



In the image of God

I recently had a difficult conversation with someone during which I came to the conclusion that we disagreed on almost everything, including what I actually believe. It is one thing to disagree, but another to feel misrepresented! It made me realise how important it is to try to hear what people are actually saying, and not what I expect them to be saying.

Human identity

What was the issue we were talking about? It centred around what it is that makes us human. That is a hard enough question in the scientific world. But in the theological world it isn't much easier. I think that it is something to do with the ability to be in a personal relationship with God. The Bible tells us that humans are the pinnacle of creation; made 'in God's image' and given ownership under God of all his creation. We are designed to live in loving obedience to, in relationship with, and dependence on, God.

Human sexuality

Imagine my surprise to be told that I thought that homosexuals are not in the image of God! I can assure you that that is far from what I believe,

any more than I think that adulterers, or, for that matter, greedy people, or people like myself who sin every day, are not in the image of God. But I am not sure I was heard.

Sex and Jesus

So what DOES define 'the image of God'? Jesus was not married, so we can't say that sexual expression defines it. In fact, he said that 'in heaven there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage' — a shocking statement for our sex-driven world. But God invented sex, and gave it to us—so if heaven is without it, I am sure there will be something even better there! No, if Jesus is truly God, then it must be something else which defines humanity as in God's image.

'Human identity is no longer defined by what one does but rather by what one owns.'

Jimmy Carter

Sin and Jesus

And looking at Jesus, it might be easiest to say what is NOT in God's image: and that is sinfulness. We have come full circle: sin is the barrier between us and God; it breaks the relationship. And just imagine how God feels when he hears us wilfully mis-representing his views! We need to listen carefully to him, and start to enjoy the relationship which will eventually be perfected in heaven.

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