Racism obtains rather than harmony. To compensate for the loss that racism nets, groups introduce policies and bring to bear the force of government to promote a reverse racism, the fruit of which, intended or otherwise, finds the "n word" in rap music inconsequential, while (rightly) condemning it among non blacks.

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is necessary. The only man that would accomplish this is Jesus, the second Adam, who would bring about that same state for all the redeemed through the atonement and reconciliation.

Humanity's journey away from God creates a spiritual void that idols cannot fill. From new age to neo paganism, to atheism and indifference, men and women seek to develop the God implanted spirit, unaided and misguided, spiraling ever downward. Materialism and creature worship are sown; reaping the reward of depraved minds and dishonored bodies while men "suppress the truth in unrighteousness." A.W. Tozer wrote, "our woes began when God was forced out of His central shrine and things were allowed to enter. Within the human heart, things have taken over...for God is crowned there no longer, but there in the moral dust, stubborn and aggressive usurpers fight among themselves for first place on the throne." Man loses his exceeding great reward, recovered only by the grace of God. And those false professors of Christ, and sometimes those true possessors, do their best to keep up their "*image of the image of God.*"<sup>3</sup>

Men and women not only abuse themselves and one another in this sin sick world, but that which God gave man dominion over suffers as well, as result of our poor stewardship. From pet owner to zookeeper to food processor, animals are often neglected and abused. In yet another example of the epidemic nature of sin, extremists assign human status to animals, conferring value on them to the detriment of fellow humans. Hence, Peter Singer of Princeton University concedes that a happy cow is inherently more worthy than a severely retarded two week old newborn. "People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals" (PETA) sponsors domestic eco-terrorist groups that blow up SUV's in a show of false righteousness. Developers despoil and deforest, while keepers of the spotted owl and river fish close down critical logging industries and deny

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<sup>3</sup> Plantinga, p. 112

farmers precious water. Much of this is done not for any higher purpose, but as positioning for power.

On a very busy road in a local city, a small shop has for display and sale a number of seasonal costumes and paraphernalia related to Halloween. In a strange paradox, classical music plays over the speaker systems while macabre masks and manufactured mutilated bodies, complete with blood and the implements that drew it, decorate the outlet. What a striking reminder of the innate abilities in man to exalt His Creator, used for common and unholy purposes. And the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against this ungodliness and unrighteousness in man. Sin begets more sin. Error begets greater error still. Men excuse and accuse one another in disharmonious climax. Fallen humanity is naked and ashamed, and very busy fashioning for itself fig leaves of self-deception.

The fall is anti-creation.<sup>4</sup> Addiction, idolatry, rape, murder, incest, envy, malice, perversion (known in scripture as the “deeds of the flesh”) – all evoke scenes of the formless void that was the early creation. Sin is incarnate godlessness. There is no place and no person, save Jesus Christ<sup>5</sup>, where its effects are not pronounced. So severe is sin that it required God the Son, “obedient unto death, even death upon a cross”, to fully realize the image of God in man. *Soli Deo Gloria*

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<sup>4</sup> See Plantinga, pp. 29-33 for a full exposition of this, his concept.

<sup>5</sup> Jesus came to abolish the works of the devil and confronted evil each moment, but was without sin.