

Tracking Who God Created Us to Be

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Introduction: The Creation Riddle

On the one hand, God creates us collectively in God's image, suggesting our divinity and immortality.¹ On the other hand, God creates us individually, forming us from the dust of the ground, affirming our finitude and temporality.² The accounts are mutually contradictory, casting doubt on their veracity. But God has spoken, the gauntlet thrown down, challenging the mettle of man.

Dismissal of the divergence in the two creation accounts is a fatal mistake for our understanding. They are the portal for our biblical* and personal understandings. They establish our duality as spirit and flesh and account for Christ, the Son of man, indwelling us.³

Some argue our original divinity and perfection were lost, by free will and human depravity,⁴ exiling us from who God created us to be. Unreconciled, we are cut off from the tree of life and cast out of the Garden of Eden in an event known as "The Fall."⁵ Consequently, our lives on earth are understood to be in exile, where we hope to regain the key to heaven and the

*Note: This paper follows Bible passages from the KJV.

¹ "So God created man in his own image...male and female created he them." Gen 1:27

² "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground...and man became a living soul." Gen 2:7

³ "I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity" Jn 17:23

⁴ See John Calvin's concept of Total Depravity.

⁵ "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden...a flaming sword...to keep the way of the tree of life." Gen 3:24

tree of life we lost by not following God's guidance in The Garden. We argue this is God's plan.

Twice Born: Humanity's Spiritual and Physical Births

In the beginning, on the sixth day, "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."⁶ Contrariwise, in the following chapter, humanity is formed generationally on earth from the dust of the ground.⁷ Reconciliation of the two accounts is the key to interpreting not only the Bible creation narrative but also the purpose of our life on earth.

Humanity's primordial creation in the beginning is the begetting of our spirit dimension, even Christ in us, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature."⁸ Humanity's subsequent creation as individual souls occurs when the LORD⁹ God breathes into us the breath of life:¹⁰ the creation of our personal physical and psychic dimensions. However, as exemplified by Adam and Eve, we fall short of reconciling our spirit dimension with our self-serving psychic nature, and we no longer have consciousness of the Son of man in us—whereby we have eternal life. And, as foretold by God, we die¹¹ to our birthright and forfeit our key to heaven and lose access to the tree of life.¹²

⁶ Gen 1:26 and John 1:1

⁷ "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground" Gen 2:7

⁸ Col 1:15 and John 1:4

⁹ Translation for "Yahweh" in KJV is spelled with all capital letters.

¹⁰ Gen 2:7

¹¹ "But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Gen 2:17

¹² "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" Jn 3:13

The Fall

Adam and Eve justify their own desires and set aside God's guidance in what has come to be known as "The Fall."¹³ The abruptness of our fall, our collapse from being "very good," to having creation "cursed" for our sake occurs in short order for the reader.

Incredulous, we are puzzled over God's apparent lack of foresight and inauspicious Grand Plan (Gen 3:17-19). The narrative tilts to evidence humanity going awry, being cut off from the tree of life, and, what we thought would be our glory,¹⁴ becomes our condemnation. Consequently, we, by our own inclinations and efforts, fail to become the image God has for each of us.¹⁵ What is achieved is humanity without divinity while acquainting us with our mortal selves.

Rather than instilling obedience to God in us, God has allowed us to first know ourselves individually, enabling us to come to desire and love God. When we are ready to freely lay down "our" life,¹⁶ God redeems the plan he has for each of us through resurrecting the mind of Christ in us, even the Son of man. Thereby, contrary to appearances, "The Fall" is for our benefit, not our demise.

Humanity's Fall As God's Grace

"The Fall" is the leitmotif by which God exercises the Grand Plan for our creation. Initially, it is the loss of our awareness of being with God: a spiritual death that also promises spiritual resurrection, like Christ's crucifixion, even the coming to be of Christ, the Son of Man, in us.

¹³ Gen 3:1-24

¹⁴ "...ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" Genesis 3:5

¹⁵ "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" Romans 3:23

¹⁶ "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Romans 6:6

With free will we are able to develop both our self-understanding and our love for God. Without developing the requisite love for God,¹⁷ we fall short of being able to lay down our mortal lives, even to be reborn to our first birth: the Son of man, Christ in us.¹⁸

“For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”
Romans 8:20-21

As flawed mortals, our lives on earth fall short of divine understanding. In due time, God enables us to hear Christ in us, our first creation, whose rebirth in us we seek,¹⁹ even the raising up of the Son of man, that we may have the mind of Christ.²⁰

To know ourselves as God created us to be, in God’s image, requires us to lay down the mind of our mortal “observer” self—to repent—that we may be reborn to the mind of Christ, even to know the kingdom of God within us,²¹ to esteem God’s creation, and our creation as God’s creation, and to no longer see with just mortal eyes and a mortal mind. It is “the pearl of great price.” (Matt 13:45-46)

Thus, by not instilling obedience to God in humanity and allowing free will, God has enabled us to come to know,

¹⁷ “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” Deuteronomy 6:5, *et al.*

¹⁸ “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed...” Romans 6:6; *et al.*

¹⁹ “Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature...” Colossians 1:15

²⁰ “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”
Philippians 2:5

²¹ “...for behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” Luke 17:21

develop, and explore our individual inclinations and character, both with and without God. Consequentially, “The Fall” enables us not only to know the self-centered side of our individuality in our separation from God, but also to appreciate the Christ-centered side of God in us through salvation, the rebirth of the Son of man in us.

V. Humanity’s Fallen Status

We are brought to sin that we might know sin, repudiate sin, and seek salvation, even to embody God’s guidance for us: our image in God’s image—Christ in us.²² We may walk a mile, but the mile we walk is in the shoes of a mortal, not our own shoes. Consequently, when we know ourselves as mortals we see with carnal minds, we do not see with the mind of Christ, which God created in us when we were primordially created in God’s image.²³

In the Gospel of John, Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews, comes to Jesus at night to question him privately. Before hearing a question, Jesus proclaims to him, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Incredulous, Nicodemus searches haplessly through mental images for the possibility of a physical rebirth.²⁴ Many may look to a moral rebirth through repentance, or the washing away of sins through baptism, but the rebirth of which Jesus speaks, Jesus answers himself: it is the rebirth of the primordial Son of man—the rebirth of Christ in us.

²² “And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. Romans 8:10.

²³ “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” Phil 2:5

²⁴ Witenton, Michael R, “Nicodemus’ confusion is typically interpreted as genuine misunderstanding—evidence that, despite his best efforts, this poor Pharisee remains in the darkness” John 1:5, 3:19; *The Dissembler of John 3: A Cognitive and Rhetorical Approach to the Characterization of Nicodemus*, *JBL*, 135, no. 1 (2016) p.152; pp. 141-158

Repentance addresses our becoming washed in the water of baptism, even our “dying to the old man,” as the Apostle Paul expresses it,²⁵ that the Son of man may be born anew in us and we may again be in the image of God,²⁶ “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:15).

“And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man...” John 3:13

In addressing Nicodemus’ perceived need to witness the kingdom of God, even to vouchsafe his eternal life, Jesus responds by putting Nicodemus on notice: unless he is born again, he cannot see the kingdom (Jn 3:3). Perhaps crestfallen, given his status as a ruler of the Jews, Pharisee and “a master of Israel” (Jn 3:1, 10), Nicodemus lamely offers objections to the possibility (Jn 3:4).

Jesus replies: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Jn 3:5-6). Nicodemus’ carnal understanding is not in question, his lack of spiritual understanding is. Jesus tells him he must be born again that God’s Spirit may guide him, and lead him in the way he must go.²⁷ Like Jesus in the desert, our minds are tempted by the devil (Mt 4:3-11), we need the Spirit to be in us, having “ears to hear,” that we may be guided by the Spirit and prevail over the devil. (“...thou shalt rule over him.” Gen 4:7)

We need to set aside our self-serving thoughts, which beguiled us in The Garden, to make way for the mind of The Son of

²⁵ “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” Romans 6:6.

²⁶ “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” John 3:6

²⁷ He must be reborn to the Spirit of God: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Mt 5:48

man to be reborn in us to rule our thoughts and will.²⁸ In choosing to “die to the old man,” as the Apostle Paul relates it,²⁹ or our corporeal self, as the parable of the two masters in the Gospel of Matthew relates it (Mt 6:24-34), we need to make way for God to resurrect in us our image-of-God self—the son of man—to lead us in the way God would have us to go, whereby we may become one with the Son of man.

How One May Be Born Again

Without exception, the only way we may see the kingdom of God is by laying down our understanding and will in this life, to make way for God to resurrect our image-of-God self—the Son of man—to re-establish in us eternal life.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”
John 12:24-25

Believing in, and having faith in Jesus Christ is at the top of most of our lists for having everlasting life (John 3:16). However, our belief and faith is suspect without the cross of Christ preparing us for God resurrecting the Son of man in us, the resurrection that necessarily precedes our seeing the kingdom of God and entering the kingdom of heaven.

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
John 3:3

²⁸ “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up;” John 3:14.

²⁹ “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”
Romans 6:6.

In falling short of having the mind of Christ in us, our beliefs and faith remain mortal beliefs and faith—at best biblically inspired, or divinely revealed—but always interpreted and understood with mortal faculties.³⁰ To overcome our natural understanding requires a crucified carnal mind so that God may lift up in us the mind that is in Christ Jesus.³¹ Thus, our corporeal self has Christ’s spirit reborn in us³² for newness of life, even eternal life.

“And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven...even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” John 3:13-15

Humanity’s Born Again Salvation

Like Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac, our “old man” is to be an offering to God.³³ And, like Abraham, it is our faith to carry out the sacrifice that is imperative.³⁴ We are to be, as the Apostle Paul exhorts us, “crucified with Christ,” whereby it is not our “old man” that lives, but Christ that lives in us.³⁵

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 8:1

³⁰ “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that He may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 2:16

³¹ “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...” Philippians 2:5

³² “...our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed...” Romans 6:6.

³³ “And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven...And said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad...for now I know that thou fearest God...” Genesis 22:1-18

³⁴ “And in thy seed shall all the nations be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.” Genesis 22:18

³⁵ Gal 2:20

The imperative to “die to the old man”³⁶ and the injunction to be “born again” are clear: we are to be born again to our primordial creation—Christ in us—that we may become a corporeal embodiment of Christ, even the son of man, who Christ indwells, and to whom we may be reconciled, according to God’s image for us.³⁷

“...but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified...by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Corinthians 6:11

The fruit thereof is a family. God has created for Himself and for us a family. They are the host of believers, the individual members whose personality and faith endear them all to us, a cornucopia of friends and kin.³⁸

Conclusion: Creation a Three-fold Process

The opening Genesis creation account of humanity is two-fold and appears at odds: our creation in Spirit—in the image of God,³⁹ and our being formed in flesh—from the dust of the ground.⁴⁰ A third creation account follows in the Gospel of John—our being born again to the image of God,⁴¹ to whom we had died when we chose to do what was right in our own eyes, like Adam and Eve.⁴²

³⁶ “...they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh...” Galatians 5:24

³⁷ “...he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.” Ephesians 1:4

³⁸ The “Pauline-Augustinian concept of the moral identity and unity of Christ the Head with his redeemed brethren as members of His One Body, through the grace of Adoption.” “Meister Eckhart’s Teaching on the Berth of the Divine Word in the Soul,” Karl G. Kertze; *Tradition*, Vol.15 (1959) p.350, pp.327-363, JSTOR, Org/stable/27830389, page count: 37.

³⁹ Genesis 1:26

⁴⁰ Genesis 2:7

⁴¹ John 3:3

⁴² “...for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Genesis 2:17

The dubiousness the reader may feel by the incongruity of the primordial and generational creation accounts in Genesis is reconciled in the letter from the apostle Paul to the Colossians. Here we see Christ as “the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature.”⁴³ As such, we were able to be in the image of God through having Christ in us until “our fall,” when like Adam and Eve we die to having Christ in us, in order that we may come to see and love God through walking in the shoes of a mortal.⁴⁴

It is through rebirth, reestablishing the primordial “us” in our creation⁴⁵—with Christ in us—that being in God’s image is possible for humanity. Consequently, rather than the creation narrative being just a redaction of diverse accounts depicting our heavenly and earthly creations,⁴⁶ the narrative lays out not only the underpinnings of our creation—God’s divine purpose and will—but also our *raison d’etre*—our reason for being—even the purpose of our lives. Therein, the creation narrative establishes both who we are to be—in God’s image—and how we are to be in God’s image—through embodying Christ in us—even being sons and daughters of God.

⁴³ Colossians 1:15

⁴⁴ Genesis 2:17

⁴⁵ “And God said, Let **us** [emphasis mine] make man in our image” Gen 1:26

⁴⁶ Wegner, Walter, *Creation and Salvation, a Study of Genesis 1 and 2*, Concordia Theological Monthly, 37 no 8 Sep 1966, p.520-542

May our rebirth to the mind and will of the Son of God make way for the son of man in the saints God has established in our creation.