

# On the Biblical Idea of Image and Likeness

## Introductory Remarks

The phrase “image of God” is one we associate automatically with the essence of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. While familiar and having definite appeal, at the same time there remains a certain fuzziness as to what this phrase means. This stems from the fact that the notion of image (as well as likeness) is simply a given discreetly positioned somewhere in the background of our theology and spirituality. Hence such givens are overlooked because we hear them bantered about so often. Why reflect upon something that’s so obvious? What can anyone say which would shed new light? If such tacit acceptance concerning our very own selves made in the divine image has been with us in the background (actually for centuries), a certain inertia builds up which can hinder us from making further inquiry. We accept the notion of image and likeness as requiring no inquiry and move on from there.

A main contribution to this tacit acceptance may be traced to the Church Fathers. They, especially those who have written in Greek, have waxed eloquently about man being made in the divine image. Their profound reflections seem sufficient for all ages as being the last word on the subject. Famously they use the word “icon” or *eikon* which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew *tselem*. For the most part that original term has faded into the background and remains unfamiliar. Yes, we find it discussed in various biblical commentaries, but it had become superseded, at least in Christian circles, by reason of the popularity of the word *eikon*. Much of what’s said about boils down to information...valuable to be sure...but less so when considering the word in the spirit of *lectio divina* as well as apart from its patristic associations. Such is the thrust of the document at hand, of bringing attention to the biblical verses in and by themselves. What’s presented here, of course, is limited and down with full awareness of that reality.

As for *tselem*, perhaps we could bring it more into the forefront not so much as to supersede *eikon* but to appreciate what it has to offer in its own right. Closely associated with image is likeness or *demuth* which also means a model or appearance bearing resemblance to something. It is discussed less but equally as important. *Demuth* seems to be the actualization of *eikon* without which it would remain unrealized.

As for *eikon*, the Church Fathers have gotten much of their inspiration from the writings of Plato and imposed it onto the biblical concept, that being a story all to its own. They saw the Genesis account as a springboard into Plato enabling them to develop insights into our human constitution. Unconsciously or not, their hope was to marry the Jewish and Hellenistic worlds.

Also, from *eikon* it’s a small leap to the notion of a soul or *psuche* which perhaps contributes to some of the reluctance as to further reflection from the *tselem* point of view. In fact we could say that the profound theological reflections upon *eikon* and *psuche* during

the Church's early centuries have pretty much altered the original biblical insight. Now theological reflection became ensconced firmly in the Hellenistic camp instead of being attentive to its Hebrew roots. No doubt the results are magnificent, but something seems to be lacking. Unfortunately a few Church Fathers knew Hebrew, one notable exception being Origen. For them the Septuagint (Greek translation) was in wide circulation and thus had assumed greater authority. Then we have the Syriac tradition, closer to the Hebrew, but getting into that would be too far afield from the thrust of this document.

No one can doubt that the Church Fathers came off with really terrific stuff. However, virtually every one of them became enamored with Plato (and Plotinus) which to some extent colored their biblical point of view. That means these Fathers were more inclined to apply Greek philosophical speculation to their theology. Fine, perhaps, but that's both their limitation and their strength. After all, they were intent at developing a theology for this relatively new religion so it could hold its own when confronting contemporary ideas, etc. Also it must be admitted that a certain anti-Jewishness existed, but that's another story.

So it seems that something has been lost not just in the translation as it's put famously but in the interpretation. *Eikon* has lent itself to a more intellectual understanding and has become somewhat remote from daily life. Yet this term has migrated from a noble, other-worldly representation of sacred images usually associated with the Greek and Russian Orthodox traditions to an unfortunate identity with computer-related icons on a screen. As for those Church Fathers who wrote in Greek, you can almost behold an icon emerging from their texts and become visible to us. If you tie in that other-worldly art form with the influence of Plato's philosophy, we have a potent mix that's hard to shake. It's a wonderful combination of reflections upon *eikon* and pictorial representations that seems to preclude alternate viewpoints.

While it would be fascinating to delve into Plato's influence, clearly that lays outside the scope of the article at hand. In fact, that's such a large field and much has been written on it. Nevertheless, a quick glance at a few key excerpts may be in order. Whether we like it or not, he is at the root of how we do much theological reflection on the subject of being made in the divine image and likeness. For this reason the excerpts are in a section called the Appendix at the end of this document more as a concession.

What's put forth here consists of personal reflections and by no means done in a professional manner. It's based upon reading the Bible in the original languages plus a certain familiarity with the Greek patristic tradition. Central to both is a desire to use these texts in the spirit of *lectio divina*, not for "doing theology" or the like. If such *lectio* doesn't lead to resting in God's presence, the enterprise is useless, a theme mentioned often throughout this home page. Thus trying to balance these two, wonderful as they are, is no mean feat. And so the current article is part of that ongoing drama, nothing more.

So having attempted to present an overall approach, we can look at the biblical excerpts first

with regard to image and second, likeness. What's striking is that given the above-mentioned familiarity of both terms, the biblical references are strikingly sparse. In fact, that turned out to be a major impetus for this article. The Old Testament consists of just four and are the most foundational ones. Admittedly it came somewhat as a surprise when I first drew up the list. "That few?" I said to myself with an embarrassment at being ignorant of so blatant a fact.<sup>1</sup> It became worse, if you will, when I realized that both terms are not present in the Gospels, that Jesus himself never mentioned them. This led to another assumption that could have taken root in Christian tradition, that image and likeness would be more or less secondary elements in the overall biblical picture. You wonder where we'd be now if there were no influences from Greek philosophy. Image and likeness would have been dealt with but not give the attention and sophistication from the patristic tradition.

All scriptural verses are from **The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha (RSV)**, New York, 1973.

## Old Testament

**Genesis 1.26:<sup>2</sup> Then 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 birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."<sup>3</sup>**

Without a doubt, this is the verse *par excellence* when it comes to reflecting upon the biblical notion of image and likeness. It functions like a hinge upon which everything else hangs, no doubt about that. The importance of the introductory words can be overlooked in our excitement, that is, "Then God said." The conjunctive *v-*, usually translates as "and" but here is rendered as "then." That means we have a close, almost immediate, connection with what went before which is the preceding five days of creation. The **RSV** choice of "then" turns out to be a good one because the other days of creation are connected with the conjunctive rendered as "and." "Then" serves to both separate as well as include this special day when man came into being compared with everything else. Besides, it gives a certain anticipation for what's coming next, for by this time after having gone through all creation we have a feeling that God is going to create a being not like any one of them.

That anticipation turns out to be true. What's striking is the way God goes about it,

<sup>1</sup>It turns out there are twenty-one references in total for image and likeness, the Apocrypha included.

<sup>2</sup>With regard to the Genesis passages, some of what's put down here is modified from *Expansions on the Book of Genesis* also on this homepage.

<sup>3</sup>The significance of the conjunctive is noted in many of the "expansion" documents on this homepage, that is, documents dealing with various books of the Bible. It begins just about every biblical verse, frequently goes untranslated, yet needs to be mentioned because it colors the verse which it begins in a way that's lost in translation.

*nahaseh* (i.e., *hasah*) or “Let us make.” This is the common verb meaning to labor or to produce and thus involves planning ahead before putting into action. Here we find it in the first person plural which can give rise to the idea that others (gods?) besides God are involved in the creative process. Interestingly “Let us make” doesn’t apply to other aspects of creation although “let” (etc.) definitely is associated with their coming into being. Only with the creation of man do we have explicit mention of “let us.” Clearly the creative act involves a divine spontaneity which (for example) precludes involvement by any other associate from the Christian point of view as with the Son and/or Holy Spirit. As for man or *‘adam*, it seems as though the Lord reflected upon his previous experiences of “let” and decided to do something special or unlike anything he had brought into being. And so instead of taking the “let us” of this verse as some kind of multiplicity of gods or association of lesser divine beings, “let us make” arises from a singular person.

The uniqueness of this verse consists in something very appealing which can be overlooked but if understood correctly, literally can thrill the reader. On occasion when we express delight at something new and unexpected or when we see the possibility of bringing something into existence for the very first time, we use the first person plural. We say spontaneously either to ourselves or out loud “Let us” instead of “Let me” or “I think I will” (etc.). We blurt out “let us” even if by ourselves. It is as though what we experience is done not in isolation but in the company of other persons. Thus “let us” transcends being alone or being with people, quite unique when you think of it. As far as making something, that’s secondary. Miraculously enough, anything that comes into being takes care of itself independent from our personal wishes and desires. Even children grasp this instinctively when they play and thus pretend. In fact, the act of a “let us” expression usually precedes the act of pretending.

When undertaking a given project we give a lot of care and attention, rightly so. However, in the situation at hand things are different. The implementation of details which otherwise we’d consider necessary are omitted in favor of the sheer joy of uttering “Let us.” This isn’t to flaunt the care required to carry out a task but to inject an element of spontaneity which has immediate roots in God. And this spontaneity has a mysterious way of bringing into existence things which we hadn’t conceived previously.

As for the verse at hand, God has an idea in his head, that is, man. Without being bothered about the details, he decides to go ahead and put one out there. Indeed, the “Let us” element cannot be stressed enough, for from it everything else flows. It has the added benefit of precluding undue reflection in favor of the sheer joy involved. In essence the coming into being of man as well as what preceded him are shrouded in mystery...shrouded insofar as we’re barred from seeing any details. This, of course, is deliberate because we’re so focused on the how and what, not the “Let us.” Once that’s established firmly in our brains, no problem. Sticking within the creative spirit of Genesis, its opening words “In the beginning” provide a larger framework. The very first word is *re’shyth* which also can apply to first fruits as for a sacrifice, so we could say that the whole creative process begun by

God has a sacrificial element present throughout.

Note that within this *re'shyth* (*b-* or 'in' is added or prefaced to it) we have the verb *bara'* for created. Its counterpart in 1.26 with regard to image and likeness is *hasah* which as noted above, commonly means to labor or to produce. On the other hand *bara'* is more along the lines of carving or to form by cutting or even chiseling. Hence it implies the existence of something already out there on which to do this. So we could say that God has a heap of something in front of him described in the very first verse as "earth" or *'erets* but as being "without form and void," the famous *tohu* and *bohu*, wonderful sounding words which are pretty much indeterminate and can't be described. Such is a perfect setting for the very first "Let" from which various beings come forth.

Nothing is out of place with *bara'* working upon *tohu* and *bohu*, nor is there room for mistakes. It all comes off perfect and whole for six days until we come to day seven, the "Let us make" with regard to man. So each biblical day is where God takes his time molding such and such beings. The interval between these days is one of rest...different from yet similar to the rest of day seven. During the intervening nights God regroups, if you will, and starts anew with something different. He knows he has a specific time frame, six days, and orders his *bara'* accordingly.

As for the *bara'* process, the verb *hasah* as to make is a kind of subsidiary of it, tying in nicely with the significance of man or *'adam* so-called by reason of the earth's redness. Thus the carving-out implied by *bara'* comes into clearer focus because *'adam* (*'adamah* means earth) resembles clay meaning it can be formed into whatever form you wish. We can imagine God taking his time while making multiple forms, lining them up on a shelf until he decides which one is best. As for the finished product, the next step is to bring it to life. That's why 2.7 reads "and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." Here the verb isn't the expected one associated with *ruach* or spirit. Instead it's *naphach* which implies exhalation (as opposed to inhalation). There had to be a place of entry for *naphach* into the newly created man, standing there lifeless. At first our modern mouth-to-mouth method of resuscitation makes us think this would be the way to transmit breath by means of inhaling. However, God chose the nostrils (*'aph*), the primary means by which we breathe. And so God makes man exhale in the same way he does which is taken as a sign that truly he is alive which is why he's called a "living being" or a *nephesh* (common word for soul or self). This noun is prefaced with the preposition *l-* or "to" and reads literally "to a being (living)." So with *'adam* having been so molding and enlivened, it's time for God to put him down let him do his thing, all the while keeping an eye on how he moves about, etc. Such an image is quite different from a mechanical one that has permeated our thinking for the past few centuries. In other words, it has nothing to do with God manufacturing man, winding him up and putting him down in order to move about until the spring inside unwinds and he comes to a stop.

The object of what God makes spontaneously is his image and likeness, *tselem* and *demuth*.

The former also means a shadow, and a shadow is an inverse representation of the original lacking color and independent movement. For this reason most biblical references with the exceptions of those few dealing with man made as such are negative, pertaining to the worship of lifeless gods. In fact, *tselem* is a fine way to express the nature of a god: lack of independent life, colorless and disappears once the sun doesn't shine. So if man as *tselem* was able to keep in mind this as part of his nature, he wouldn't stray far from God. Actually a shadow can't stray from its original, but in this case it can. However, once cut loose, it lacks any life.

*Demuth* or likeness also means a model or that which resembles something. As with *tselem*, the first person plural "our" applies to *demuth* meaning it's the product of a spontaneous creative act. *Demuth* seems to follow closely on the heels of *tselem*, almost as being a shadow of a shadow. Thus it requires constant maintenance to retain its own identity else it would be lost or better, cause *tselem* to be lost, that getting into the realm of memory or anamnesis to be discussed shortly.

Interestingly right after God brings 'adam into existence, he puts him in charge of creation, the result of the previous six days of creation. He does so without either consulting or informing him about the responsibility involved. Presumably how to do it is built-in, part and parcel of being made in the divine image and likeness. In other words, man isn't to hang around but to be active with regard to all that came from God's creative hands. So how does this first man... 'adam... respond to *hasah*, keeping with the notion that we've posited it as deriving from the initial *bara'* or carving and cutting of *bara'* which opens the book of Genesis? Does he have some kind of memory, then, of being so carved-out? That's the question of questions.

At this stage of the game man lacks development of his recollective faculty or *anamnesis* which we could take here as being close to the original sense of recalling a previous existence, that previous existence being just a second ago in God himself. More precisely, he has it in full and this fulness consists only in the divine *hasah*. Getting more precise, he has memory of being made in (*b-*) God's image (*tselem*) and according to (*k-*) God's likeness (*demuth*). Thus he has both a distinction between "in" and "according to" which aren't separate from each other but work together. The former is something man is branded with (*b-*), if you will, and cannot alter even if wishes; the latter is something he puts into action (*k-*), and that's subject to change. By reason of being freshly minted, the first man exists within the space and time yet isn't subject to its vicissitudes. The same could be said of someone even now despite what we see and hear all around it, albeit in seminal form.

So when you come down to it, what else could this first man have memory of? From now on 'adam goes about his business of having domination over creation. If we could get inside his mind, this means he applies the same *hasah* which had been done to him on to creation. When he does this, automatically he's reminded—has memories inserted into his faculty of *anamnesis*—of the days of creation which had preceded him. Not that he replicates the six



days in their fullness but can apply what God had done in any or all now in miniature, this being described in terms of tilling the ground of the garden (cf. Gen 2.5). Because God is involved, cosmic or small–macro or micro–is incidental.

As for transferring *bara'* into the created realm, the verse at hand puts it as having domination, the verb being *radah* which originally applied to treading as in a wine press. Also it connotes taking possession of, to subdue, which can be taken mistakenly as lording over and not giving a damn as to the results. On the other hand, *radah* means something's out there that needs not so much to be brought under control but under the divine *hasah* which had created the first man, he now being the agent responsible for this. Everything passes through him on to God. Even better, man is to take the *hasah* which brought him into existence and transfer it to the making or tilling of the garden just noted. Thus creation will be like him, being a continuation of what it means to be “in” God's image and “according to” his likeness, *b-* and *k-*.

As for bringing creation from *hasah* to *bara'* and therefore more directly under divine guidance through the first man, it applies to four general categories of living beings: fish (sea), birds (air) cattle (earth) and creeping things (on earth). While these are implied as being sources of food and other means of sustenance, primarily man's task is to insert his memory of *bara'* into them, each according to their own capacity, if you will.

While Gen 1.26 differs from the other account of the man in a garden, perhaps the transference of awareness of the divine into creation as just outlined is another way of speaking about the garden itself or at least a foreshadowing of it.

**Genesis 1.27: So God created man in his own *image*, in the *image* of God he created him; male and female he created them.**

As noted earlier, a surprisingly few references to image and likeness are found in the Bible, so already we're half way through.

The most important part of this verse is the conjunctive *v-* translated as “so” comes straight on the heels of vs. 26, that being the one upon which all our notions of image and likeness hinge. As for the conjunctive, virtually every verse thus far in Genesis it translates as “and,” “so” and “then,” the first being the most dominant. This gives the impression of God creating one thing after another in rapid-fire sequence. Since six days are assigned to each category of beings, the succession of each day is equally rapid fire. For this reason it's better to consider each day as “day one,” “day two” and so forth instead of “first day” or second day.” Thus the conjunctive connecting these days gives us a real sense, if you will, of this quick succession. As for all the other beings brought into existence, they have a quick follow-up or description of their function, etc. Such is not the case here. Once God has made man in his image and likeness, he's stuck with a brand new being that can respond in a way like him which hadn't been the case thus far. That's why vs. 27 is a kind of recap, a pause of sorts,

where God stops and considers his unique handiwork.

The verb *bara'* (to create) occurs three times. As for that verb, here it's preferred instead of *hasah* (to make, to do) noted earlier. It's quick appearance in a short sentence reflects that pause just noted when God stops and takes into consideration what he had done. You almost get the sense that he's stuck with man and can't go back. Everything else thus far can be remade, if you will, or done over in a different way. Not so with a copy of God himself who is the agent of creation.

As for *bara'*, the three may be outlined as follows:

- 1) *Bara'* with respect to man or '*adam* not just in God's image but his own image, not that of someone else.
- 2) *Bara'* with respect to the image of God.
- 3) *Bara'* with respect to the first man as well as the first woman even though another account has God fashioning woman from one of the man's ribs (cf. 2.21).

**Genesis 5.3: When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own *likeness*, after his *image*, and named him Seth.**

This verse jumps ahead considerably from the previous two which essentially form a unit. Since that momentous event a whole lot of equally crucial events had taken place: creation of the first woman, insertion of the man and woman into the garden, their fall, banishment from the garden and murder of Abel by Cain. Finally just before Chapter Five we have Adam and his wife giving birth to a second child, Seth. Right after this, 4.26 says that Seth gave birth to a son called Enosh. It seems that the first man and woman tried desperately to remedy their exiled situation which amounted to a loss of immortality. They went about this by having children which amounts to them creating a lineage that will endure beyond their personal lives. After all, this first set of parents had come to grips with their mortality outside the garden which, despite the many years...indeed, centuries...people of the time had lived, did not remove the specter of death.

We can situate the verse at hand by examining what came before it. For example, the last verse of Chapter Four reads "At that time men began to call upon the name of the Lord." The verb at hand is *qara'* which implies not just asking but something more desperate. It doesn't appear alone but with "began" or *chalal* which fundamentally means to lay open or to pierce. As for "at that time," the small word '*az* is used, meaning "then" or the attempt to mimic divine immortality through the means of human birth.

In the situation at hand, the sense of *chalal* lends a growing desperation or awareness that our earlier predecessors have lost what it means to be immortal. And so we have a rapid succession of births as noted above, descendants of the first parents attempting to copy their parent's original immortality by a means that imitates it as best as they can. However,



physical birth never can substitute for divine life.

Among this lot of first descendants there's mention of only one woman. Given that we're at an early stage of mankind and life expectancy extends for many centuries, chances are the Seth and Enosh had children by the mother of their father. This, of course, has nothing to do with our modern sensibility but points to the vitality of the first human beings made in the divine image and likeness. It remained strong as long as the first man and hence father was alive who could transmit firsthand knowledge of his *bara'*...his being created by God.

As for the divine name, nothing definitive is recorded of it. The so-called "men" taken literally are the few names mentioned above but infers descendants after them. What did they cry out for and how? That's the question which goes unanswered but put in a way by way of inference. It means we have to take into consideration all the factors noted, primarily the first man's knowledge of *bara'*. He gathered his sons both individually and collectively to discuss it and pass it on after which they would discuss it among themselves. Hence the very human idea of tradition is born, a way to maintain identity along with physical birth and hence descendants.

The specific time frame in the verse at hand is one hundred and thirty years, that is, after the birth of Cain and Abel. The intervening time saw the murder of Abel by Cain, Cain bearing a child with his wife, again, through the intermediary of that only woman we know about, Adam's wife, who is popularly called Eve. So it took all those years (Adam lived to be eight hundred, cf. 5.4) to work out the effects of the first murder. Although Adam had given birth to Cain and Abel, they're not mentioned as having been made in their father's image and likeness. With the birth of Seth the long-lasting effects of the first murder worked themselves out which shows the lasting impact it had on the human race in its early stages. Now with some justification Adam could apply the words image and likeness to Seth as God had done to him. He was not so much mimicking the Lord but attempting to copy his creative power more so than as with the human attempt to create mortality by begetting children.

**Genesis 9.6: Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own *image*.**

This verse jumps considerably ahead from the descendants of Adam through the flood which destroyed all living things on earth. Noah and his family are the sole human survivors faced with repopulating the earth.

The Lord tells Noah that living beings can be taken for food compared with the green plants in the garden of Eden (cf. 9.3). However, Noah and his descendants cannot eat "flesh with its life" [vs. 4]. If so, the Lord will demand a reckoning, the verb *darash* fundamentally as to beat or tread and thus to seek intensely. Hence being the object of *darash* is less than desirable, especially when it comes to God. And so this idea of blood as life is transferred to

the prohibition against murder which is what the verse at hand is about.

So after the pre-flood attempt to create immorality through the mortal means of birth and descendants, in the new world after the flood we have mention of God making man in his image. It is the very last occurrence in the Old Testament after which the word for image or *tselem* degenerates, if you will, into detestable representations either of animals or divinities. This rapid decline intimates something present right from the start, namely, that despite being made in the divine image and likeness, humans lost sense of it with amazing, indeed frightening, rapidity. Also the descent of *tselem* from divine image to detestable idol parallels the gradual decrease in life span. So once this degeneration (for lack of better word) has exhausted itself and wanders about unconnected with anything we have the rule of idols which is with us to this day. Yet from the first man's expulsion from the garden history is all about the human race attempting to repair the breach through artificial means as noted several times earlier. This is bound to fail which is a key ingredient to what the story of image and likeness is all about.

### New Testament

**Romans 8.29: For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren.**

More than as in the case of the Old Testament verses just considered, those of the New need to be situated better within a larger context. That is to say, often we need to look at a given occurrence in light of the preceding or following verses or even both. That makes it a two way street, back and forward. The chief reason is that we're dealing more with theology and teaching instead of stories. The former requires explanation while the latter centers around the presentation of a historical (or mythical) situation which can be expanded more freely. A sign of this dependence of the verse at hand upon the previous one is the first word, *hoti* (also as 'because' or 'wherefore'). Thus *hoti* signals a need to examine what went before as bears upon the one under consideration.

Vs. 28 speaks of those who love God, *agapao* from which is derived the well-know *agape*. Thus *agapao* controls the verse under consideration. Here we have six steps following the result of divine foreknowing or *progignosko*. Six in that vs. 30 can't be omitted because what's contained there has direct bearing upon what is at hand <sup>4</sup>:

1) Predestined or *proorizo* with the preposition *pro-* or before (as with *progignosko*), literally to bound beforehand. It's found in the next verse as well as in Eph 1.5: "He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will."

<sup>4</sup>Vs. 30 runs as follows: "And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified."

2) Conformed or *summorphos* or to have or be with (*sum-*) the same form or shape (*morphe*) and has one other New Testament reference, Phil 3.21: “Who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body.” Such being-with the same form applies not to the Son but to the image or *eikon* (cf. 1.23) of him. While the two are virtually indistinguishable, they are in effect separate.

3) First-born or *prototokos* as in Col 1.15: “He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.” This unique position isn’t removed from Christ’s brethren but literally is “in many brethren.”

4) Called or *kaleo* which is dependent directly upon being predestined.

5) Justified or *dikaioo* (cf. 6.7) is dependent directly upon being called.

6) Finally we have glorified or *doxazo* which is dependent directly upon being justified.

**1 Corinthians 15.49: Just as we have borne the *image* of the man of dust, we shall also bear the *image* of the man of heaven.**

Vs. 48<sup>5</sup> contains the demonstrative *hoios* or “as” twice with respect to the man of dust and the man of heaven, *choikos* and *epouranios*. In other words, we have two seemingly opposed opposites which can’t be reconciled in the normal human way. However, reconciling them is not an insurmountable problem for God. The key in vs. 49 is *phoreo* or to bear which obviously means to carry around with the implication of not putting down the burden.

There are two tenses, past and future. The man of dust represents our proneness to evil and sin which we have borne...carried...from the day of our birth and is very familiar to us. On the other hand, the man of heaven lays in the future. Note that the adjective *epouranios* has the preposition *epi-* prefaced to it, literally as “upon heaven” implying something so exalted that as of yet we are unable to perceive it. Thus *choikos* and *epouranios* represent two distinct modes of time: one we can perceive and the other we cannot. In order to bridge the gap it’s necessary

The verse at hand is pretty much a repetition of the one before it but with the insertion of *eikon* or image. Again, emphasis is upon past vs. future but both being connected with *kathos* or “as,” similar to *hoios* which is more along the lines of “such as,” “such what.” Paul seems to be driving home the idea of staying familiar with the *hoios* of the earthly man, a means of teaching which automatically will switch over to the *hoios* of the heavenly man. As for when this will happen, he doesn’t say, thinking it sufficient to be aware of the two modes of existence, past and future. It’s up to each person to make the connection which will resolve the contrast.

**Colossians 1.15: He is the *image* of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or**

<sup>5</sup>Vs. 48 runs as follows: “As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven.”

**dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.<sup>6</sup>**

Jesus Christ is the *eikon* of God who cannot be seen, *agoratos* whose verbal root *horao* is to see in the sense of to appear, be visible. That means we have a person who can be seen walking around as the embodiment of God who cannot be seen, two diametrically opposed realities pretty much in the extreme. As for Jesus, it's a question of identifying him as a point of reference where the two extremes meet which seems to be the case with all who encountered him. A verse parallel to this one is Heb 1.3: "He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power."

In the same breath Paul calls Jesus *prototokos* not just of creation but of all creation. The notion of first, if you will, suggests a second and so forth. That doesn't mean a second Jesus (etc.) but he as a kind of eldest brother according to whom persons may conform. Again, this applies "all" creation suggesting that other animate beings as well as inanimate ones follow. Thus *prototokos* is akin to *eikon* with that notion of visibility reflecting invisibility.

We have another mention of "all" with respect to creation, the second of three instances where it applies to a verb, "were created." Here it has a specific place-where or "in" Jesus Christ although the last mention of him is as Son in vs. 13. It's as though this son-ship has taken place of Jesus as a person...accurate insofar as Paul is transiting from Jesus Christ as a person who had lived a human life to him as God, no small move by any stretch of the imagination.

Vs. 16 of this two part quote ends with a third mention of "all" relative to creation. The first has "in him" whereas here we have "through and for him." Summing this up, then, is "in, through and for" with respect to the Son who, as noted above, is what Paul calls him instead of the proper name Jesus Christ. As for use of the latter two prepositions, what he says of as "in him" is divided into two pairs: "in heaven and on earth" as well as "visible and invisible." Belonging to both—and it seems the following four categories of angelic beings can apply to either—are thrones, dominions, principalities and authorities. So apart from Paul's consideration of Jesus Christ as Son, he was a human being walking around as *eikon* of God who isn't visible as well as being first-born of all these things.

**Colossians 3.10: Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.<sup>7</sup>**

This is the first verse relative to the image of God with practical moral implications, that is, as it applies to lying (*pseudo*). The gravity of the situation is enhanced by the preposition

<sup>6</sup>Vss. 15 and 16 form a whole sentence in English. For this reason both are included.

<sup>7</sup>Vs. 9 and vs. 10 form a whole sentence in English. For this reason both are included.

*eis*, “into one another,” which makes it more direct and personal (‘seeing that’ is not in the Greek text). Lying is singled out as being the most adverse trait to the “new nature,” *anthropos* or man as it is with “old.” Paul presumes that such a manner of behavior has been taken care of. In other words, it has been put off or *apekduomai* which connotes a more radical action, of stripping off this old man along with its practices, *praxis* also meaning affair or transaction. This is indicated by use of two prepositions relative to off-ness, if you will, prefaced to the verbal root, *apo* and *ek*, two forms of “from:” away from and out of.

As with the above mentioned presupposition of having removed the old man, the same applies to the new man, “man” not mentioned but obviously presumed. Note that *praxis* isn’t included as it is with the old man. As for the new man, one has put it on, *enduomai*, the preposition *en* prefaced to the verbal root meaning “in.” The idea seems to be that a person has put on this new man and once so clothed, it has an action all its own. This action may be described as being renewed, *anakainoo*, the preposition *ana* suggestive of up to or an upward motion.

Knowledge or *epignosis*—literally, knowledge-upon—*epi*...is the force which causes this continual renewal (upward, *ana*). It, in turn, is effected in accord with (*kata*) the image of its creator, the creator of the new nature. And so the new man, its renewal-upward (*ana*) and knowledge-upon (*epi*) presuppose familiarity not so much with the creator or God but his image. And this image is presupposed as being the Son (as ‘opposed to’) Jesus Christ noted in reference to Colossians 1.15 above.

## Apocrypha

**2 Esdras 8.44: But man, who has been formed by your hands is called your own *image* because he is made like you and for whose sake you have formed all things—have you also made him like the farmer’s seed?**

NB: *The Second book of Esdras probably was composed in Greek though no Greek version has been found. In light of this, the RSV verse is left as it is.*

**Wisdom 2.23: Thus they reasoned, but they were led astray, for their wickedness blinded them, and they did not know the secret purposes of God nor hope for the wages of holiness nor discern the prize for blameless souls; for God created man for incorruption and made him in the *image* of his own eternity, but through the devil’s envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his party experience it.**<sup>8</sup>

This excerpt starts off with the verb *logizomai* or “reasoned.” The common meaning is to

<sup>8</sup>Vss. 21-24 form a whole sentence in English. For this reason all are included.

calculate or to reckon but here has a negative connotation, a type of conniving which is at the root of all alienation against God. No small wonder then that it causes people to be led astray, *epilanthano* with the verbal root meaning to forget prefaced with the preposition *epi*, literally as “to forget upon.” And from here we move to wickedness causing blindness, preventing knowledge of God’s secret purposes, the verb *gignosko* and the noun *musterion* or that which requires initiation. *Gignosko* also applies to the wages of holiness, *misthos* also meaning pay or service.

Similar to the failure to know or *gignosko* is not being able to discern the prize (*geros*, also as privilege or gift of honor) for souls which are blameless or *amoros*. And so the calculating attitude suggested by *logizomai* leads to this manifold consequence which obscures man being made in the divine image, the reason why it’s mentioned first.

The second part of this verse has two parts, if you will:

1) Man as made by God for incorruption, *aphtharsia* which has the preposition *epi* and reads literally “upon corruption.

2) Man as made in the *eikon* not just of eternity but God’s, that is, “his own” or *idiotes* which implies that which is peculiar or special.

However, the devil was envious (*phthonos* also means ill-will) of him which hearkens back to the Garden of Eden story in Genesis. And so this envy entered the word, *eiserchomai* with the preposition *eis*; i.e., two uses of the preposition *eis*. Those allied (*meris* or part, portion) with the devil experience this along with the first man commonly known as Adam. The verb here is *peirazo* meaning to make proof or to test. In fact, the first man is a template for these person (angelic beings may be included) who followed after him and who remain imprisoned by him.

**Wisdom 7.26: For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God and an *image* of his goodness.**

The noun for wisdom (mentioned last by name in vs. 24) is *sophia* which also means skill, of knowing how to do something specialized as well as having sound judgment. Thus the idea of something produced is associated with it. Here *sophia* is an *apaugasma*—an effulgence or beaming—not just of light but of one which is eternal. A mirror functions not unlike such an effulgence provided it’s spotless or *akelidotos*. This perfectly clear mirror, in turn, reflects divine working, *energeia* (also as performance, action) as well as being an *eikon* of divine goodness, *agathotes*.

While this verse doesn’t pertain to man as image of God, *sophia* as image of divine light, working and goodness may be said to be a template which he uses for creating man as his *eikon*.



**Sirach 17.3: He endowed them with strength like his own and made them in his own *image*.**

The verb for endowed is *enduo* also as to put on as clothes, to assume, and here pertains to *ischus*, strength as power or force. Such *ischus* is similar to God's and hence is his *eikon*. Thus *ischus* = *eikon*.

*The following is a list of references with regard to likeness*

### Old Testament

**Genesis 1.26: Then 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 birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."**

Refer to the same verse above.

**Genesis 5.1: This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the *likeness* of God.**

*Toldoth* is the noun for generations which also means family as well as history and encompasses the entirety of Chapter Five. Furthermore, this account of generations occurs after the murder of Abel by Cain as well as several other generations springing from Cain as well as Seth, born of Adam.

Chapter Five deals with the generations from Adam's descendants to Noah at the threshold of the flood and begins with the words "This is the book of the generations of Adam." It implies a source different from the one at hand, one other from that of Moses who was present with God from creation onward up until his appearance in the Book of Exodus. Despite the importance of *toldoth* (the age of each person becomes less as time we go further down the line from Adam), mention of Adam being made in God's image is tantamount. It's as though the author of Genesis wished this image would be preserved and transmitted unbroken throughout all generations. It was, but quickly became lost or to put it better, individuals lost their likeness to God, not their image.

In 4.17 we see that "Cain knew his wife," a woman who wasn't fashioned in Eden. Chances are she belonged to those persons mentioned elsewhere and whose record is lost. The rest of vs. 1 spills into the next verse and recaps the creation of man in 1.26-8. However, note the shift: "and named them man (*adam*) when they were created." The earlier account (as well as that of 2.7) neither has God calling nor naming the man nor the woman. Perhaps in this different account God wished to show that both the man and woman (she was taken from the man's side) is derived from the same *'adamah* or earth and shares the same nature. While evident from the start, it may not have been that evident to Cain's descendants in the

City of Enoch who quickly degenerated into all sorts of deviant behavior.

**Genesis 5.3: When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own *likeness*, after his image, and named him Seth.**

Refer to the same verse above.

### New Testament

**Romans 8.3: For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the *likeness* of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.<sup>9</sup>**

These two verses form one lengthy sentence dealing with the limitations of the Torah. It was established by God yet had become weakened (*astheneo*;) by the flesh (*sarx*), this verb also meaning to be sick as noted in 4.19. By juxtaposing law-as-Torah with the person of Jesus Christ Paul is making an enormous distinction. It's as though God who gave the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai decided the Torah wasn't adequate so decided to become present himself, an inconceivable idea. As for *adunatos* or "could not do" relative to Torah, this means the Torah lacks *dunamis* (cf. 1.2) or the capacity of what Paul is about to propose.

For Paul's listeners as well as Jesus' contemporaries, it was difficult to comprehend Jesus as being in the likeness (*homoioima*, cf. 6.5) of sinful flesh. It would take some time for them to see how such opposites could hold together and eventually be resolved, such doubt being quite natural.

Vs. 4 continues this extended sentence with a positive assessment of Torah, that is, associating with it a just requirement or *dikaioima* as precept in 2.26. Such a precept is to be fulfilled (*pleroo*, cf. 1.29) in us, that is, Paul uses the first person plural referring to fellow Christians at Rome engaged in walking (*peripateo*, cf. 6.4) or literally walking around (*peri-*). This is done *kata* the *Pneuma* (cf. vs. 1), a preposition meaning in accord with and can be considered a refinement of the words about the above mentioned in-ness concerning Jesus Christ.

**2 Corinthians 4.4: In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the *likeness* of God.**

<sup>9</sup>Vss. 3 and 4 form a whole sentence in English and for this reason are considered together.

“God of this world” most likely refers to Satan who ties in with the Genesis account (and above references) of the loss of the divine likeness but not image which he does by blinding the minds of persons who don’t believe. *Noema* is the noun for mind which also means that which is perceived, perception, purpose and idea. Such blindness of *noema* is passed down through the generations (again, as in the references above) which are characterized by decreasing life spans.

The verse at hand situates this transmission of blindness relative to *noema* as seeing not just the gospel but its light, *photismos* more as illumination of this gospel. It, in turn, stems from the glory (*doxa*) of Christ and further back than this, if you will, to him being the *eikon* of God the Father.

Thus we have two directions, opposite each other, the second reversing, as it were, that decrease in life span:

- 1) god->blinded->minds
- 2) light->gospel->glory->Christ->Father

**Ephesians 4.24: Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts and be renewed in the spirit of your minds and put on the new nature created after the *likeness* of God in true righteousness and holiness.**<sup>10</sup>

*Enduomai*: “put on” in the sense of putting on a garment and noted later in 6.11: “Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” As *anthropos* is used in vs. 22 for “nature,” so it occurs here but one which is *kainos* or “new.” Both terms are noted last in 2.15.

*Ktizo* is the verb for “created” noted last in 3.9 which in the verse at hand is used with the preposition *kata* or “after” in the sense of in accord with, that being the divine “likeness” which is not in the Greek text but instead reads “according to God.”

The *kata* associated with God is followed by the preposition *in* with regard to “righteousness” or *dikaiosune* and *hosiotes*. The former is noted next in 5.9: “for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.” The latter has one other New Testament reference, Lk 1.75: “in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.” The noun *aletheia* is used for “true” and noted last in vs. 21.

**Philippians 2.7: Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped**

<sup>10</sup>Vss. 22 and 23 contribute to forming a whole sentence in English with regard to vs. 24. For this reason they are included.

**but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the *likeness* of men.** <sup>11</sup>

“Have this mind” is the verb *phroneo* meaning to have understanding as well as prudence. It’s not private but to be shared, literally “in you.” Such in-ness is transferred to Christ Jesus, the form of God, *morphe* applicable to shape as well as comeliness. This *morphe* belong to God and is God as suggested by the verb *huparcho* which literally means to begin or to take the initiative, *arche* applicable to the first principle of anything. In the verse at hand *huparcho* is rendered simply as “is.”

Christ disregarded equality with God, the verb *hegeomai* literally as to go before or to lead the way and applies to being (*to enai*) like or *isos* God. In other words, he did not consider this to be grasped, *harpagmos* which means a seizing of booty.

Completely opposite to *harpagmos*, the violent seizing of something is self-emptying, *kenoo* meaning to be left empty which pretty much characterizes a *doulos*...not just a servant but a slave, and slaves lacked personal identity. Note that it’s the *morphe* of a slave, this *morphe* being contrasted with the one of God. Here *morphe* is parallel to *homoiosis* or likeness as it applies to human beings.

**James 3.9: With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who are made in the *likeness* of God.**

James is speaking of the tongue which can go in one of two directions, blessing or cursing, *eulogeo* and *kataoraomai*. Both apply to men made in the likeness or *homoiosis* of God. The preposition *kata* is used, more specifically as “according to the likeness of God.” Thus one physical organ is used for two different purposes.

## Apocrypha

**2 Esdras 8.6: O Lord who are over us, grant to your servant that we may pray before you and give us seed for our heart and cultivation of our understanding so that fruit may be produced by which every mortal who bears the *likeness* of a human being may be able to live.**

NB: *The Second book of Esdras probably was composed in Greek though no Greek version has been found. In light of this, the RSV verse is left as it is.*

## Appendix

"Vss. 5 and 6 contribute to forming a whole sentence in English along with vs. 7.

As noted in the Introductory Remarks above, the following excerpts from the writings of Plato pertain to the notion of image and likeness. The early Church Fathers read Plato and most likely were enamored of his reflections on his use of *eikon*.

**-Republic 509d:** You have to imagine, then, that there are two ruling powers, and that one of them is set over the intellectual world, the other over the visible. I do not say heaven, lest you should fancy that I am playing upon the name. May I suppose that you have this distinction of the visible and intelligible fixed in your mind?

I have.

Now take a line which has been cut into two unequal parts, and divide each of them again in the same proportion, and suppose the two main divisions to answer, one to the visible and the other to the intelligible, and then compare the subdivisions in respect of their clearness and want of clearness, and you will find that the first section in the sphere of the visible consists of *images*. And by *images* I mean, in the first place, shadows and in the second place, reflections in water and in solid, smooth and polished bodies and the like. Do you understand?

**Republic: 501** But how will they draw out the plan of which you are speaking?

They will begin by taking the state and the manners of men from which, as from a tablet, they will rub out the picture, and leave a clean surface. This is no easy task. But whether easy or not, herein will lie the difference between them and every other legislator,—they will have nothing to do either with individual or state, and will inscribe no laws, until they have either found, or themselves made, a clean surface.

They will be very right, he said.

Having effected this, they will proceed to trace an outline of the constitution?

No doubt.

And when they are filling in the work, as I conceive, they will often turn their eyes upwards and downwards: I mean that they will first look at absolute justice and beauty and temperance, and again at the human copy; and will mingle and temper [the various elements of life into the *image* of a man; and thus they will conceive according to that other *image*, which, when existing among men, Homer calls the form and *likeness* of God.

Very true, he said.

And one feature they will erase, and another they will put in, they have made the ways of men, as far as possible, agreeable to the ways of God?

Indeed, he said, in no way could they make a fairer picture.

**Timaeus 37c-e:** When the father creator saw the creature which he had made moving and living, the created *image* of the eternal gods, he rejoiced, and in his joy determined to make the copy still more like the original; and as this was eternal, he sought to make the universe eternal, so far as might be. Now the nature of the ideal being was everlasting, but to bestow this attribute in its fulness upon a creature was impossible. Wherefore he resolved to have a moving *image* of eternity, and when he set in order the heaven, he made this *image* eternal but moving according to number, while eternity itself rests in unity; and this *image* we call

time. For there were no days and nights and months and years before the heaven was created, but when he constructed the heaven he created them also. They are all parts of time, and the past and future are created species of time, which we unconsciously but wrongly transfer to the eternal essence; for we say that he "was," he "is," he "will be," but the truth is that "is" alone is properly attributed to him, and that "was" and "will be" only to be spoken of becoming in time, for they are motions, but that which is immovably the same cannot become older or younger by time, nor ever did or has become, or hereafter will be, older or younger, nor is subject at all to any of those states which affect moving and sensible things and of which generation is the cause. These are the forms of time, which imitates eternity and revolves according to a law of number. Moreover, when we say that what has become is become and what becomes is becoming, and that what will become is about to become and that the non-existent is non-existent-all these are inaccurate modes of expression. But perhaps this whole subject will be more suitably discussed on some other occasion.

**Symposium:** "He who has been instructed thus far in the things of love, and who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty (and this, Socrates, is the final cause of all our former toils)-a nature which in the first place is everlasting, not growing and decaying, or waxing and waning; secondly, not fair in one point of view and foul in another, or at one time or in one relation or at one place fair, at another time or in another relation or at another place foul, as if fair to some and-foul to others, or in the *likeness* of a face or hands or any other part of the bodily frame, or in any form of speech or knowledge, or existing in any other being, as for example, in an animal, or in heaven or in earth, or in any other place; but beauty absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, which without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things. He who from these ascending under the influence of true love, begins to perceive that beauty, is not far from the end. And the true order of going, or being led by another, to the things of love, is to begin from the beauties of earth and mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty, using these as steps only, and from one going on to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is. This, my dear Socrates," said the stranger of Mantinea, "is that life above all others which man should live, in the contemplation of beauty absolute; a beauty which if you once beheld, you would see not to be after the measure of gold, and garments, and fair boys and youths, whose presence now entrances you; and you and many a one would be content to live seeing them only and conversing with them without meat or drink, if that were possible-you only want to look at them and to be with them. But what if man had eyes to see the true beauty-the divine beauty, I mean, pure and dear and unalloyed, not clogged with the pollutions of mortality and all the colours and vanities of human life-thither looking, and holding converse with the true beauty simple and divine? Remember how in that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not *images* of beauty, but realities (for he has hold not of an *image* but of a



reality), and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may. Would that be an ignoble life?"

**Phaedrus:** Thus far I have been speaking of the fourth and last kind of madness, which is imputed to him who, when he sees the beauty of earth, is transported with the recollection of the true beauty; he would like to fly away, but he cannot; he is like a bird fluttering and looking upward and careless of the world below; and he is therefore thought to be mad. And I have shown this of all inspirations to be the noblest and highest and the offspring of the highest to him who has or shares in it, and that he who loves the beautiful is called a lover because he partakes of it. For, as has been already said, every soul of man has in the way of nature beheld true being; this was the condition of her passing into the form of man. But all souls do not easily recall the things of the other world; they may have seen them for a short time only, or they may have been unfortunate in their earthly lot, and, having had their hearts turned to unrighteousness through some corrupting influence, they may have lost the memory of the holy things which once they saw. Few only retain an adequate remembrance of them; and they, when they behold here any *image* of that other world, are rapt in amazement; but they are ignorant of what this rapture means, because they do not clearly perceive. For there is no light of justice or temperance or any of the higher ideas which are precious to souls in the earthly copies of them: they are seen through a glass dimly; and there are few who, going to the *images*, behold in them the realities, and these only with difficulty. There was a time when with the rest of the happy band they saw beauty shining in brightness—we philosophers following in the train of Zeus, others in company with other gods; and then we beheld the beatific vision and were initiated into a mystery which may be truly called most blessed, celebrated by us in our state of innocence, before we had any experience of evils to come, when we were admitted to the sight of apparitions innocent and simple and calm and happy, which we beheld shining impure light, pure ourselves and not yet enshrined in that living tomb which we carry about, now that we are imprisoned in the body, like an oyster in his shell. Let me linger over the memory of scenes which have passed away.

+

*16 August 2017*