

restoring the image of God

The Image of God & the Adventist Pioneers—3 of 4

KEY TEXT—ROMANS 8:29

HOPE FOR BROKENNESS

When I was a child, my brothers and I spent a lot of time building great structures with Lego. Sometimes I would pick up my building and it would slip out of my hands and smash on the floor. But that was ok. I knew how to put it back together again. I could either look at the instructions that came in the Lego box, or I could remember the design. But what if you don't have any instructions? What if you walk into your room with all the pieces on the floor—but have no idea what the building looked like in the first place. Where would you begin? How would you know how put it back together?

In this sermon we will look at how the image of God is put back together when it is broken. This has great implications for what I prioritise in my life with God, but also incredible implications for what church leaders plan to do as they devote themselves to restoring broken and hurting people.

GOD'S COSMIC PURPOSE FOR RESTORATION

Consider the purpose of the Trinity and thus of the whole of Heaven, followed by the comments of the Adventist pioneers.

Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...

1. **Beginning in Heaven** White: "It is the glory of the gospel that it is founded upon the principles of restoring in the fallen race the divine image by a constant manifestation of benevolence. This work began in the heavenly courts".
2. **Why Jesus came** Ellen White explains that restoring the moral image of God in man was the reason "Christ came from the heavenly courts to this earth."
3. **What Jesus did on earth** WW Prescott adds, Jesus "came and lived here that we might through Him reflect the image of God. This is the very heart of Christianity. Anything contrary to it is not Christianity."
4. **What Jesus is doing now** Haskell wrote "the very purpose of the life of Christ in heaven now is that the image of God may appear in our lives."

SIX COMPONENTS OF RESTORATION

Throughout the writings of the Adventist pioneers, six themes appear critical to restoring the image of God:

1—beholding Jesus

2 Corinthians 3:18—And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate ^a the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory...

White writes, "As the perfection of His character is dwelt upon the mind is renewed, and the soul is re-created in the image of God," noting that "the man who permits the grace of Christ to enter his soul will be reformed in character."

White counselled Brother and Sister F that it is this union with Christ which dramatically changes my negative attitudes, "Christ, enthroned in the soul-temple, will efface that fretful, peevish, unhappy look; and as the cloud of witnesses look upon a man reflecting the image of God, they will realise that his is surrounded by a pleasant atmosphere."

2—indwelling Holy Spirit

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (Romans 8:11)

As early as 1842, Josiah Litch described the restoration of the image of God as accomplished by grace, "which is nothing but the indwelling of the Holy Ghost." Much later, Jones returned to a familiar theme of the mind and the Holy Spirit, when he noted that it is "the working of the Spirit of God upon the mind, transforming the mind and all the life into the image of Christ."

Ellen White ties the indwelling of Christ through the Spirit to character, "Transformation of character is the testimony to the world of an indwelling Christ. The Spirit of God produces a new life in the soul bringing the thoughts and desires into obedience to the will of Christ; and the inward man is renewed in the image of God."

3—surrender

Romans 6:3-4—Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death?

⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

In 1856, Uriah Smith included an article by the Puritan writer John Flavel in the Advent Review and Sabbath Herald where Flavel describes "the renovation of the soul after the image of God, in which *self-dependence* is removed by faith; *self love*, by the love of God; *self will*, by subjection and obedience to the will of God; and *self seeking*, by self denial."

Waggoner connects the significance of being made dust to the divine image:

Man is made from the dust, that he may remember that he is nothing in himself; but also in the image of God, that he may know the infinite possibilities before him -

association with God Himself; of himself having no more might than the dust upon which he walks, but capable of the greatest things through the power and goodness of God. And, strange as it may seem, his capabilities are the greatest when he is most sensible of his weakness. "When I am weak, then am I strong."

4—faith

Without faith, I will never surrender to God. But I am encouraged to do this through the example of Jesus,

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Such surrender to reflect the divine image was not seen to happen by accident because it is "by faith the soul surrender's itself to God." (White) The consequence of faith that brings surrender is that Christ comes to live within, "Christ in man, man justified by faith in him, and faith alone, a faith which has divine power in it . . . a faith that brings all things to him who has it, and restores the image of God in the soul." (AT Jones). Faith is also seen as essential for beholding Jesus.

5—knowledge of God

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the message of the cross [the gospel] is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Waggoner explains, "we are made partakers of the Divine nature, and changed into the image of God, only while we steadfastly behold the glory of God; and this glory we find in His word." This is not an academic knowledge, but practical, for it is "the experimental knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, [that] transforms man into the image of God." (White)

6—obedience

Joshua 1:8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Adventist writers saw that "when man was made in God's image, he [Adam] was the ten commandments in personality", so to be obedient is to return to how humans were designed to live.

But God's law covers a wide area, including health laws. White writes that "much can be done to restore the moral image of God in man, to improve the physical, mental, and moral capabilities. Great changes can be made in the physical system by obeying the laws of God and bringing into the body nothing that defiles."

AGENTS OF RESTORATION

At the beginning we saw how it was the work of Jesus to restore the image of God in humans—from before He came to earth to the present day. As disciples and communities of Jesus, it is our great responsibility to join Jesus in his work as Paul describes to the Galatians, "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you" (Galatians 4:19).

Ellen White writes, "What can be more satisfying to the worker together with God, than to see children and youth receiving the impressions of the Spirit of God in true nobility of character and in the restoration of the moral image of God?" (White) GE Fifield exhorts Christians, "O may he enable us to see him in the human forms around us, so that we can feel just as he does, giving our lives to bring out the image of God in the most defaced form there is around us" with LA Hoopes declaring, "our crown of rejoicing at the appearing of Christ will be to see the souls whom we have been instrumental in saving, reflecting the image of God."

A PERSONAL CHALLENGE

The challenge before us as agents of restoration:

I saw that great changes must be wrought in the hearts and lives of very many before God can work in them by His power for the salvation of others. They must be renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness," noting the supernatural battle that will be provoked, for, "Satan, I saw, will arouse when they in earnest commence the work of reformation in themselves. (Ellen White)

1

LIFE POINT

Heaven is continually working for my restoration

2

LIFE POINT

there are 6 components that are essential for restoration in my life

3

LIFE POINT

my challenge is making changes in my life to be able to work for others

4

LIFE POINT

Satan is continually working to destroy my efforts for restoration