

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

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## Thinking Biblically Part 4: Man as the Image of God

By John W. Robbins

*Editor's note: The content of this Review is taken from lecture 5 of Dr. John W. Robbins series on Thinking Biblically, "Man as the Image of God." It has been transcribed and edited for print. Thinking Biblically: A Challenge to Christians will be published in book form in 2021 Lord willing.*

### The Creation of Man

We leave the doctrine of God and move on to the doctrine of man as the image of God. We begin by surveying *Genesis* 1:1-25.

Verses 1-3:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. *And God said*, Let there be light: and there was light.

Verse 6:

*And God said*, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

Verse 9:

*And God said*, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.

These verses contain the phrase *And* [Then in NKJV] *God said*. The verses between these contain the phrase *God called*. Not only did God *create* by his Word, he also *named* his creations. The notion that words are inadequate is silly. Words are

entirely sufficient for God to create the universe, to name his creations, and to reveal truth.

Verse 11:

*And God said*, Let the earth bring forth grass....

Verse 14:

*And God said*, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven....

Verse 20:

*And God said*, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth....

Verse 24:

*And God said*, Let the earth bring forth the living creature....

Finally, we arrive at the account of the creation of man in verses 26-27:

*And God said*, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

### The Basis of Civil Government

That is the doctrine of the creation of man. One of the very practical implications of this doctrine is in *Genesis* 9:6 NKJV. "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of

God He made man.” This idea that man is the image of God is the basis of civil government and in this specific case, of capital punishment. An attack on man is implicitly an attack on God. One who sheds another man’s blood is impugning God, and the punishment is death.

### **The Image of God**

Now we will look at several more verses that will help us to determine what constitutes the image of God. *Genesis 2:7*, “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.”

*Job 32:8*, “But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.”

*Job 33:4* repeats this idea, “The spirit of God hath made me, And the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.”

*Proverbs 20:27 NKJV*, “The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the inner depths of his heart.”

This is the same idea we have found in *John 1* where Christ is the light that lights every man. The simple statement in *Genesis* is that man is created in God’s image. The Roman Catholic Church-State has invented a distinction between the terms *image* and *likeness*. We will not study their view other than to mention it. The terms *image* and *likeness* are used interchangeably, and in *Genesis 1:26* both terms are used for emphasis.

What we need to ask is, *What exactly is this image?* Different theologians have given different answers to this question. Many theologians have thought that it is man’s body, or some aspect of his body. Man has a prehensile thumb—his thumb can touch the tips of the other fingers of the same hand—a rather unique ability among God’s creatures. Some theologians have suggested that the image is things like this. Some have suggested that the image consists in man’s ability to walk upright.

One of Karl Barth’s views is that sex is the image of God because it says in *Genesis 1:27 NKJV*, “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” So, Barth jumps to the conclusion that the image of God is actually sex. All of these views are wrong and for the same reason. God does not have a

body, therefore the body or any aspect of it cannot be the image of God. The image has to be something else, and we have seen in the verses we have quoted, what that something else is.

One other view that the Reformed theologian Louis Berkhof (1873–1957), and some Reconstructionists have held is that the image is dominion. After all, the LORD God has dominion over the entire universe, and man as his image has dominion over the Earth. They say the image is dominion. To see what is wrong with that idea we must look at the *Genesis 1:26-28 NKJV* with the question in mind, Is the image dominion? Beginning with verses 26 and 27, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” It certainly mentions dominion, but it also mentions sex as Karl Barth pointed out. So we continue reading in verse 28, “Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” The answer is in verse 28. Man is already created, and he is already the image, and this is before he is given dominion. He is given dominion because he is the image already. He does not become the image as a result of being given dominion. The dominion cannot be the image.

### **The Status and Dignity of Man**

Now that we have eliminated all aspects of the body as the image, and the function of dominion as Berkhof suggests, there is not much else. We are left with the soul or the mind, and we will look at a few more verses in this regard. We begin with *Psalms 8*:

O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies, that thou mightiest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and

the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

There is a common misunderstanding of this passage that the Psalmist is putting down man, but that is not his intention at all. Some people understand verse 3 to mean that the Psalmist is comparing puny man to the wonderful heavens, but that is not the case. He is saying the exact opposite here. He is saying, *I have considered Your wonderful heavens, the moon and the stars, the work of Your fingers, but You have made man a little lower than the angels.* Far from saying that man is puny, the Psalmist is saying that man is greater than all these other things. The word for angels here is *elohim*. This is very powerful. He is saying, You have made man a little lower than God. You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor, and all those things are under his dominion.

Here are Shakespeare's sentiments on man from *Hamlet*: "What a piece of work is a man! How noble in Reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an Angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! and yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust?" (Act 2, Scene 2, lines 285-300). Shakespeare likens man to an angel.

Pavlov was a scientist in pre-communist Russia. Perhaps you are familiar with his experiments with dogs. Pavlov likens man to a dog. We can train dogs to salivate when we ring a bell, and we can do the same thing with human beings. The whole philosophy of behaviorism, which has been so influential since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, likens man to a dog or even a machine. B. F. Skinner invented what is called the Skinner Box and put his own daughter

in it as a way of controlling her conditioning. They do this because they deny the image of God in man.

### **Man's Dignity Consists in Thought**

We now consider some quotes from the French mathematician, physicist, and theologian Blaise Pascal (1623-1662). The existentialists wrongly claim that he was one of their intellectual leaders. Here is what he has to say about man, "It is not in space that I must seek my human dignity, but in the ordering of my thought. It will do me no good to own land. Through space the universe grasps me and swallows me up like a speck; through thought I grasp the universe" (*Pensées*, VI:348 [Variant Translation]).

If you are going to compare the size of man with the universe, you are a speck. We know that far better than Pascal did in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is only in the last hundred years or so that people have started to grasp the immensity of the universe. Pascal says, "Through space the universe grasps me and swallows me up like a speck. Through thought, I grasp the universe." He continues, "Man's greatness comes from knowing he is wretched: a tree does not know it is wretched. Thus, it is wretched to know that one is wretched, but there is greatness in knowing one is wretched" (*Pensées*, 114).

Here is perhaps one of Pascal's most famous paragraphs on mankind:

Man is only a reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed. There is no need for the whole universe to take up arms to crush him. A vapor, a drop of water is enough to kill him. But, even if the universe were to crush him, man would still be nobler than his slayer, because he knows that he is dying and the advantage the universe has over him; the universe knows none of this. Thus, all our dignity consists in thought. It is on thought we must depend for our recovery, and not on space and time which we could never fill. Let us then strive to think well; that is the basic principle of morality. (*Pensées*, VI:347)

He says, "All of our dignity consists in thought." Look at man's achievements. When you attend various athletic competitions or watch them on television and see a sprinter run

twenty miles per hour for a few seconds, you think, *Wow! Twenty miles an hour!* Watch a high jumper, and perhaps he will reach eighteen or twenty feet. *Wow! Eighteen feet!* This is insignificant. Ants can jump one hundred times their height. Fleas can jump three hundred times their height. Yet we think it is great when man jumps three times his height. Horses can run thirty to forty miles per hour. Cheetahs can run seventy miles per hour. Yet we are awed when man runs twenty miles per hour. If you compare man's attributes of size, speed, or strength to God's other creations, man is puny indeed. This is why Pascal says that all our dignity consists in thought.

### **Reason Distinguishes Man from the Animals**

Returning to Scripture, look at *Psalms* 32:8-9: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee." This is one of the verses that shows that the difference between man and the animals is understanding. Animals are not made in the image of God. They have no understanding.

*Proverbs* 30:2 states, "Surely I am more stupid than any man, And do not have the understanding of a man" (NKJV).

*Jude* 9, 10 read, "Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!' But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves" (NKJV). The interesting thing here is the phrase, *brute beasts*. In the Greek New Testament, this word *brute* is the Greek word *ἄλογα* meaning *without reason*. The beasts are without reason.

A similar passage is *2 Peter* 2:12: "But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption" (NKJV). The same Greek word for *brute* is there also.

Recall the situation in *Daniel* 4 where Nebuchadnezzar as a punishment from God loses

his understanding. Scripture says he grazes in the field like an animal because he is without understanding. The conclusion that we ought to draw from these verses is that the distinction between man and animals is his reason.

Going back to *John* 1, Christ is the Logos, the Light that lights every man. That is the image. It is not man's body, it is not a function, but the fact that he is rational. The *Confession* and *Catechisms* refer to man as a reasonable and rational soul—a soul able to reason. Animals are souls, but they are not reasonable and rational souls.

### **Man Is the Climax of God's Creation**

We will draw out some more implications from creation before moving on. Referring to *Genesis* 1 and 2, man's creation is the last major event of the creation. It is the climax of creation. Until then, the stage was being set. God was creating the stage and the backdrop and finally the actors appear. God creates Adam and then Eve. Keeping the play metaphor, God wrote the script in eternity. In beginning of *Genesis* 1 he creates the stage and the backdrop. Finally, toward the end of *Genesis* 1 and in *Genesis* 2, God creates the actors. All those things that the Psalmist mentioned, the Heavens with the Moon and stars are backdrop; they are the stage scenery. They are not the show. Today we have people that specialize in studying the backdrop. We call them scientists. They are studying the scenery, and there is no harm in that. That is fine. But if they confuse the scenery with the play, then they do not understand what is going on at all. And as Shakespeare says, "the play's the thing" (*Hamlet*, 2:2). And man is the actor.

In the account of the creation in *Genesis* 1-2, the creation of man is different from the creation of every other thing. God takes special counsel when he creates man. When he creates no other thing does he say, Let us do such and so. It is simply, Let there be light, or Let the waters abound, or Let the earth bring forth. But when we get to the creation of man, the Trinity consults as it were, Let us make man in our image. God takes special counsel in the creation of man. Man alone is described as the image of God.

Man alone is given dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the Earth. But notice that in that

grant of dominion, he is not given dominion over men.

In *Genesis 2* God breathes into man alone. We have already looked at *Job 32:8* and *Job 33:4*. These verses teach that the breath of God gives man life and understanding.

God speaks to man alone. The account of the creation is literal; it is not poetry; it is history. When God created Adam and Eve, he speaks to man and is able to do so because he has already given them the understanding and the language. Language is not something that evolved from the grunts and squeals of animals. Language is a gift of God. God speaks directly to Adam, and Adam speaks directly to God. There is no inadequacy in language. They speak to each other in words. They do not have mystical encounters. They speak to each other just as I speak to you, and just as you speak to someone else. That gift is given primarily for the purpose of speaking with God. It is useful also for the naming of the animals, but it is given primarily for the purpose of speaking to God and especially for understanding what God says.

God makes a covenant with man in the garden. “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’” (*NKJV*). Consider that Adam had never seen death. How does he know what the word *die* means? He knows because that knowledge was innate, given to him by God.

Finally, and the most stupendously of all, a few thousand years later, the Second Person of the Trinity becomes a man. God becomes incarnate, and you have the God-Man Jesus Christ. When you think about it, that is stupendous! The Creator of the universe becomes a man. He does not give up the attributes of deity, he remains God. He is *fully God, fully man*, to use the phrase from the Athanasian Creed. God became man. Nothing could give greater dignity to man than that fact—not only is man the *image* of God, but God himself *became* a man.

Man is the image of God, he does not *have* the image, he *is* the image, and this image is his mind, his rationality, his reason. This eliminates one variety of philosophy immediately. There is a widespread school of thought in philosophy called

Empiricism. Empiricism is the idea that man is born with a blank mind, and he learns everything by observation and sense experience. However, the image of God cannot be a blank mind. If God is omniscient, then the image of God has to be a knowing mind. In fact, there is no other kind of mind, a blank mind is a contradiction in terms. So, this account of creation itself eliminates the majority view in philosophy.

### **Bipartite or Tripartite?**

Still, there have been some discussions among theologians about what exactly man is. Is man a soul and body? Is man a spirit, soul, and body? And so forth. We will look at some passages from the New Testament that contain some of these terms. We begin with *Luke 10:25-28*:

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said to him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

Here the four terms *heart, soul, strength, and mind* are used. In theology the big argument here is whether man is bipartite—soul and body, or tripartite—spirit, soul, and body. Why stop there? Why not say that he is five parts—heart, soul, strength, mind, and body? But it gets worse.

Look at *Matthew 22:37*, “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” Rather than four, Jesus mentions only three in that passage.

Next, look at *Mark 12:30*, “And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.” In Mark’s account here we are back to four. Now go down to verse 33, “And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” We are back to four and have a new

term introduced, the *understanding*. You end up with at least six Greek words here, but, to my knowledge, no one suggests that man is six different parts. Most theologians admit that these various terms are put there for emphasis and are used synonymously. So, they reduce the parts to either: spirit, soul, and body; soul and body; or spirit and body.

What does the account in *Genesis* say the elements are? The elements are the dust of the ground and the breath of God. The dust being man's body, and the breath being the mind or the man himself. This particular viewpoint is carried throughout Scripture in a majority of passages. For example, *Matthew 10:28* says *soul and body*: "And fear not them which kill the *body* but are not able to kill the *soul*: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both *soul and body* in hell."

*Isaiah 10:18* also mentions *soul and body*: "And it will consume the glory of his forest and of his fruitful field, Both *soul and body*; And they will be as when a sick man wastes away" (NKJV).

*Daniel 7:15* says *my spirit within my body*: "I, Daniel, was grieved in *my spirit within my body*, and the visions of my head troubled me" (NKJV).

*Ecclesiastes 12:7* says *the dust and the spirit*: "Then *the dust* will return to the earth as it was, And *the spirit* will return to God who gave it" (NKJV). We have to conclude from passages such as these that man is the soul and that the words *soul* and *spirit* and *mind* and *heart* are used synonymously. Whereas the body is the outward, the visible; all of those terms refer to the invisible, the inner man.

### Man Is Not His Body

Look at the account of the crucifixion in *Luke 23:39-43* where Jesus speaks to the penitent thief being crucified alongside him:

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward for our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus

said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Although the body of that man and the body of Christ remained on Earth that day, on that same day, Christ and the thief were in Paradise.

Next, we will look at *2 Peter 1:12-14*. In verse 12, notice the words, *reason, remind, know, and truth*. Peter says, "For this *reason* I will not be negligent to *remind* you always of these things, though you *know* and are established in the present *truth*" (NKJV). Notice how thoroughly intellectual this verse is. We are so used to reading the Bible that we gloss over these things. Continuing in verses 12-13, "Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this *tent*, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my *tent*, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me." What is his tent? His tent is his body. He refers to it as a tent. Peter is not his body. Peter is not his tent. He is going to put off his tent, and he is going to be clothed with a mansion as compared to a tent. So, Peter is not the body, and the image is not the body. Man is the image, and the image is the mind.

Next, look at *1 Thessalonians 4:3-5*, and maybe now verse 4 will suggest something new to you. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lusts of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God." Here body is referred to as a vessel. It is a vessel in which a person lives. Your body is a vessel, a tent, but you are not your body.

Next, we will look at *2 Corinthians 12:1-4*:

It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. (NKJV)

This man was caught up into paradise, and Paul does not know whether he was in his body or out of his body. If man is the body as some people think, then Paul's language here does not make any sense.

### **Blurring the Distinction between Man and Animals**

The view that the image of God is man's rationality has been denied by many people. I have mentioned Pavlov and Darwin. Here is a quote from Darwin's *Descent of Man*, "My object in this chapter is solely to show that there is no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties."<sup>1</sup>

It is on the basis of such a position that you have the obsession with making chimps talk and with saying that horses can calculate, and that they can memorize the alphabet and spell words. This is because, as Darwin holds, there is no fundamental difference between them and man in their mental faculties.

Peter Singer is an Australian philosopher and Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University. His position is that animals are virtually indistinguishable from men, and they should enjoy the same rights that men do.

One of the early proponents of this view is Carl Sagan, the astronomer. He made a remark at one point which he did not intend to be facetious but is still rather funny. He said, "They have certainly committed no crimes. I do not claim to have the answer, but I think it is certainly worthwhile to raise the question: Why, exactly, all over the civilized world, in virtually every major city, are apes in prison?"<sup>2</sup> He is referring to zoos, of course. He thinks that apes are such highly evolved animals that to put them in zoos is to put them in prison. Obviously, they have done nothing wrong, so we ought to liberate the apes. I do not know if an ape liberation movement started at Princeton after that, or if one is going on now. That may be the case.

Not only has this blurring of the distinction between man and animals led to the sort of nonsense that elevates animals to the status of man,

but it has worked the other way as well, demoting man to the status of animals. You see this in spades in the public school system. Not only do we have animal rights being advocated on one side, but now we regard human beings as somewhat sophisticated animals, and we should not expect humans to behave differently from animals. So, you have sexual promiscuity, drug use, crime, and more. That is to be expected if humans are animals. So, what if they behave like animals? What do you expect?

These are some of the implications of this blurring. On the one hand, we have people like Peter Singer who want to treat animals like human beings. On the other hand, we have educators who want to treat human beings like animals. Of course, everything is set up for a totalitarian government, when you arrive at such a position. If the basis of civil government is man being God's image bearer as we saw in *Genesis* 9:6, and if that image is denied, then civil governments are free to do whatever they want with human beings. Hitler and the Nazis worked this out very thoroughly, as did Stalin, Mao, and the Communists.

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### **Brief Book Review**

*Exactly Backwards: A Proposed Twofold Corrective to the Calvary Chapel Distinctives* by Stephen M. Cunha, The Chrysostom Institute, 2020, 97 pages, \$9.95, available from [www.chrysostominstitute.org](http://www.chrysostominstitute.org). Reviewed by Thomas W. Juodaitis.

Stephen M. Cunha, author of *The Emperor Has No Clothes: Richard B. Gaffin Jr's Doctrine of Justification* (The Trinity Foundation, 2008) has written a new book in which he proposes a twofold corrective to the Calvary Chapel Distinctives, specifically teaching that believ-ing "that a pretribulational, premillennial understanding of the end times is essential Christian doctrine and that at least a portion of the so-called *Five Points of Calvinism* (TULIP) is unbiblical and unnecessarily divisive" (back cover).

*Exactly Backwards* contains a Preface, Introduction, and six chapters, the last three of which are a new translation of the Second, Third, and Fourth Heads of Doctrine of the Canons of the Synod of Dort, and selected quotations related to Eschatology (last

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, Volume I 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 35.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Sagan, *The Dragons of Eden: Speculations on the Evolution of Human Intelligence*, 1977, 57.

things) and Soteriology (salvation). The chapters include: 1. Concerning Calvary Chapel's Position on the End Times; 2. Concerning Calvary Chapel's Position on Protestant Reformed Soteriology; 3. The Proposed Twofold Corrective; 4. The Doctrines of Grace Rejected (Perhaps Unwittingly) by Calvary Chapel; 5. Selected Quotations Related to Eschatology; and 6. Selected Quotation Related to Soteriology. The following are select portions from the Preface and Introduction to whet the reader's appetite:

This book is unapologetically theological and written with the conviction that the truth as revealed by God in Scripture is important for both the individual believer and the church. Even if we don't always understand why certain teachings of Scripture are important to the life of the believer, it is important to diligently study all of God's Word and the teaching contained therein. The closer we conform our thinking to the teaching revealed in the whole of Scripture, the stronger our relationship with God will grow and the better we will be able to glorify and honor Him individually and corporately. ...

The aim of this book is therefore to provide a corrective to Smith's problematic teaching so that Calvary Chapel can be even more of a blessing to others and more honoring to the Lord than it is today. Whether or not one agrees with all of the book's conclusions, it is my hope that it causes those who read it to think more carefully, in the light of Scripture, about the doctrines treated. At a minimum, I hope that it helps provide the reader with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (viii-ix) ...

There is much that is commendable about Calvary Chapel—self-identified as a *Movement* or as a fellowship of evangelical Protestant churches—which originally grew out of the ministry of Pastor Chuck Smith (1927-2013) in Costa Mesa, California. There are an estimated 1,800+ Calvary Chapel churches worldwide today. They are known for being strongly committed to the inspiration, authority, and inerrancy of Scripture, taking the command to share the Gospel with the lost very seriously, preaching consecutively through the Bible so that all of God's Word is expounded to the saints (when all 66 books of the Bible have been preached through, the minister begins again in Genesis), a belief in the continuance of the gifts of the Spirit, and a lively, joyful worship. They are also known for welcoming anyone, including, and maybe even especially, those whom society and

traditional denominations would consider to be the lowest of the low, to hear the good news of Jesus Christ's sacrificial, atoning death available to completely wipe away the guilt of sin for anyone who comes to Him through faith. Perhaps this latter attribute had its foundation in Chuck Smith's willingness, in the late 1960s and early 1970s to reach souls in the hippie movement, many of whom were heavy users of drugs, with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There tends to be, consequently, a balance in Calvary Chapel worship services between a healthy informality, in terms of things like how people dress and individual worship expression, and a deep, uncompromising reverence for God's Word. (1-2) ...

The most definitive statement of Calvary Chapel's foundational principles appears to be the book written by Chuck Smith entitled *Calvary Chapel Distinctives*.... As can be anticipated by so much that is good about Calvary Chapel, there is a great deal to be found in this little book. Smith offers Biblically sound advised mixed with what should be common sense, and much that is refreshing to hear in this modern day and age.... However, the two distinctives that are problematic can be found in the chapters entitled respectively, "The Rapture of the Church" and "Striking the Balance."

More particularly, Smith believes that in the area of Eschatology...the doctrinal consensus on the teaching of Scripture is so clear that there can be no room in the Christian ministry for a man who holds any view other than that of a rapture of believers out of this world, followed by a short, but intense Tribulation period (to be experience by those who are not raptured), and then a Millennium, all prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. In addition, according to Smith, this pretribulational, premillennial understanding is critical for properly conducting ministry. That is, it is an essential of the Christian faith. On the other hand, Smith asserts that what the Bible teaches regarding whether or not God is ultimately Sovereign in the salvation of each soul that is saved is neither clear, nor an essential of the faith. Otherwise, reasons Smith, why would there be so much disagreement on this topic within the church—it is interesting that this same line of reasoning is not employed with respect to Eschatology. I would argue that *here* Smith has things precisely backwards. (4-6)

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