

Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin
(Translation by Henry Beveridge)
Men's Theology Study – November 18, 2020 – 6:30 pm

Book 1 – Chapter 15 – State in Which Man Was Created. The Faculties of the Soul—the Image of God—Free Will—Original Righteousness

Opening Discussion: Is God the author of sin since he created mankind with the ability to sin and not to sin?

Section 1: The importance of considering the condition in which mankind was first created.

- "...we cannot clearly and properly know God unless the knowledge of ourselves be added (p. 104)." What is the twofold aspect of this knowledge of ourselves as it relates to mankind and God?

Section 2: Proofs for the immortality of the soul.

- Mankind was created by God with a body and a soul. The soul is immortal, sometimes called a spirit, and is the more "nobler part."
- What proofs for the immortality of the soul were significant to you?

Section 3: The image of God considered and a refutation of Osiander.

- Osiander held a view similar to the Eastern Orthodox Church's doctrine of theosis. Theosis is the view that Christians experience mystical union with God to the point that they share in the divine nature. However, they maintain that mankind does not merge with God or share in the divine essence. This process culminates in the resurrection of the body.
- What do the terms "image" and "likeness" refer to as it relates to the creation of mankind in the image and likeness of God?

Section 4: The implications of the fall upon the image of God in man.

- Did the fall into sin fully destroy the image of God in man?
- Let's read Romans 5:12-20. What does it mean for Christ to be the second Adam?

Section 5: Being created in the image of God does not mean mankind shares in the essence of divinity.

- “Because it is said that God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life (Gen 2:7), they (i.e. Manichees & Servetus) thought that the soul was a transmission of the substance of God; as if some portion of the boundless divinity had passed into man (p. 108).” If this is true, what does Calvin say is the implication for the immutability and holiness of God?
- Let’s read 2 Corinthians 3:18. How does mankind change into the image of God: transfusion of transformation? What’s the difference?

Section 6: Philosophers can call it what they want, but the soul holds the place of regulating man’s conduct.

- To be human means we are embodied souls. Calvin makes this point by saying, “...the soul is incorporeal...occupies the body as a kind of habitation, not only animating all its parts, and rending the organs fit and useful for their actions, but also holding the first place in regulating the conduct (p. 109).” What evidence is there of this with regard to our vices and consciousness?

Section 7: The two parts of the soul and their functions.

- Calvin says the soul is comprised of two parts: the intellect and the will. What are the functions of each?
- “...the intellect is to us, as it were, the guide and ruler of the soul; that the will always follows its beck, and waits for its decision, in matters of desire (p. 111).” What would be the implication for the Fall if this order were reversed?

Section 8: Adam fell into sin by his own will.

- “God has provided the soul of man with intellect, by which he might discern good from evil, just from unjust, and might know what to follow or to shun...To this he has joined the will, to which choice belongs (p. 111).” Did Adam fall into sin by willful choice?
- In what way is all mankind sons of Adam?
- According to Calvin, why didn’t God create man with a will that could not sin? How does God receive glory in this?