The Preached Image of God: Christian Anthropology in Hiddenness and Speech

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Abstract

This study reconsiders the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28) in light of its dual character as hidden in itself (both resistant to analysis in its biblical setting and inaccessible to experience) and revealed in divine speech. Common interpretations of the image fail to account for the biblical usage. The first chapter considers the background of image language in the Ancient Near Eastern use of cult images, and the circumstances under which a living human could be termed an image. This background suggests a human image as a material site of divine presence; however, that description does not resolve the biblical conception of the image of God, leading back to the problem of its unknowability. A return to the context of the image within God's speaking of creation points to the image's resolution.

Chapter two investigates the image in its transit through early Judaism into the New Testament's Christological understanding, as an eschatological revelation of the Son in whom humanity is grounded and renewed. A consistent New Testament theology of the divine image is described, and further traced through Irenaeus, Origen, and Gregory of Nazianzus. The role of the Spirit is clarified in revealing the image in conformity to Christ and mediating it through human instrumentality (proclamation).

The third chapter turns to Luther and his articulation of the distinction between God as preached and not-preached, and its application to the *imago Dei*. Luther's interpretation is traced chronologically, into its eventual articulation in the Genesis lectures and *Disputation on Man*. The preached Christ spells the end of the old human in opposition to God, and creates anew in God's image. Present existence is the conflict between this preached humanity and the silence of the old creature passing away.

Chapter four expands on the discussion of Luther in order to illuminate the difference between a preached, eschatological view of the divine image and an interpretation based in analogical metaphysics, as represented by Erich Przywara. Both Przywara's interpretation of the *imago Dei* and his reception of Luther are considered, revealing the role of different receptions of Pseudo-Dionysius in their approaches. What Przywara attempts to achieve by holding hiddenness and revelation in tension, Luther resolves concretely in a word of promise, analyzed in an account of Luther's understanding of language.

The fifth chapter takes up the preached image in contrast to an impulse in contemporary Protestant theology which posits an ontological chasm between God and humans, and so denies a human image of God. This approach is considered through Kathryn Tanner, David Kelsey, and Rowan Williams, and answered through Johann Georg Hamann, for whom the image of God, as the human, is at once bodily and communicated in speech. A short conclusion considers ethics, eschatology, and anthropocentrism as three areas in which this theology of the preached image of God may have particular contemporary resonance, considering human nature itself as received verbally in Christ.

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Abbreviations

AE	Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis*
BC	*The Book of Concord*
CHC	Rowan Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation*
CK	Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key*
EE	David Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*
LW	*Luther's Works*
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PL	Patrologia Latina
ST	Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae*.
WA	*D. Martin Luthers Werke* (Weimar Ausgabe)
WA DB	*D. Martin Luthers Werke*, *Die Deutsche Bibel*
WA Tr	*D. Martin Luthers Werke*, *Tischreden*
WPL	Johann Georg Hamann, *Writings on Philosophy and Language*

Introduction

In Genesis 1:26, God declares, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness,” and from this spring flows a torrent of commentary. The sheer volume of this elaboration, and its outsize significance in the history of theology, can easily obscure basic questions. Just what is the image and likeness of God? Many opinions are on offer - none, I argue, are fully convincing.

From a strictly grammatical perspective, the answer is simple - the human is the image of God. Everything *after* that is difficult. Without further specification, what remains is a tautology which risks an ambiguous but uncomfortably close identification of divine and human. Much of historical and contemporary interpretation - for example, distinguishing between image and likeness, or emphasizing difference through the prepositions “in” and “according to” - seeks to mitigate this risk. Such efforts are linguistically unpersuasive, and only defer the question of the image itself.

In this respect, the *imago Dei* presents an aporia, widely invoked but resistant to analysis. Attention to the supporting texts shows a host of polarities and discontinuities: between the human as singular and plural within Genesis 1:26-27, between male and female, between Old Testament reference to the human species and New Testament reference to Christ, between the obscurity of the image and its relatively clear attendant features such as dominion, and at the root, between God and human.

Because the image concerns the relation between humans and God, its difficulties should not be understood as mere textual obscurity. The divine image is spoken by God but not explained. Within the Old Testament, it quickly drops out of sight, surfacing again in Pauline references to Christ. This pattern of speech and silence, hiddenness and revelation is itself theological - it bears relation to God’s own hiddenness. The scope of the divine image, whether the

human species, a subset, or Christ alone, is left unsettled in the Bible. If it can be specified *what* the image is - the human - the questions of *who* that human may be, and *where* they may be found, are in question. The image of God, as the human being, has a dynamism that defies simple definition.

This thesis seeks to locate and describe the image of God within the dynamic relations of hiddenness and speech, or what the Christian tradition refers to as preaching or proclamation. The divine image arises within God's own speaking of creation, and within the Priestly theology which attests to the mediation of divine speech through human speech in the present. Humans are given the name "image of God," which is a disclosure of humanity in intimacy with God.

The study's guiding stars are the questions of the image's hiddenness and scope. While these have rarely been discussed in an explicit way, interpreters since antiquity have contended with them, illustrating the inner workings of their interpretations. By focusing on these questions, it is possible to trace an account of the divine image as preached that is responsive to the dynamic, aporetic character of the biblical witness. The human image of God is known and comes to resolution not in itself, but in its disclosure in Christian proclamation, as a promise.

The central dynamic of hiddenness and proclamation is adopted from Martin Luther. While Luther's account of the *imago Dei* is important to this study, his theology of God as hidden and preached has an architectural significance for it. This aspect of his theology remains under-explored; while somewhat known with respect to his doctrine of God, its implications for other areas and for theological practice have not been widely appreciated.[1] This study could be considered as an effort to apply a maligned aspect of Luther's thought to a

[1] The most striking exception to this judgment is in the work of the late Gerhard Forde, who constructed the outline of a systematic theology (*Theology is for Proclamation*) around Luther's distinction between preached and not-preached. The present work's debt to his approach is profound. A similar account of hiddenness likewise has a structural significance in the work of Oswald Bayer.

complex doctrinal problem, illustrating its potential.

The goal of this study is not comprehensiveness, but an argument as to how the image of God as preached illuminates and resolves problems in the history of interpretation. Its argument at points assumes a polemical edge. In particular, it opposes the tendency to force the *imago Dei* into coherence by severing matters which are properly linked in the divine word: body and soul, creation and eschatology, God and human. The image of God cannot be understood except within the concrete unity of God's promise. My emphasis on the image as realized in proclamation is both a practical recommendation and, I hope, the proposal's real catholicity - if this book contributes in any way to a sharper preaching of the human, then it has reached its mark.

I do not attempt a comprehensive story of historical development, but I try to account for the principal impulses driving major lines of interpretation. Figures and episodes were selected for the light they shed on that argument. Therefore, certain familiar approaches - notably, the Augustinian tradition of the image of the Trinity in the soul - are treated very lightly, as their fundamental assumptions are discussed in another way. Likewise, some figures whose accounts may show similarity to an aspect of this project - e.g., Maximus the Confessor or Marc Cortez[2] - are not discussed.

The first chapter concerns the image of God in its Hebrew Bible context. I lay out a common typology of interpretations and consider an expanded range of ancient sources for interpreting the concept of a divine image, as well as discussions of divine embodiment. Much of this material has to date seen little use in Christian theology.

[2] Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology*. Cortez's understanding of the *imago Dei* as humanity received in Christ, such that origin is rooted in eschatology, is significantly compatible with my own (this touches on the question of scope). However, he devotes little attention to how the image is mediated to humans.

Chapter two investigates the image of God in its transit through early Judaism into the New Testament and beyond. I consider New Testament interpretation at length, not only through Paul, but in the Gospels, describing a broad but consistent New Testament theology of the divine image. Features observed in early Jewish and New Testament texts are further traced through Irenaeus, Origen, and Gregory of Nazianzus.

The third chapter turns to Luther. I describe several of Luther's concepts to provide a basis for his discussion of the divine image, before turning to Luther's own interpretation, traced chronologically, and focusing especially on the Genesis lectures and the *Disputation on Man*. Chapter four expands on the discussion of Luther to illuminate the difference between a preached, eschatological view of the divine image and an interpretation based in analogical metaphysics, as represented by Erich Przywara. The difference is shown to rest especially in their differing receptions of Pseudo-Dionysius. Where Przywara holds hiddenness and revelation in tension, Luther resolves these concretely in a word of promise.

The fifth chapter takes up the preached image in contrast to a divisive impulse in contemporary Protestant theology, illustrated through Kathryn Tanner, David Kelsey, and Rowan Williams. Uncertainty about the divine image is resolved by positing an ontological chasm and opposition between God and humans. Johann Georg Hamann is posited as an alternative, interpreting the relation of God and creatures through the Word, and so the image of God as bodily, verbal communication. A short concluding chapter takes up ethics, eschatology (and the unfortunate conflation of created difference with sin), and anthropocentrism as areas of particular contemporary resonance.

Regarding translations of biblical texts, most quotations default to the New Revised Standard Version, but are frequently altered in order to highlight the

arguments. Similarly, transliterations of Greek and Hebrew words are characteristically in their base forms, rather than those specific forms in which they appear in the Bible. This is for ease of identification of readers without advanced skills in those languages. Greek and Hebrew text appear occasionally, when that is judged most useful to the overall argument.

Chapter 1
The One God and the Many Images of Ancient Israel

I. Introduction

The image of God presents a paradox to Hebrew Bible research. The paucity of biblical reference to the human as image of God - occurring only in Genesis 1, 5, and 9 - suggests that this is anything but a central concept. The prominence of its location and the weight placed upon it by later tradition (including, not least, a bevy of references within the New Testament) weigh against that judgment, but do not dispel the underlying question: why is the *imago Dei* prominent in the early chapters of Genesis, but nowhere else? Is it truly an unknown doctrine to the rest of Hebrew scripture, or might a similar concept be expressed elsewhere under different vocabulary?

Recent decades have shown significant progress on this issue, such that the image can be seen to fit within a much more substantial web of associated biblical texts, themes, and extra-biblical textual parallels and practices than many interpreters of prior generations had supposed. Certain interpreters have even dared to speak of a consensus on the topic.[1] Most of this material has not yet penetrated into discussions of the image among theologians.

Nevertheless, what might seem an obvious conclusion of such research - precisely what the image of God is - remains not only unresolved, but no closer to a definite answer, as nearly every insight is met with the proviso that this or that connecting thread, however significant, must be taken as a consequence or implication rather than as a definition of the image itself. In this light, James Barr's well-known criticism that the Priestly writer may simply have had no clear idea of it[2] sounds less like pessimism and more like a definite, negative

[1] Jonsson, *The Image of God,* 219. Also Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 25.
[2] Barr, "The Image of God in the Book of Genesis," 12-13.

feature of the image - it is not to be known in an ostensive definition.

The result is a dynamic polarity, an apparent opposition and connection between the unknown and in some sense unknowable image, and the remarkable wealth of effects and manifestations which pulse through a broad range of scripture in relation to it. The primary objective of this chapter is to describe that polarity and pose it as a question, but only just to begin answering it. The question will not be easily arrived at without attending to various matters of language, context, and interpretation, but once posed will open up towards the rest of this dissertation.

As a methodological note, this chapter excludes explicit engagement with the New Testament or Christology. Those matters will be treated in chapter 2 and beyond, and are critical to the overall thesis, but are withheld here for the purpose of framing an initial question. A hasty move to Christology runs the risk of crowding out Genesis and other Hebrew Bible texts as sources for this topic. As shall become apparent, I understand even this chapter as christological, but only implicitly so.

II. Imago Dei in the Hebrew Bible

The subject matter requires an initial look at the texts, vocabulary, and major lines of interpretation associated with the image of God in the Hebrew Bible. Engagement with other ancient Near Eastern conceptions of divine images, and consideration of the *imago dei* within its broader biblical context will follow. The purpose of this preliminary overview is twofold: to establish texts, terms, and an interpretive typology, and to identify certain tensions and problems to be traced through the rest of the study.

1. Basic Texts - Genesis 1, 5, and 9

Direct references to the human image or likeness of God appear only a handful of times in the Hebrew Bible. Genesis 1:26-27 is the first and most important such text, together with verse 28, which does not mention the image but stands as a critical piece of context. The only other explicit invocations of the image come in Genesis 5:1-3 and Genesis 9:6 (together with verse 7 as context). All three texts are set within the primeval history of Genesis 1-11, and all three are generally attributed to the Priestly writer.[3]

The central text, Genesis 1:26-28, reads as follows:

> [26]Then God said, "Let us make humankind [אָדָם- adam] in our image, according to 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 wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."
>
> [27]So God created humankind [הָאָדָם - adam] in his image,
> in the image of God he created him;
> male and female he created them.
>
> [28]God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

[3] Traditionally, source criticism has assigned the Genesis 1 creation narrative and the other primary image of God texts (Genesis 5:1-3 and Genesis 9:6) to the P or Priestly source. Despite significant controversy on many other matters of source criticism, the unit Genesis 1-2:3 is still generally assigned to the Priestly writer, and often, though by no means universally, dated in its present form to the exilic or post-exilic periods. See, e.g., Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 139-145.

In this passage the image of God functions as a kind of balancing point between opposing terms in two different ways. In the first place, the image is related to humans both as a specific individual and as a genus or universal. The pronouns connected to humankind (אָדָם - *adam*) are plural everywhere but in the second clause of v.27. Rather than a particular individual Adam (as appears in Genesis 2), we see a genus, humanity as such. The designation "male and female" serves to reinforce this generic usage, and prohibits reading the image of God as implicitly masculine. Conversely, the singular 'him' in v.27 excludes reading that "male and female" as indicating that the image of God pertains in a special sense to the gendered pair. Rather, even within v.27, a tension or polarity is implied between singular and plural, individual and species. The weight of this text leans toward universal humanity as the image of God, but the lone singular pronoun establishes the opposite pole. Image pertains to the human in both directions.

Secondly, the image both distinguishes humans from other creatures and serves as the basis of humanity's relation to them. The turn to reflexive divine speech ("Let us make…") in v.26, and then the direct address of v.28 ("Be fruitful…") should both be distinguished from the third person summary report in v.27 ("So God created…"). The Priestly creation narrative as a whole shows a repeated pattern of divine speech (e.g., "Let there be light,") followed by reports of the effect ("and there was light"). Image and likeness are directly spoken by God, as are the bestowal of dominion and the instruction to multiply. Divine speech also establishes dominion as internal to the image of God, part of the word which constitutes it. While image of God is spoken of the human alone, the same divine speech sets the human in relation to other living creatures through that relation named as dominion, which is then reinforced by the instruction to multiply, also given in v.22 to the inhabitants of the seas and skies. The designation "male and female" also suggests connection to other living creatures, though those terms are not applied to animals until the Noah narrative in Genesis 6 and 7.

The second *imago Dei* text, Genesis 5:1-3, reads:

> [1]This is the list of the descendants of Adam [אָדָם]. In the day that God created humankind [אָדָם], he made him in the likeness of God. [2]Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them adam [אָדָם] in the day they were created.[3] When Adam [אָדָם] had lived one hundred thirty years, he became the father of a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.

Here, following the narrative of Genesis 2-3, the particular individual Adam comes into view as the sense of the Hebrew *adam*. The first reference in v. 1 is undoubtedly to the individual, but the second is more ambiguous, as it is followed by a singular pronoun, and then "male and female" with plural pronouns in v.2. While this shows signs of interweaving the six days of Genesis 1 with the Eden narrative of Genesis 2-3, note that the interplay of singular and plural, generic and specific is present here as it was in Genesis 1:27, in inverted form. Genesis 1 speaks of humanity in general, but at one point focuses down to a singular "him." Using the same vocabulary, Genesis 5 speaks of the man Adam, but at one point universalizes to a common humanity.

Seth is image and likeness of the singular, particular Adam, and so image has an implied link to filiation, as well as to the "be fruitful and multiply" of Genesis 1. Whether this filiation should be read as a continuation of the divine image is not immediately apparent. Seth's standing in the image of Adam could as easily imply attenuation or interruption, rather than propagation, of God's image. The passage is a report, rather than direct divine speech, and so the creative power of the divine word cannot be assumed to apply straightforwardly to the comment about Seth - there is no, "Let us make Seth in our image..."

The third image of God text, Genesis 9:6-7 reads:

[6]Whoever sheds the blood of a human [הָאָדָם],

by a human [בָּאָדָם] shall that person's blood be shed;

for in the image of God

God made humankind [הָאָדָם].

[7]And you, be fruitful and multiply, abound on the earth and multiply in it."

These verses are distinct from previous references to the image of God, arising in explicit recognition of a changed situation with humanity. Not only green plants (as in Genesis 1) but flesh, other living creatures, are given as food to the human (Genesis 9:3), though not without restriction (viz., the prohibition on eating blood). The relation to other living creatures is not here characterized as dominion, but as "fear and dread" (Genesis 9:2) - human mastery over other life has a threatening character absent in Genesis 1. Furthermore, the divine image is employed by way of acknowledgement and warning against human violence. The image of God implies a divine threat: God will require a reckoning, blood for blood. Human relations to humans, to other living creatures, and to God are assumed to be troubled.

Once again, God speaks the divine image, reminding Noah and his sons of this condition in a direct address. The repetition of the blessing of Genesis 1, be fruitful and multiply, combined with an oblique reiteration of the image of God is as close as Genesis comes to affirming human imaging of God after Adam. Theology's later question of whether or how the image of God still persists after the fall cannot be straightforwardly answered by this passage or Genesis 5:1-3, even if one assumes a traditional interpretation of Genesis 3 as fall. The text suggests a continuing relevance of the image of God for human life, roots the image in divine speech, and treats humanity in general as its scope. The one man Adam, and the polarity between universal and particular apparent in Genesis 1 and 5, are not here present.

2. Ṣelem and Demuth - Lexical Considerations

A later section of this chapter considers image and likeness within the context of Ancient Near Eastern conceptions of image. This section consists in a brief study of the Hebrew words *ṣelem* (צֶלֶם - image) and *demuth* (דְּמוּת - likeness) in the Bible, along with their associated prepositional prefixes from Genesis 1:26-28, 5:1-3, and 9:6-7. The conclusions of such a study are necessarily limited, but still serve to constrain reasonable interpretation of the Genesis texts. The biblical usage of *ṣelem* is here argued to be highly concrete and consistent, and implies a significant deficiency in some interpretive approaches to Genesis 1:26-28.

Ṣelem is a relatively uncommon word in the Hebrew Bible. It describes humans in relation to God only in Genesis 1:26-27 and Genesis 9:6, and in relation to a human parent (Seth to Adam) in Genesis 5:3. Other occurrences indicate concrete, physical objects, usually within a cultic setting. In three instances in 1 Samuel 6, *ṣelem* denotes the golden images of tumors and mice, representations of the afflictions sent after the capture of the ark, which the Philistines make as a guilt offering to YHWH. In Numbers 33:52, 2 Kings 11:18, 2 Chronicles 23:17, Ezekiel 7:20 and 16:7, and Amos 5:26 ("You shall take up Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god, your *ṣelem,* which you made for yourselves"), it denotes prohibited cult images, manufactured deities for use in worship.

Three occasions of *ṣelem* may appear to stand somewhat outside this usage: Ezekiel 23:14, Psalm 39:6 and Psalm 73:20. In Ezekiel 23:14 it refers to relief images of Babylonian soldiers, and so might suggest a physical representation without cultic resonance. However, the violent and nearly pornographic scene depicted in Ezekiel 23, which allegorizes the unfaithfulness of Samaria and Jerusalem and the divine judgment against them, contains many indications instead pointing toward a cultic interpretation. In verse 7, Oholah (explained as Samaria in v.4) is described as defiling herself with the idols (גִּלּוּל - *gillul*) of the Assyrians for whom she lusted. Oholibah (Jerusalem) likewise lusts after the

Assyrians, and then the Chaldeans (v.12-16). In verse 30, the judgment she receives is explained: "because you played the whore with the nations, and polluted yourself with their idols (*gillul*)." Again, in verse 37 adultery is glossed as idolatry, and verse 39 describes the sacrifice of children to idols and the corruption of sabbath and temple. The images of Chaldeans from verse 14, described as objects of lust and spurs to adultery, should in context be understood as idols, which explains the seemingly unusual use of *ṣelem* - Jerusalem's lust is false worship. The word *ṣelem* contributes to the cultic resonance of the full passage, and appears consistent with its use elsewhere in the Bible.

The appearances of *ṣelem* in Psalm 39:6 (39:7 in the Masoretic Text) and 73:20 are often taken as evidence that the word's semantic range includes a somewhat diffuse, non-physical sort of representation.[4] The NRSV, in agreement with a number of other translations and commentators agrees with this[5], rendering Psalm 73:20 as "They are like a dream when one awakes; on awaking you despise their phantoms [*ṣelem*]." This interpretation suggests an incorporeal, unreal sense to *ṣelem*, but rests on thin evidence, and is to be avoided. Psalm 39:6a, which NRSV gives as, "Surely everyone goes about like a shadow [*ṣelem*]," is slightly more ambiguous, but again the internal evidence does not compel the reading, and *ṣelem* can easily be read in a fashion consistent with other biblical usage.

Psalm 73 is structured around a complaint regarding the prosperity of the wicked, a complaint that shifts in tone in verse 17, when the speaker recounts having entered the sanctuary of God. From this (obviously cultic) reference on,

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[4] Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 46. *Brown-Driver-Briggs*, 854. Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, v.III, 1029.

[5] E.g., the NIV. See also Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 83f.; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 506f.; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I*, 248f. This interpretation is not universal, however, as deClaisse-Walford, Jacobson, & Tanner presents much of the argument made below for a straightforward reading of *ṣelem* as image, and notes a similar interpretive problem with Psalm 73:7, where *maskith* (often referring to a carved idol) is frequently translated more abstractly as delusion or imagination. DeClaisse-Walford, Jacobson, Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 586f.

the wicked[6] are described as set in slippery places, cast down to destruction, brought to desolation, and coming to a total end. They are thus "like a dream when one awakes" - fading into oblivion - and so, the theory goes, the parallelism between the first and second halves of verse 20 indicates a sense of *ṣelem* as a dream-shape. Such a reading rests in part on the assumption that an image is in a sense unreal and only mimetic of a real thing, an assumption to be challenged later in this chapter. For now, it is enough to see that an interpretation of *ṣelem* as a physical image, and in particular a divine or cult image, fits the context perfectly well. That at God's awakening the *ṣelem* of the wicked will pass away as quickly as a dream does not thereby imply that *ṣelem* means a phantom or shade. Rather, it speaks to the powerlessness of the *ṣelem* of the wicked to endure before God. Whether this refers to false worship by the wicked, that is, to the idols they employ, or to the wicked themselves, imagined as *ṣelem* in possible resonance with Genesis 1 (these interpretations are not mutually exclusive), the resulting picture is of cult images set in slippery places, thrown down, and falling to ruin in divine judgment.

Psalm 39:4-6 speaks of life as fleeting, as vapor (הֶבֶל - *hebel*), and so *ṣelem* is read as similarly insubstantial (a shadow) in parallelism to *hebel*. However, the comparison with breath or vapor and the recognition of life's brevity do not suffice to indicate an incorporeal interpretation. The final line of verse 5, "Surely every human stands as *hebel*," is something of an oxymoron - breath or vapor cannot stand, but pass away. Neither can *hebel* roar, as in the second clause of verse 6. Likewise, "a man walks about like a *ṣelem*" may have an oxymoronic sense. A *ṣelem* could here be considered, especially given biblical polemics against cult images as lifeless, as a representation that is not mobile on its own. A man[7] is, in this way, as nothing, but not because he is bodiless or a shadow. He is as enduring as a breath, and as animate as a dead idol. There is no reason to

[6] Sharp suggests instead that the reference is to the suffering and destruction of Israel, but supports our reading of *ṣelem* as a cult image. Sharp, *Irony and Meaning in the Hebrew Bible*, 227-229.
[7] Hebrew here is *ish* - a gendered singular term, a man, not a generic term for people.

suspect that *ṣelem* is not here operating within its conventional sense of a physical image with cultic associations.

Having considered these passages, we find no evidence of any biblical texts at all (excluding for the moment the Genesis texts) which use *ṣelem* in a more general or abstract way to mean a non-physical representation or immaterial form, nor any in which the term lacks association with cult images or idols. A few further considerations reinforce this point.

The Aramaic cognate *ṣelem* appears frequently in one section of Daniel (seventeen times in 2:31-35 and 3:1-19), and there too is used in all cases but one to refer to a cult statue. In Daniel 2, the statue is the famous composite of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, constructed of gold, silver, iron, and clay. In Daniel 3, it is the statue which Nebuchadnezzar himself has made and commanded to be worshiped. That one exceptional usage may be significant - in a bit of wordplay in 3:19 it refers to Nebuchadnezzar's own angry facial expression when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to worship the statue. Rather than indicating that in Aramaic *ṣelem* sometimes indicates a general appearance of a thing, here a face, this suggests Nebuchadnezzar as the image of the cult image he has constructed, as if transformed into the image, and so draws on a larger theology that connects human and manufactured images. In any case, *ṣelem* in its biblical Aramaic usage remains quite physical and associated with cult.

The influence of the Septuagint and its parallel terms to *ṣelem* and *demuth* - usually εἰκών (*eikon*) and ὁμοίωσις (*homoiosis*) or ὁμοίωμα (*homoioma*) - will be discussed in chapter 2. It is enough to say here that the Septuagint broadly supports the interpretation of *ṣelem* as a cult image. Most uses of *eikon* are direct parallels to *ṣelem,* and conversely, most instances of *ṣelem* are translated by *eikon*. The cases in which *eikon* translates a word other than *ṣelem* (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:16, 2 Chronicles 33:7, Isaiah 40:19-20, Hosea 13:2) specifically involve other terms for idols. In two cases (Numbers 33:52, 2 Chronicles 23:17),

ṣelem is translated by εἴδωλον (*eidolon*) in the LXX, and clearly indicates an idol, and in one case (Amos 5:26) *ṣelem* is translated by τύπος (*typos*), but the context is obviously idol worship.

Demuth describes humans in relation to God only in Genesis 1:26 and 5:1, and in relation to a parent (that is, Seth to Adam) in Genesis 5:3. Most of its occurrences simply indicate a comparison between two things, and are commonly translated with such words as "likeness, form, resemblance," etc. In 2 Kings 16:10, 2 Chronicles 4:3, and Ezekiel 23:15 it is used for a physical copy. Note that one of those occurrences, Ezekiel 23:15, is also described with *ṣelem* in the preceding verse. One can gather that *demuth* is often more abstract than *ṣelem*, but not always so, and frequently lacks any cultic association.

The relationship between the two terms is complicated by their use in Genesis. While the order in Genesis 1:26 is "in our image (*ṣelem*), according to our likeness (*demuth*)," that order is reversed in Genesis 5:3 - "in his likeness, according to his image." If one term were meant to qualify the other, this reversal makes it difficult to say how. Note also that the prepositional prefixes *beth* (בְּ - in, among other possible senses) and *kaph* (כְּ - "according to", etc.) are tied to the opposite terms in 5:3 from their use in 1:26. Both prefixes can as easily be understood as "as" (*beth* in particular sometimes functions this way, the so-called *beth essentiae*), so, as with *ṣelem* and *demuth*, we see a degree of semantic overlap.

The 1979 discovery of a bilingual Aramaic and Akkadian inscription on a royal statue at Tell Fekheriye, Syria, demonstrates that Aramaic could employ the cognates of *demuth* and *ṣelem* in an apparently synonymous fashion,[8] in this case referring to a physical representation of the ruler dedicated to the deity Hadad (and so connecting royal and cultic purposes). While cognates are not

[8] Sasson, "The Aramaic Text of the Tell Fakhriyah Assyrian-Aramaic Bilingual Inscription," 86-103. Also Jonsson, *The Image of God*, 206-207.

dispositive for establishing the meaning of words in Hebrew, this inscription reinforces the difficulty of asserting a clear distinction between *ṣelem* and *demuth* in the Genesis texts. Demuth by itself might have a range of meanings, but when it appears alongside *ṣelem* (Genesis 1:26, Genesis 5:3, Isaiah 40:18-20, Ezekiel 23:14-15) it seems to function synonymously.[9]

In sum, *ṣelem*'s basic sense in Biblical Hebrew appears to be that of a cult image. The peculiar application of the term in Genesis 1, 5, and 9 will be re-examined later with this sense in mind. *Demuth* by itself is merely a likeness, but in pairing with *ṣelem* lacks meaningful distinction from the other term. The prepositional prefixes attached to the terms in Genesis allow for multiple interpretations, and are difficult to distinguish.

3. Interpretation of the Image of God in Genesis

The following overview will present a typology of interpretive approaches to the image and likeness of God in Genesis 1:26-27, focusing on their methodological differences, and offering preliminary evaluations of each in light of the previous conclusions regarding *ṣelem* and *demuth*. A number of excellent surveys of biblical scholarship on the *imago dei* are available, though the bulk of these date from the 1980s or before. The most comprehensive by far, and the most detailed with respect to underlying theological and methodological concerns, is Gunnlaugur Jonsson's study of research on the question from 1882 to 1982.[10] J. Richard Middleton has outlined the rough trajectory of much research since that time, and the typology below is based on his and Jonsson's surveys.[11]

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[9] So, Westermann concludes it is impossible to distinguish the terms in 1:26-27 in any meaningful way. Both nouns and prepositions are interchangeable, and amount to a single expression. This is not true of *demuth* or *ṣelem* in isolation, but appears to be the case in tandem. Westermann, *Genesis*, 1.145f.

[10] Jonsson, *The Image of God*. Also Westermann, *Genesis*, 1.142-161. Curtis, *Man as the Image of God in Genesis in Light of Ancient Near Eastern Parallels*. Clines, "The Image of God in Man."

[11] Middleton, "Image of God."

a. Spiritual Interpretations

Historically, by far the most common interpretation of the image of God, and the prevailing view into the 20th century, understands *ṣelem* and *demuth* as indicating a spiritual or intellectual aspect of the human being which exists in special analogy to God. This approach goes back at least to Philo of Alexandria and is commonly framed in terms of capacities such as reason and free will. It is typical within this approach to distinguish between *ṣelem* and *demuth*, image and likeness, such that the first term functions as the archetype or initial stamping, and the second its full realization in the creature. For example, Philo argues regarding Genesis 1:26 that,

> But as it is not every image that resembles its archetypal model, since many are unlike, Moses has shown this by adding to the words, "after his image," the expression, "in his likeness," to prove that it means an accurate impression, having a clear and evident resemblance in form.[12]

Augustine identifies the triad of memory, understanding, and will/love as *vestigia Trinitatis* in the human being,[13] and it is in this influential form, the psychological image of the Trinity, that the image of God is most often interpreted in Latin medieval theology.

The justification for this reading rests to a certain extent outside of Genesis in other dogmatic and philosophical, generally Platonic, assumptions. Since God is spirit (that is, explicitly non-bodily), his image must be non-material. The blessing of dominion in Genesis 1:28 is key to specifying the image; the difference between human and animal implied by that blessing is subjected to an Aristotelian differential logic such that those traits possessed by humans but lacked by animals constitute the divine image and likeness. The power of reason

[12] Philo of Alexandria, *De Opificio Mundi*, 71.
[13] Augustine, de Trinitate XIV.4.15 (Hill, 383).

is therefore also the power of dominion over other creatures, and the biblical concept of the human as image of God is assimilated to the concept of the human as rational animal.

As the previous discussion of *ṣelem* implies, a traditional spiritual interpretation finds little basis in the Hebrew text, and is uncommon in contemporary biblical scholarship. However, features of this interpretation sometimes recur in other models[14], and the approach remains common in Christian theology. The distinction between image and likeness, though unsupported on linguistic grounds, finds a certain theological warrant within the tension between universal and particular in the Genesis texts.

b. Physical Interpretations

In the late 19th century Hermann Gunkel and Theodor Nöldeke both advocated for material interpretations of the image of God in opposition to the then-prevailing spiritual view. Similar interpretations have been periodically, if uncommonly, expressed in the years since. Like the spiritual interpretation, an interpretation of this sort seeks to identify image and likeness with a substantial feature of the human being, such as physical appearance or upright posture. In Gunkel's case, Genesis 5:1-3 is decisive. Just as Seth is in Adam's bodily image and likeness, so Adam is in God's. Similarly, the prohibition against shedding human blood in Genesis 9:5-6 requires the image of God to be recognizable in the concrete natural form of a human.[15] Nöldeke argues via a hypothetical etymology that *ṣelem* derives from a root meaning "to cut," and indicates a physical image cut from wood or stone.[16]

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[14] A modern example is Firmage, "Genesis 1 and the Priestly Agenda." Firmage proposes that the image of God in Genesis 1 be viewed as an underpinning for the dietary law described in Leviticus 11. This differs from spiritual interpretations in identifying the image not with a capacity of the soul, but with the potential to achieve holiness by dietary observance.
[15] Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos*, 9.
[16] Jonsson, *The Image of God*, 46. Nöldeke, *Untersuchungen zur Kritik des Alten Testaments*, 127.

Just as the spiritual view of the image depends on dogmatic assumptions about God's immateriality, the physical view implies a rejection of the same. Gunkel expresses a clear preference for the "primitive narrative" he perceives underlying the Priestly source, a narrative that he takes as thoroughgoing, rather than occasional, in its anthropomorphic depiction of the divine. Ludwig Köhler's interpretation of the image as the human being's upright stance seems an oddity, but clearly follows the logic of the spiritual interpretation in deriving the essence of the human negatively, by way of difference from animals.[17]

While the linguistic basis of a physical interpretation is clear, the theological implications are murky at best. Widespread aversion to speaking of God as bodily consigns such a view to perpetual minority status. However, as with the spiritual interpretation, aspects of physical interpretation - for example, Gunkel's emphasis on filiation and Nöldeke's definition of *ṣelem* as a shaped, physical image - find their way into various proposals. Recent work on divine embodiment among biblical scholars likewise resonates to a degree with a physical interpretation of the image of God.[18]

It is common to suggest that both physical and spiritual interpretations err in their exclusivity, as a human in the Hebrew conception cannot be reduced to separable physical and spiritual components.[19] Gunkel himself recognizes that physical similarity does not rule out spiritual likeness.[20] On the opposite side, Protestant interpreters seizing on original righteousness as the spiritual sense of the image have often allowed that perfected bodily strength and integrity attended righteousness in Adam and Eve.[21] However, these two lines of interpretation cannot simply be combined into a single approach. The physical

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[17] Koehler, *Old Testament Theology*, 147. Jonsson, *The Image of God*, 110-111. Also Curtis, *Man as the Image of God in Genesis*, 41-43.
[18] Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel*. Hamori, *"When Gods Were Men."* Wagner, *Gottes Körper*, partially translated and revised as Wagner, *God's Body*.
[19] von Rad, *Genesis*, 56. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament,* vol. 2*,* 122-125.
[20] Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos*, 9.
[21] Schmid, *Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 221-227.

and spiritual interpretations each seek to define image and likeness in terms of a specific intrinsic quality or capacity; to shift discussion to the human as an indissoluble whole renders image and likeness opaque. Such an approach would make *ṣelem* synonymous with the human per se, and result in a tautology, not a definition. Nevertheless, the spiritual and physical interpretations share an obvious similarity in seeking for the image in an intrinsic quality - in this respect, both have also been termed *substantive* interpretations.[22]

c. Relational Interpretations

Relational interpretations of the image of God avoid the problems of substantive views by taking image and likeness to mean the whole human as constituted by relation to God. The prototypical form of this interpretation is the proposal of Karl Barth, as articulated especially in the *Church Dogmatics III/1*, leaning heavily on the phrase "male and female" in Genesis 1:27 as the interpretive key to image and likeness:

> The only thing that we are told about the creation of man... is that "God created them male and female." Everything else that is said about man, namely, that he is to have dominion over the animal kingdom and the earth, that he is blessed in the exercise of the powers of his species and the exercise of his lordship, and that he is to draw nourishment from the plants and trees, has reference to this plural: he is male and female.... In this way he is a copy and imitation of God. In this way he repeats in his confrontation of God and himself the confrontation in God.[23]

Thus, image and likeness name the analogy of relation between God and human, which is expressed in the correspondence of the human as male and female to God in God's own Trinitarian self-relation.

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[22] This terminology is used by Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, and Van Huyssteen, *Alone in the World?*
[23] Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 3/1, 185-186.

While Barth is highly critical of most previous interpreters, whose versions of the *imago dei* strike him as sheer invention, the exegetical basis of his own position is nearly as thin. Apart from a very traditional, proto-Trinitarian reading of the divine plural "let us" in 1:26, his attention is entirely on "male and female," a prioritization inexplicable on merely syntactic or contextual grounds.[24] Barth draws on the views of Wilhelm Vischer and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, sharing similar metaphysical assumptions, particularly a preference for an ontology expressed in the I-Thou relationship over more traditional categories of substance. Barth's analogy of relation, of course, owes much to his earlier engagement with Erich Przywara, a debt often expressed negatively as criticism of Przywara's *analogia entis*.

Interpretations of Genesis 1 along roughly Barthian lines are still common among theologians, but much rarer in biblical studies. Claus Westermann's contribution to the *imago dei* discussion is often grouped with Barth's as a "relational" approach, though it is in many respects dissimilar.[25] Westermann accepts neither of the exegetical pillars of Barth's reading, and little of its metaphysical basis. The resemblance to Barth rests in his assertion that the creation of the human in the image of God constitutes human existence as existence in relation and correspondence to God. As any sort of likeness or imaging could plausibly be termed a relation, this designation of Westermann is largely meaningless. In fact, Westermann refuses most of the questions typical of the approaches outlined here, especially the most basic: what is the image of God?

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[24] See Bird, "Male and Female He Created Them" and "Sexual Differentiation and Divine Image in the Genesis Creation Texts."

[25] Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, Curtis, *Man as the Image of God in Genesis*, and McDowell, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden* assign Westermann to the "relational" category, though they significantly qualify Westermann's ties to Barth's proposal. Jonsson, *The Image of God*, is more cautious in his assessment of Westermann's vicinity to Barth.

d. Functional Interpretations

A fourth position, ascendant within contemporary Hebrew Bible scholarship, is identified by several names - royal, functional, royal-functional - and many variations, but roughly consists in the view that the terms image and likeness indicate the human's function as a divine representative. Some disambiguation is in order: the label "functional" is sometimes used narrowly to refer to that interpretation which elevates dominion as the distinguishing feature of the divine image, but here the term should be taken to require no such specific identification.

As early as 1915 Johannes Hehn suggested that the term image of God could be understood by reference to Babylonian and Egyptian texts which speak of a human king as the image of a god, and so present that ruler as the god's representative.[26] Subsequent interpreters have suggested other parallels, but functional views of *imago dei* can in part be distinguished by a preference for interpreting Genesis 1 against the background of ancient Near Eastern sources.[27]

Attention to these sources, as well as to the context of Genesis 1:26-27 within the Priestly creation narrative, has connected the image to a significantly broadened range of biblical material. Whereas previous interpretations found little textual grounding outside of Genesis 1, publications within the last twenty years have brought image of God language into conversation with Psalms 18 and 89,[28] Ezekiel 1-11,[29] Exodus 32-34,[30] Isaiah 40-55,[31] Leviticus 11 and the Holiness Code

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[26] Jonsson, *The Image of God*, 55-58. Hehn, "Zum Terminus 'Bild Gottes.'"
[27] Examples include von Rad, *Genesis,* 60. Schmidt, *The Faith of the Old Testament*, 182ff. Wildberger, "Das Abbild Gottes Gen 1:26-30."
[28] Crouch, "Made in the Image of God."
[29] Strine, "Ezekiel's Image Problem."
[30] Herring, *Divine Substitution,* 138-162.
[31] Janzen, "Ecce Homo." Schaper, "Divine Images, Iconophobia, and Monotheism in Isaiah 40-66."

generally,[32] and Genesis 2-3.[33] It may be that much of the argumentative force behind functional interpretations derives from their power to shed light on texts beyond Genesis 1, rendering the image of God a much less biblically marginal concept.

As indicating a material cult image, the term *ṣelem* slides easily into a functional interpretation, especially as focus turns from royal representation to a wider context of divine images. Nevertheless, significant theological obstacles remain, both in differences between interpreters and among the texts they bring to bear. Most centrally, there is a notable difference between Genesis 1, which refers to humanity at large, and other texts which describe only particular divine representatives. Ancient Near Eastern parallels do not speak of a universal human imaging of god or gods. That the Bible does in some places but not in others presents a puzzle, and leads towards one of the chief problems addressed in this study.

While the advantages of certain interpretive approaches over others have emerged through this typology, and this study can in general be said to adopt the main elements of a functional approach to the image of God (though at points drawing from the other approaches), a serious caveat remains. Each of the approaches outlined above, falter on the most basic question regarding the image: what is it?

Various attendant features are suggested, but the thing itself eludes. Why should the question prove unanswerable? A survey of the literature suggests a fifth interpretive category, what one might playfully call *recusant* interpretations of Genesis 1:26-27, which not only resist providing a simple definition of the image of God, but make a point of the question's unanswerability or even illegitimacy.[34]

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[32] Firmage, "Genesis 1 and the Priestly Agenda."
[33] McDowell, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden*, and Schüle, "Made in the Image of God."
[34] Here, one might more accurately place Westermann, but also Barr, and in some respects Ian McFarland, *The Divine Image*, 11.

This matter will be revisited later in the chapter. In order to reach that impasse, and to properly understand it, the methodological impulses of the functional approach will first be followed through. The following section addresses the concept of images in an ancient Near Eastern context, followed by a closer look at the Priestly theology of Genesis 1 and its relation to other biblical texts.

III. Imago Dei in Context

1. Divine Images in the Ancient Near East

> ...rather than being a copy of something in reality, the image itself was seen as a real thing. It was not considered to resemble an original reality that was present elsewhere but to contain that reality in itself. Therefore, instead of being a means of signifying an original real thing, it was seen as ontologically equivalent to it, existing in the same register of reality.[35]

So observes Iraqi art historian Zanaib Bahrani regarding *ṣalmu*, the Akkadian word for image and cognate to the Hebrew *ṣelem.* As with the biblical use of *ṣelem*, a *ṣalmu* is a physical image. However, even the gloss of *ṣelem* or *ṣalmu* as cult image is misleading if the more basic conception of an image, the relation between reality and representation, is not properly clarified. While a significant variety of uses and meanings of images obtains within a cultural context as broad as the ancient Near East, certain general inferences are possible. An examination of Assyrian and Babylonian use of images, supplemented by some reference to Egyptian sources, will demonstrate the contrast between these ancient Near Eastern and modern concepts of image. The significance of the parallels to the biblical image of God can then be assessed.

In brief, a *ṣalmu* is a representation, but not an imitation, not a signifier intended to suggest by resemblance a real thing that is fundamentally other than the

[35] Bahrani, *The Graven Image,* 127.

ṣalmu. Bahrani instead insists that it is a "natural representation," which is to say, not a portrait, functioning by mimesis, or standing in relation to an original as an illusion stands in relation to the truth.[36] It is natural because it stands on the same ontological plane as what it represents - it is straightforwardly real.

What makes a certain physical object a *ṣalmu* is not that it is an especially accurate depiction of a god or a king in statuary form, but that the image as a whole, in its context - including its appearance, the inscriptions identifying it, its clothing, its ritual use - is a repetition or double, a manifestation of the original. The image of the god is not present in the temple in order to remind worshippers of the god, but as the presence of the god in the temple.

This is the major deficiency in the proposal, popularized by Gerhard von Rad, that the image of God in Genesis finds its parallel in the practice of kings establishing images in distant lands as symbolic projections of their dominion.[37] The parallel may be in part correct, but the understanding of it is insufficient. The image does not function merely to transmit power, but as a double and extension of the person, and as such conveys presence rather than absence. Furthermore, the exclusively royal focus of von Rad's explanation misses the connection and the distinction between royal and cult images. Either could be termed a *ṣalmu*, and royal images frequently bore inscriptions dedicating them to deities, or even in rare cases became objects of cult devotion themselves. Kingship had undeniable cultic associations, not least because the king himself could be described as a *ṣalmu* of the god. The inscription on the Tell Fekheriye statue may indicate such a dual purpose. However, an image of the king was not quite the same as an image of a god.

A number of Assyrian and Babylonian texts describe the *mīs pi* (mouth washing) or *mīs pi* and *pīt pi* (mouth washing and mouth opening) rituals, used to

[36] Ibid., 123.
[37] von Rad, *Genesis*, 59-60 and *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1, 146.

consecrate and vivify divine cult images.[38] An image given life in this way is considered to be born directly from the gods, as the ritual enacts a denial of human workmanship: the craftsman throws away his tools, disavows having made the image, and has his hands symbolically cut off. The now living and divine image gains the ability to see, hear, eat, and speak, and is installed in its temple. Its movements are the movements of the god. The statue that becomes the god is not inherently divine, but as an image it becomes a visible, concrete mediator of divine presence.

This divine presence should therefore be understood in bodily terms, though not necessarily in the same terms applicable to human bodies. Benjamin Sommer characterizes the Near Eastern conception of difference between divine and human bodies and selves as the capacity for divine bodies to be "fluid" in several ways.[39] The divine self might involve fragmentation, such that various deities with the same name both are and are not distinguishable from one another: "Ishtar of Arbela acts independently of Ishtar of Nineveh, and both of them act independently of Venus - yet their independent actions are completely parallel to each another."[40] In this, we can see how two or more different images might both at once be Ishtar.

Likewise, the selves and bodies of deities ordinarily seen as different might at times overlap. A late 2nd millennium hymn to Ninurta identifies other deities as parts of Ninurta's body. A hymn to Marduk similarly identifies aspects of Marduk with other gods: "Sin is your divinity, Anu your sovereignty, Dagan is your lordship, Enlil your kingship, Adad is your might, wise Ea your perception..."[41] This overlap was not a general rule or principle, as if Enlil were always an aspect of Marduk; these gods were generally quite distinct from one

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[38] See McDowell, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden*, 15ff.; Walker and Dick, "The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia". Also Clines 81-83; Sommer, 19-22; Strine, 253-256.
[39] Sommer, The Bodies of God, 12-37
[40] Sommer, 14-15.
[41] Ibid., 16.

another. In some instances two ordinarily distinct gods could even be thought of as one *combined* god, a temporary merger.[42] The significant matter for this study is that this fluidity of divine bodies in Near Eastern cultures corresponds to and makes sense of the ontology of images. The concept of image as manifestation of divine presence requires a theology in which the divine difference from humanity expresses itself in just this kind of fluid presence.

Accordingly, the loss, destruction, or defacement of a divine image must be understood as befalling a living entity. When Marduk's image was taken from Babylon by an Elamite ruler in the 12th century B.C.E., temple rites to Marduk in Babylon ceased; Marduk had departed. When the image was returned under Nebuchadnezzar I, rites resumed; Marduk had returned.[43] This departure and return are not described as plunder in Babylonian texts, but as the travels of the god. Defacement of an image or alteration of its inscription are attacks - real violence, sometimes opposed by inscribed curses threatening the one who would do such violence.[44]

The integral relationship between inscriptions and *ṣalmu* further illustrates the nature of an Assyrio-Babylonian image. A card on the wall of a contemporary art gallery, located next to a painting - often enough, next to a painting that is not present - is typically viewed as incidental to the painting. By contrast, the inscribed words that name a *ṣalmu*, celebrate it, and curse any who would harm it are part of the image. Words and writing exist on the same ontological plane as other things. Omens and sign are "written into the real,"[45] including into human and animal bodies. Language, in a broad sense - including the pictorial - "creates the real."[46]

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[42] Ibid., 17.
[43] Bahrani, 177f.
[44] Ibid., 179ff.
[45] Ibid., 136.
[46] Ibid., 147.

This does not mean that every sort of pictorial representation is a *ṣalmu.* As has been suggested, a statue or the like has to become an image, a process in which written words, incantations, and ritual actions all play their parts. Just as crucially, however, it means that not only manufactured objects could be *ṣalmu.* Kings and even priests could, under the right conditions, also be called images of gods.

While our discussion to this point has centered on Mesopotamia, Egyptian sources show an ontology of images sharing some features with Mesopotamian thinking. A parallel Egyptian ritual to the *mīs pi*, the *wpt-r* (opening of the mouth), was used in various contexts for the consecration and vivification of cult objects, ranging from statues of deities to mummies (that is, human bodies) and in one case, an entire temple.[47] Despite differences from the Mesopotamian rituals, the thrust is similar - the object of the ritual becomes a living mediator of divine presence, and is addressed and treated as such.

E. M. Curtis cites Egyptian texts naming at least eighteen different pharaohs as images of gods, establishing this description as unexceptional in the New Kingdom.[48] The Egyptian notion of kingship included the ruler's divine birth and continued divine status. The king's central cultic role as mediator of divine presence, in many ways similar to a cult statue (e.g., curing illnesses and pronouncing divine oracles are attributed to both), also serves to explain why Egyptian priests could at times be spoken of as images of gods.

However, there is reason for caution in our interpretation of the relationship between divine imaging and Mesopotamian kingship. Fewer Mesopotamian texts than Egyptian refer to humans as divine images, and rarely speak of rulers as personally divine in the ways common for Egyptian texts. Middleton notes the contrast between Egyptian and Mesopotamian royal ideologies, suggesting that

[47] McDowell, 85.
[48] Curtis, *Man as the Image of God in Genesis in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Parallels*, 226f.

in Mesopotamia the king's status as image of a god was qualified by function or behavior - that is, by his characteristically doing the things the god does.[49] Bahrani nuances this somewhat differently - the king may be an embodiment of a god, but neither in a singular way, nor as a unique privilege of kingship. She draws attention to the performative, ritual context of the words declaring the king as *ṣalmu* of the gods Shamash or Marduk. He does not mirror the heavenly realm generally, but is a momentary substitution, a non-unique body double for the god.[50]

However it may be, a number of Akkadian texts of the 13th to the 7th centuries BCE do refer to kings as *ṣalmu*, or otherwise describe them in divine language. Tulki-Ninurta I, a 13th century BCE Middle Assyrian ruler, is said to be born of the gods, and described thusly: "It is he who is the eternal image [*ṣalmu*] of Enlil, attentive to the people's voice, the counsel of the land."[51] Tulki-Ninurta's military conquests figure prominently in that account. Other texts do not refer to the king's divine birth, but often emphasize his words or judgments as those of gods. A 7th century Babylonian astrologer addresses his Assyrian king this way: "The king of the world is the very image [*ṣalmu*] of Marduk: when you have been angry with your servants we have suffered the anger of the king, our lord, but we have also experienced the king's favor."[52] The king's justice and mercy are, at least in this specific context, divine judgments.

A 7th century Assyrian incantation text places the divine image in a priest instead: "The spell is the spell of Marduk, the exorcist-priest is the image [*ṣalmu*] of Marduk."[53] Middleton describes this as a "functional analogy," indicating that for the purposes of the exorcism, the priest is the image of Marduk. Bahrani

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[49] Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 118f. For his extensive discussion of ancient Near Eastern background for the *imago dei*, 93-145.
[50] Bahrani, 142f.
[51] Foster, *Before the Muses,* 1.213.
[52] Tigay, 172.
[53] Middleton, 117. Bahrani argues for a different translation: "The conjuration is Marduk's conjuration. The conjurer is Marduk's presence/manifestation/substitute [*ṣalmu*]."

draws attention to the same text, emphasizing its performative nature - it is by this repetitive incantation that the priest becomes Marduk's double, and so his words Marduk's words.

In this way, the basic potential of a human to image a god is established. However, the conditions under which such imaging might take place were rarified. Certain activities, if not inherently divine, stood much closer to divinity than others. We can see this in an account of the responsibilities of the 9th century Babylonian ruler Nabu-apla-iddina, to whom, "the great lord Marduk entrusted the righteous sceptre, the shepherding of the peoples, to avenge Akkad, to make cities habitable, to found sanctuaries, to prepare reliefs, to put in order rites and cult objects, to establish regular sacrifices, to increase offerings."[54]

The ordinary Near Easter view of humanity stands in sharp contrast to this elevated example. In *Enuma Elish*, the Babylonian creation epic, humans were created as slaves to perform menial labor and provide for the gods' needs. The *Atrahasis Epic* likewise describes the creation of humanity for the purpose of relieving the gods from the necessity of labor. A similar view is expressed broadly across ancient Mesopotamian literature.[55] Each of the tasks given to Nabu-apla-iddina relates to such provision, which is the purpose of the whole of human social order. The scepter is given to the king so that he might rule over the people, make war upon enemies, and impose order on the land. Under such order the people can build cities, which exist for the support of temples, homes for the gods, so that sacrifices and offerings may be given, removing from the gods the responsibility to labor for themselves. While there is something godlike about overseeing labor as a king does, and about speaking for the god as a priest might, it is unthinkable that the great mass of human toil carries divine weight.

[54] Middleton, 119.
[55] Middleton, 165-167.

In such a setting, it would be straightforwardly false to say that humans in general serve as divine images. Undoubtedly Israel's regional neighbors - the cultural juggernauts of Egypt and Mesopotamia - applied the concept of a divine image to both rulers and certain priests in a period roughly contemporaneous with the relevant texts in Genesis.[56] Sommer identifies similar dynamics of fragmentation and overlap of divine selves in Northwest Semitic divinities (e.g., the various intertwined Baals) to those in Mesopotamia, including embodied divine presence in stelae, known as betyls (from *beth el*, house of god).[57] A human image of a god might thus be possible. However, no known Mesopotamian texts make such a claim about humanity as a whole, and the only Egyptian texts that might do so appear idiosyncratic and isolated to a period long before the Hebrew Bible.[58] Furthermore, the God of the Bible differs in significant ways from these sorts of gods. If broader Near Eastern conceptions of image are to be of use in understanding the biblical image of God, these apparent differences must be explained.

2. Creation, Temple, and Ideology Critique

J. Richard Middleton's *The Liberating Image* is noteworthy among recent works on the image of God for its extensive engagement with Near Eastern sources, its treatment of biblical material in that light, and the clarity of its theological and ethical vision. His proposal rests on his contextualization of the image of God within Genesis 1-11 and in connection with the themes of temple/tabernacle and priesthood, understood in contrast to Mesopotamian ideology. This section

[56] Precise dating of the Priestly writer is beyond the scope of this overview. Since the extra-biblical parallels easily cover a period from the 13th century to post-exilic, some configuration of the above applies regardless.
[57] Sommer, 28-29.
[58] Curtis identifies the *Instruction for Merikare* and *Instruction of Ani* as possible parallels for Genesis 1:26-27. Middleton rejects these, as they significantly predate any period in the history of ancient Israel. To the extent that they express notions of common humanity in the divine image, this is atypical of later Egyptian writing, which reserves such language for the pharaoh. Middleton, 99-104.

draws upon Middleton to examine the link between creation and temple, and then assesses his interpretation of the *imago dei* as ideology critique.

The basic literary structure of the Genesis 1:1-2:3 creation narrative is of eight creative acts and *fiat* statements ("Let there be…" or "Let us…") spread over six days, preceded by an introduction (Genesis 1:1-2), and followed by a conclusion (the seventh day, Genesis 2:1-3). These days and creative acts are further divided into two "panels" of four creative acts each, the first four corresponding to the establishment of the static regions or spaces of creation, and the second four to the population of those regions with living and mobile inhabitants.[59]

The various fiat statements establish a pattern of God creating by speaking. God declares a thing, and then it is reported that the thing is so, followed by some evaluation. Genesis 1:3-4 is prototypical: "Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good." This pattern is maintained through the final creative act, the creation of humans, though the fiat statement there takes on a distinctive, deliberative form: "Let us make…" Verse 27 therefore appears as the execution report following the fiat of verse 26: "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

Some interpreters have detected in this structure an echo of a royal motif in God's activity, his effective word standing in parallel to the powerful words of human rulers.[60] Whether or not this royal imagery is altogether clear, another significant motif is more easily established, that of God as builder or artisan of creation.[61] The division of creation into two panels of three days and four creative acts each displays a careful, intentional construction process. The

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[59] This summary borrows considerably from Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 60-90. Much of this structure is described in various standard texts on Genesis, but Middleton's discussion is helpful insofar as it is calibrated to a discussion of the image of God.
[60] Middleton, 66-74, responding to Patrick and Scult, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation*, 115, and Stek, "What Says the Scripture?" 234.
[61] Traced out in Middleton, 74-88.

“without form and void” gradually takes on form and is then filled with living occupants. Days one through three see (1) light separated from darkness, (2) a dome established to separate upper from lower waters and create sky or heaven, and then (3) the separation of the lower waters into dry ground to create earth and sea. The fourth through sixth days, in precise correspondence, see (4) the lesser and greater lights (moon and sun, but unnamed) and stars placed in the heavens to rule over or govern day and night, (5) birds and fish placed in the upper and lower waters, and (6) the dry land filled with animals, including humans. Days 3 and 6 each include an extra act of creation, with vegetation produced on the earth on the third day, and humans, to whom the vegetation is given for food, on the sixth.

A number of biblical texts describe God’s creation of the world in architectural terms - laying a foundation, measuring and setting the earth in place, etc. Creation is thus presented as a kind of building, set on pillars (the mountains) and covered by a dome. So 1 Samuel 2:8b, “For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s, and on them he has set the world.”[62]

The building motif is even more explicit in Job 38:4-7:

> Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
> Tell me, if you have understanding.
> Who determined its measurements—surely you know!
> Or who stretched the line upon it?
> On what were its bases sunk,
> or who laid its cornerstone
> when the morning stars sang together
> and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

[62] Further language of this sort can be seen in Job 9:6, 26:11, 37:18, Psalm 33:7, 75:3, 104:5, 119:90, and Amos 9:6.

Proverbs 3:19-20 associates the divine building activity with wisdom:

> The Lord by wisdom [בְּחָכְמָה] founded the earth;
> by understanding [בִּתְבוּנָה] he established the heavens;
> by his knowledge [בְּדַעְתּוֹ] the deeps broke open,
> and the clouds drop down the dew.

Nearly identical language is used Proverbs 24:3-4 to describe a house:

> By wisdom [בְּחָכְמָה] a house is built,
> and by understanding [וּבִתְבוּנָה] it is established;
> by knowledge [וּבְדַעַת] the rooms are filled
> with all precious and pleasant riches.

God is the supreme builder in Isaiah 45:18, identified as the creator whose creation is meant to be inhabited:

> For thus says the Lord who created the heavens,
> he is God, who formed the earth and made it,
> he established it;
> he did not create it a chaos,
> he formed it to be inhabited:
> I am the Lord, and there is no other.

The identification of God as he who has "stretched out the heavens" and "laid the foundations of the earth" appears as a formula in Isaiah 48:13 and 51:13 and 16, but Zechariah 12:1 extends that formula to include the creation of the human as the cosmos' inhabitant: "Thus says the Lord, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the human spirit within him."

Genesis 1 draws on this building motif to describe the creation of the cosmos as the establishment and population of a habitable structure. More specifically, the edifice so described can be likened to a temple. A number of correspondences between Genesis 1-2:3 and the instructions to Moses for constructing the tabernacle in Exodus 25-31 point to creation and tabernacle as not only similar, but related structures. These parallels are well-documented, such that Middleton himself only briefly summarizes them.[63] Several warrant our attention.

In Exodus 31:3, at the conclusion of the instructions, Bezalel is appointed to oversee the manufacture of the tabernacle and its various implements. To equip him for this task, Bezalel is filled with the Spirit of God (רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים - *ruach elohim*), and so granted wisdom (חָכְמָה - *chokmah*), understanding (תְּבוּנָה - *tebunah*), and knowledge (דַּעַת - *daath*). This set of terms is repeated in reference to Bezalel in Exodus 35:31. The triad of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge is the same as from both Proverbs 3:19-20 and Proverbs 24:3-4, describing God's attributes in building the cosmos, and the building of a house/temple, respectively. In 1 Kings 7:13, they are also attributed to Hiram, who fashions the temple furnishings for the prototypically wise Solomon. The phrase *ruach elohim* is fairly rare in scripture - aside from these two appearances in Exodus, in the Pentateuch it only shows at the beginning of the creation story in Genesis 1, and in Genesis 41:38 in reference to the wise (חָכַם - *chakam*, the same root as *chokmah*) Joseph. There is a scriptural nexus between the Spirit, wisdom, and the construction of a sanctuary.

The structure of the tabernacle passages also runs parallel to the pattern of creation in Genesis 1. Seven times in Exodus 25-31[64] God speaks to Moses,

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[63] Middleton, 81-88. For more, Levenson*, Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 66-99; Fretheim, *Exodus*, 268-272. Blenkinsopp, "The Structure of P," 275-292.

[64] The locations of the divine speeches, each introduced with the words, "The Lord spoke to Moses," are Exodus 25:1-30:10, 30:11-16, 30:17-21, 30:22-33, 30:34-37, 31:1-11, and 31:12-17.

culminating in God's seventh speech, concerning the seventh day and the Sabbath, which finishes: "Therefore the Israelites shall keep the sabbath, observing the sabbath throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed." Likewise, the tabernacle's construction in Exodus 35-40 concludes with, "In this way all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished; the Israelites had done everything just as the Lord had commanded Moses... When Moses saw that they had done all the work just as the Lord had commanded, he blessed them." (Exodus 39:32, 43).

This association between tabernacle or temple and Genesis 1 is not merely an observation of modern scholarship. Jewish tradition from Josephus through the Talmud and medieval Rabbinic works also emphasizes connections between the passages, albeit via somewhat different arguments. This is the ancient tradition of the temple as microcosm, as repeating the cosmos in miniature - even as its capstone or completion. As Jon Levenson notes: "In this current of Rabbinic thought, as in the older temple mythos of the Hebrew Bible and its Near Eastern antecedents, the point is not simply that the two projects, world building and temple building, are parallel. Rather, they implicate each other, and neither is complete alone. The microcosm is the idealized cosmos, the world contemplated *sub specie creationis*, the world as it was meant to be, a powerful piece of testimony to God the creator, a palace for the victorious king."[65]

One strong, if peculiar, piece of evidence in support of creation as a sanctuary comes in Isaiah 66:1-2. This post-exilic text appears to critique the rebuilding of the temple by affirming the status of the cosmos itself as the house of God, and the act of creation as analogous to human construction:

> Thus says the Lord:

[65] Levenson, 99.

Heaven is my throne
  and the earth is my footstool;
what is the house that you would build for me,
  and what is my resting place?
All these things my hand has made,
  and so all these things came to be,
says the Lord.

The Isaiah passage does not disavow the temple as dwelling of God, but it implies that it cannot be *more* the house of God than creation already is; temple and creation house God in the same way. One might say that the temple's legitimacy stems from this relation. To put it differently, the temple is something like an image of the cosmos. The qualifier "something like" is necessary because a temple is not, strictly speaking, an image. A temple typically *houses* an image. This, however, points to the place of the human. If the created world of Genesis 1 is a temple, then it is within that temple that the human, its crowning inhabitant, stands as image of God.

Middleton's reading of Genesis 1 implies a royal and cultic functional understanding of the divine image. Since creation is a sanctuary not made with human hands, the creation of a human image of God, gifted with dominion over other creatures, is also the shaping of a human priesthood. Humans are established as images not only to order and subdue the earth, but to mediate divine blessing. The link between cosmic sanctuary and tabernacle parallels that between the universal scope of human vocation and the story of Israel: "The human vocation as *imago dei* in God's world thus corresponds in important respects to Israel's vocation as a "royal priesthood" among the nations (Exodus 19:6)."[66]

In contrast to the royal ideologies of Mesopotamia or Egypt, this form of divine

[66] Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 90.

mediation belongs to humans broadly because it represents a different understanding of divine power. This "democratization" of the divine image therefore represents a potent critique and inversion of Near Eastern ideology. Creation is not founded upon an original violent conflict between God and chaos.[67] Humans were not created as slaves, byproducts of this conflict, to provide for the needs of the gods. The king's violent imposition of order does not image the original creative act. Instead, Genesis 1 strikes against any inscription of violence into the fabric of the cosmos or the being of God. The creation of the human as *imago Dei* is the act of a self-giving and liberating God, and so tied to God's redemptive work.[68]

Middleton's theological vision is sweeping and potent. Nevertheless, the coherency of his account masks, even exacerbates, some serious problems. We have noted the repeated tension in the Genesis texts between the human taken as universal and as a particular individual: "So God created *adam* in his image, in the image of God he created *him*; male and female he created *them*." In Middleton's reading, this polarity has become much more severe, as the democratization of the imago dei is its liberating force. Anything short of that universal scope pulls toward the Mesopotamian ideology which God opposes.

Middleton has therefore oversimplified the democratization of the image. He overlooks problems on the surface of the Mesopotamian accounts: human behavior is noisy and chaotic, and civilization seems to require the suppression of many individual impulses. Under those conditions, it would appear incoherent or evil to declare all humanity as imaging God - rather than declaring the peace and order of God, this would suggest God as monstrous and chaotic. The biblical picture is not so one-sided. While Genesis 9 uses the image of God to oppose human violence, it also presupposes violent conflict, and invokes the

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[67] Middleton recognizes various appearances of *Chaoskampf* mythology - the primordial and creative combat of the god with a serpentine, watery embodiment of chaos - within the Hebrew Bible. He takes Genesis 1-11, however, and Genesis 1 in particular, as a subversion and demythologization of that tradition. Middleton, 263-266.
[68] Middleton, 297.

divine image precisely as a threat: "Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed; for in the image of God / God made humankind." All that Middleton identifies with the liberating, universal image of God is present in the Bible, but he has articulated only one end of the polarity. The absence of any mediating structure or theological description of this polarity compromises his account.

The same problematic structure recurs in multiple forms in his reading of Genesis 1 and the Priestly tradition. The assertion of a neat correspondence between the universal human vocation as *imago dei* and Israel's vocation as "royal priesthood" overlooks the tension between Genesis 1's universal scope and the particularity of Israel. Similarly, the correspondence between cosmos and historical temple or tabernacle masks the tension (clear in Isaiah 66) between God's universal presence and the singularity of Jerusalem. At one point, Middleton seems to broaden the universal scope of image beyond humanity, denying that humans are "absolutely unique" in imaging God.[69] The issue is not that there is no relation between the poles of universal and particular or cosmos and human, but that the Bible clearly presents them as related, such that the polarity cannot be easily split apart or collapsed to one side. It must be carefully described and navigated, for it represents a basic theological problem.

3. The Many Images of God in the Hebrew Bible

Middleton's understanding of the *imago dei* as a liberating critique of Near Eastern ideology, while among the most comprehensive of recent offerings, is only one among many to take up a functional view. However, there is considerable variance among them as to the scope, purpose, and identification of the human image of God. The question asked at the outset of the chapter, whether the image of God might be only a Priestly peculiarity confined to the first part of Genesis, is thus practically inverted. Can coherent sense be made

[69] Middleton, 289fn48.

from the strange assemblage of divine images, or do we find an irreducible difference in the manifold expressions of the concept? In either case, what are the theological implications? This section attempts to sift some of these proposals, with attention to the light they cast on the identified polarities.

Andreas Schüle[70] and Catherine McDowell[71] see strong connections between the *mīs pi* rituals (McDowell also considers the Egyptian *wpt-r* ritual texts) and the creation of the human in Genesis 2. When God shapes Adam from earth, breathes life into his nostrils, and sets him in the garden, God thereby produces the man as a living cult image. This suggests an influence of the image of God theme beyond the Priestly corpus. McDowell and Schüle differ considerably in their interpretations of the relationship between Genesis 1 and 2. Schüle understands the image of God as the central, all-encompassing anthropological concept of the Priestly code. Genesis 2 is read as a Yahwist critique of that anthropology, which does not allow for free human response and development. The events of Genesis 3 are not a fall, but positive stages in this development - the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the expulsion from the garden, and the entry of death are all identified with human freedom and creativity, lacking in the image of God framework of Genesis 1.

Against this reading, McDowell stresses that the royal-cultic function of the image of God is secondary to a more basic filial relationship implied by the image, as seen in Genesis 5:1-3.[72] The Priestly image of God, as a living child of God, thus includes many features which Schüle denies to it. The events of Genesis 3 are not positive developments; in its canonical location, Genesis 2 describes and interprets what Genesis 1 means by image of God, but in complementary rather than contrastive fashion.

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[70] Schüle, "Made in the Image of God."
[71] McDowell, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden*, and "In the Image of God He Created Them."
[72] McDowell, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden*, 200-202.

She considers two specific figures in the Hebrew Bible who are compared to cult images. First, the vestments of the Israelite high priest identify him as an image of God. Details such as the purple woolen headband with inscribed gold plate ("Holy to the Lord") parallel descriptions of purple woolen headbands and gold ornamentation worn by divine statues in Mesopotamia. "In short, the high priest, when dressed in his full regalia, seems to have been a living representation of Yahweh to Israel, but he may have also functioned as a living "cult statue" of corporate Israel designed to dwell in the presence of Yahweh, dressed, adorned, and coded in such a way as to rank him with kings and gods."[73]

Second, Isaiah occasionally describes corporate Israel using language typical of images.[74] Israel must be smelted and refined (Isaiah 1:25 and 48:10), and is repeatedly referred to as the work of Yahweh's hands (Isaiah 29:23, 60:21, and 64:8). These examples are not particularly strong, but read in the context of the polemic against idols as the work of human hands (Isaiah 2:8, 37:19, and 41:29), they are suggestive. Neither McDowell nor Schüle contends with the question posed by the universal scope of Genesis 1 and 2, in contrast to the particular instances of human images of God in the comparative literature or elsewhere in the Bible.

Gerald Janzen[75] explicitly builds on Middleton's interpretation of the image of God and Genesis 1-11 as ideology critique, seeing a similar purpose in Second Isaiah. Through attention to the language of idol making and use in and around the Servant Songs, he argues that the servant of YHWH is displayed as the true image of God, though one who images YHWH in an unexpected way - he bears sins. Janzen is careful to distinguish the image of God from its Babylonian counterpart in terms of theological content; the God here imaged is not at all like Marduk.

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[73] McDowell, 211.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Janzen, "Ecce Homo."

The calling of servant Israel is carefully interwoven with the polemic against idolatry. In Isaiah 41:6-7, people in fear encourage one another, constructing an image and fastening it in place so that it "cannot be moved." Verses 8-10 then describe Israel, "my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend... I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand." The nations attempt to steady their images, but Yahweh himself upholds Israel.

A similar juxtaposition takes place in Isaiah 42:1-8. The servant, Yahweh's chosen, receives Yahweh's spirit and will bring justice to the nations. In verse 8, however, glory and praise are reserved to Yahweh alone: "I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols." This is not a contradiction, or a qualification of what is given to the servant, but an expression of how the servant is identified with Yahweh. In Isaiah 49:3, the servant is associated with the divine glory; likewise, in Isaiah 46:13, Israel is "my glory", and in Isaiah 43:7 Israel is created "for my glory." The sense of 42:8 is that idols do not share in what is Yahweh's, but the servant does - it is a true image.

Isaiah 46:1-4 describes the idols of Bel (that is, Marduk) and Nebo as haltingly carried in procession on animals; by contrast, God promises to carry Israel: "even to your old age I am he, even when you turn gray I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save." Similarly, in Isaiah 43:24, God is burdened with Israel's sins. In the fourth Servant Song, Isaiah 52:13-53:12, it is the servant himself who bears sins, like God, and not like the idols of the nations. This servant is "high and lifted up", like the vision of Yahweh in the temple in Isaiah 6, in the place where a cult image would be.

Janzen explicitly connects creation to redemption, but also to anthropology and eschatology. Significantly, he shows how the anti-idol polemics in Second Isaiah employ a concept of a valid image of God. While he does not directly address the tension between universal and particular scope in the image, one may note that a

similar problem is repeated in the figure of the servant himself, as his identity oscillates between individuality and corporate Israel.

Taking up similar material to Janzen, Joachim Schaper considers the image of God in relation to aniconism and monotheism in Isaiah 40-66. He begins with an apparent disagreement between Genesis 1:26 and Isaiah 40:18 - both speak of a *demuth* of God, but while Genesis 1 explicitly states such a thing to exist, Isaiah 40 appears to say that such a thing cannot exist, or at least, cannot be produced by humans. Reviewing the terminology for idols and idol production, Schaper notes one location, Isaiah 43:10, in which language used for fashioning an idol is directly applied to Yahweh:

> You are my witnesses, says the LORD,
> and my servant whom I have chosen,
> so that you may know and believe me
> and understand that I am he.
> Before me no god was formed,
> nor shall there be any after me.

Schaper contends that the force of this paradox has been missed. God, who is utterly incomparable and made by no one, compares himself to the manufacture of other gods, and so negates them. Similar vocabulary will be used, however, to speak of Yahweh's creation of Israel (cf. Isaiah 43:7).

To explain this ambiguity and the larger relationship between Genesis 1 and Second Isaiah, Schaper draws on the work of Benjamin Sommer on divine corporeality. Isaiah 40:18 does not deny any form or likeness for God, but instead assumes that God has one. The reader of its rhetorical question, "To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?" is meant to supply the answer by drawing from Genesis 1:26: "the *demuth* which can be made of God

cannot be produced by a human being, but it can indeed be produced by God himself, and that *demuth* is none other than the living human being."[76]

Similarly, the polemic against idols in Isaiah 44:9-18 repeatedly draws attention to the futility of their manufacture as a human action. The material of the idol is the same stuff over which a woodcutter bakes his dinner and warms himself in the evening. The craftsman's disavowal is absurd, as the idol is no different from anything else he makes with tools. All of the powers which the *mīs pi* was supposed to confer upon the image, the life and deity within it, are absent - it cannot see, understand, or save. By contrast, the creative activity of God is so universal that it cannot be captured by human production - but it also needn't be, because the God of Israel has made such a likeness already. Schaper is therefore able to connect Israelite aniconism with the *imago Dei* tradition and God's role as creator. However, he does not address the difference in scope between passages which treat humanity as image of God and the more specific identification of Israel in this way.

Benjamin Sommer's *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* is not specifically focused on the image of God, but on the question of divine embodiment in the Hebrew Bible. Sommer argues that virtually the whole Bible assumes divine corporeality, which nevertheless does not compromise monotheism, and he explores its forms in relation to the Near Eastern traditions of fluid divine bodies. The biblical traditions vary in the concepts they use to speak of bodily presence, addressing it within such terms as glory, word, and name, and differ as well in the matter of fluidity.

For example, the Priestly tradition broadly held that God was bodily present in Zion, and not elsewhere. The *kabod*, the divine glory, is specifically located and spatialized: it fills the sanctuary so that humans may not enter, moves around, and in Ezekiel's vision, departs Zion. However, in Genesis 18 (a J text), God

[76] Schaper, 151

manifests to Abraham as three men. Later in the passage, two of the visitors depart, and the remaining one is identified as Yahweh.[77] The ones who depart are later identified as angels, but ambiguity remains regarding God's presence, as the already earthbound deity announces in verse 21 an intention to "go down" and observe Sodom and Gomorrah. This and other passages suggest a kind of fluidity of body akin to Near Eastern deities.

Rather than seeing this fluidity as a primitive stage of development, not yet fully monotheistic and inevitably to be overcome by more philosophically pure models, Sommer argues for its theological value. The fluidity model, "speaks of a God with a body, and hence a God who can be nearby, but its God is also radically unlike a human being, for God's fluid self and unity across multiple bodies are fundamentally incomprehensible to humanity… The immanent deity of the fluidity model can, mysteriously enough, be wholly other, even more so than the transcendent one."[78]

For Sommer, the specific question of the image of God is to be viewed in relation to this larger question about divine embodiment. He sees no reason not to read Genesis 1:26-27 in a basically physical sense, relating the shape of humans to that of God, even arguing that the physicality of Genesis 5:1-3 demands such a reading.[79] The human is a sort of statue of God. Sommer does not dwell on the question of the image's function, though he does briefly note the functional implications of his reading.[80] Oddly, he does not attend to the fact that the image of God in Genesis 1:26, a Priestly text, suggests a divine embodiment in these human images, and so a form of fluidity in its own right. On this point, his assertion that the P tradition rejects divine fluidity has to be questioned. Neither does he consider a difference in scope between a universal human image and particular divine representatives. However, Sommer does note the peculiar

[77] Sommer, 40.
[78] Sommer, 143.
[79] Sommer, 69-70
[80] Sommer, 225n73.

shifting between singular and collective uses of *adam* in the Genesis texts, but draws no further conclusion from it.

C.A. Strine argues that the prophet Ezekiel's movements in chapters 1-11 are modeled on the *mīs pi* ritual, such that the book presents the prophet as YHWH's living image and unique authorized representative.[81] He contrasts this *imago dei* anthropology with that of the Priestly account, suggesting that while they have several features in common, they disagree in purpose and scope. Both Genesis 1 and Ezekiel conceive of a human image of God. However, Ezekiel represents the prophet alone - not all humans, either presently or eschatologically[82] - as the divine image. Correspondingly, the function of the image is different, as Ezekiel shows no sign of a royal aspect. Rather, his standing as a divine image confirms Ezekiel as a sign that a true prophet has been among the exiles in Babylon. Strine concludes that Ezekiel and P exhibit related but undeniably different *imago dei* anthropologies.

Strine's argument is unique for its explicit attention to the difference between a singular representative and a "democratized" image of God. He does not attempt a theological mediation between these views, but clearly understands them as representing diverging paths. It is further to Strine's credit that he recognizes (leaving to further research) the importance of such difference for a full account of the *imago dei*.

Other[83] scholars[84] have identified still more instances of the image of God concept in the Hebrew Bible. While such research has reinforced the

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[81] Strine, "Ezekiel's Image Problem."
[82] Contra Kutsko, ""Ezekiel's Anthropology and Its Ethical Implications," 128; Herring, "Divine Substitution," 218.
[83] Stephen Herring, *Divine Substitution*. Among several examples, Herring considers both Moses and the golden calf in light of the *mīs pi* and Mesopotamian use of images, seeing in them a contest between two visible mediators of divine presence. He does not seek to adjudicate between the divine image as a universal and particular human cases.
[84] C. L. Crouch, "Made in the Image of God." Crouch argues that an earlier tradition underlying Genesis 1 placed the king in the role of image of God. This tradition, dependent on Near Eastern royal ideology, associated the image with divine sonship (as Genesis 5:1-3 implies) and with the

significance of the image of God to the Hebrew Bible as a whole, it has not consciously pressed the questions with which we began this section. A relative methodological convergence (chiefly, attention to Near Eastern parallels and contextualization of Genesis 1:26-27 within the P tradition) has, rather than establishing a single, coherent concept of the image of God, splintered it.

IV. The Unknown and Manifold Image

Despite a robust collection of biblical associations for the image of God, major questions remain. Strine assesses that Ezekiel and Genesis 1 conceive of the image differently, the former limiting it to the prophet himself, the latter expanding to all humanity. Similar problems could be raised in relating Genesis to examples cited by Janzen (the servant of Yahweh) and Herring (Moses), and more broadly, to the Near Eastern parallels of royal and cult images. Middleton argues for a historical step of "democratization" of the image, as does Crouch, stepping from the king alone to all of humanity, but historical process does not answer the conceptual problem.

Ezekiel images Yahweh only insofar as he is set apart as a mediator by Yahweh's initiative, authorized in this role, placed in the proper setting, purified, and given words to say on Yahweh's behalf. What it means for him to be an image of Yahweh is relatively easy to define on account of that personal specificity. The same could be said for any mediation of the image through an individual. However, if not only Ezekiel, but all other humans past or future, including the king of Babylon, 12th century Chinese peasants, and the San Diego Tabletop Wargaming and Roleplaying Association were also declared living images of Yahweh, it would be unclear what that form of imaging could consist in. Even

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ancient *Chaoskampf* mythology. Crouch draws on Psalms 8, 18, and 89 to demonstrate traces of what Genesis 1 has polemically erased, democratizing the image to all humanity. As her focus is mainly historical, Crouch does not address the theological problems implied by the shift.

more, it would be unfathomable who the Yahweh might be who was thus imaged.

This resembles the problem posed by seeking to combine spiritual and physical interpretations. In each, the image is marked out by a specific quality. When those qualities can no longer be picked out of a whole, "image of God" becomes another name for the whole. It means the human as such – a conclusion no few interpreters have reached.[85] Should we then say, with Barth, that the image is the *analogia relationis?* Or perhaps simply dominion, in the crudest form of functionalism? Interpreter after interpreter, chastened by the criticisms of Barth, Westermann, James Barr, and others, qualifies that the phenomenon toward which they point is not itself the image of God, but a consequence of it. Can it be defined at all? Werner Schmidt considers that perhaps it cannot be.[86]

1. Refusing the Question

Earlier, we noted Westermann's refusal of the question of the image of God as usually posed. While his survey of the history of interpretation[87] of Genesis 1:26-28 offers fewer concrete objections to Barth's view than some others (while also asserting that it arose before Barth, and does not depend on the peculiar fashion in which Barth puts the question), Westermann should not be understood as settling on that interpretation. Rather, he rejects all standing interpretations as inadequate, or rather, as asking and answering a fundamentally inapposite question:

> Scarcely one of the many studies of the text asks about the process that is going on. Nor do they try to isolate and understand it so as to distinguish

[85] Schüle expresses this most radically when he judges that within the Priestly view, "there is nothing that could possibly be said about Adam without referring to his being created in the image of God." Schüle, "Made in the Image of God," 7.
[86] Schmidt, 197.
[87] Westermann, 147-158.

> between it and the conclusion, namely, that it is humanity created in this way by God that is the image of God. There can be no question that the text is describing an action, and not the nature of human beings.[88]

Westermann takes the correct question to be the nature of the act of creation which allows an event to unfold between God and humans. Both Genesis 1 and 2 describe the creation of a human who can serve as a counterpart to God - nothing *else* is here added to the definition of a human.[89] Westermann therefore insists on humanity as a whole as the scope of the text - absolutely all humans, under all conditions and differences, believing or unbelieving.

There is an admirable logical clarity to Westermann's approach. If the image of God is entirely bound up with this universal act of creation, then no specific divine representative or image can be considered, and no particular content to the image can be countenanced. That the human as image of God somehow represents or witnesses to God is excluded outright as impossible, unless the meaning were that the human represents God before the rest of creation (a possibility he rejects without further comment).

The trouble, of course, is that the Bible does not present a picture as clean as Westermann's. Instances of particular and collective human representatives - the high priest, Moses, Ezekiel, the Servant, Israel as a whole in distinction from the nations - present themselves as drawing on the tradition of divine images. Even Genesis 1, and still more Genesis 1, 5, and 9 considered together, oscillate between singular and plural expressions, between humanity as such and the particular human, between relation to God and relation to other humans, or other creatures at large. Westermann's observations and objections are sharp, but do not overcome the actual pluriformity of the human image of God in scripture. Here we encounter a theological impasse.

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[88] Ibid., 155.
[89] Ibid., 157.

James Barr's 1968 lecture, "The Image of God in the Book of Genesis: A Study of Terminology," names this impasse. Any seeking after a referential meaning for the phrase "image of God," whether in a specific entity or in a specific relation, including dominion, is doomed. In a bracing passage, Barr rejects the possibility of defining the image of God:

> To these profound questions this lecture will supply no answer, because there is no answer to be found, and the putting of the question in this form arises from a misunderstanding of the literary characteristics and the spiritual situation of the P writer. There is no reason to believe that this writer had in his mind any definite idea about the content or the location of the image of God.[90]

Barr, like Westermann, rejects any attempt to consider the image of God apart from its setting in the creation narrative. Having already ruled out definition, he instead tries to account for why the Priestly writer might have reached for the terms *ṣelem* and *demuth* over others. He is concerned for the function of the words, the web of associations and effects they have within that text. At the outset of that discussion, and in comparison between Genesis 1 and Isaiah 40:18 ("To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?"), Barr states:

> He [Deutero-Isaiah] thus posed a question which he himself did nothing to answer; and he himself did not require to answer it because, being a prophet, he was by no means trying to give an ordered or reasoned account of the world, of man, or of the origin of man. To give such an ordered or reasoned account was, however, just what the P document undertook to do, and in this context, where man as man was being described within an organized world, the question could not be avoided

[90] Barr, "The Image of God in the Book of Genesis - A Study of Terminology," 12-13.

> whether there was anything in this world – in this world which, it was granted, could not furnish out of itself any comparisons or analogies with God – which had any special or peculiar relation with God. The placing of man in such a special position is the function of the term 'image of God'; if it were absent from the structure of Genesis 1, the effect would be that man was only a dominant animal.[91]

This is a somewhat confusing passage, since he employs two terms, function and relation, that ordinarily name positions he has already rejected. Barr does not refer to the functional view of the image, but to the function of the term – he is concerned with the effect of the words. They have a power, and that power is the otherwise inexpressible difference between a human and a lordly animal. Here is the distillation of human uniqueness, to be found not in any capacity or observation about the human, but in the words, "image of God." Even more, there is in this observation the sense that it is words - God's words - which have power in the Priestly creation narrative.

Barr returns to this theme in his 1991 Gifford Lectures, quoting from the earlier lecture and following in this way: "It may thus be possible to say that, though the image of God is attached to the story of the creation of humanity, its primary function and purpose is to say something about God. Its dynamics develop from the need to clarify speech about *him*. Precisely for that reason one cannot necessarily locate the elements in human existence to which it applies. Nevertheless, by its own nature as a statement of *likeness*, this particular kind of speech about God necessarily says a great deal about humanity."[92]

Barr has granted that the image is at once impossible to lay hold of and of surpassing importance; its anthropological implications follow from a thoroughly theological center. It can be said of human beings, and that saying

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[91] Ibid, 14.
[92] Barr, "The Image of God and Natural Theology," 170.

has a purpose, but the image itself never comes to light. It is not lying around to be found, and our inability to identify it is not remediable by historical research. It belongs to God. Proper use of the *imago dei*, whatever that may entail, cannot consist in asking after a thing which has not been given and which steadfastly refuses to show itself.

2. The Impasse

We can now restate, in two parts, the theological aporia that has been so far uncovered, which will be taken up going forward under the terms *hiddenness* and *scope*. The first part, concerning the hiddenness or undefinability of the image of God, arises out of the simple observation that the image is God's. A definition cannot obtain because any part, capacity, or aspect of the human, once equated with the image of God, would also then serve as a sort of definition of God. The risk of Augustine's psychological image of the Trinity is not chiefly that it serves as a truncated account of the human, but that it might be understood to image the Trinity. Westermann and Barr's cautions about lifting the image of God from its context in Genesis 1 should, similarly, not be understood as merely hermeneutical warnings but as theological. God declares himself as creator in a specific manner and location. Here God speaks creation and here the human is spoken as God's likeness; where God does not speak, God is not known as creator and the human is not known as the image and likeness of God, so both remain hidden.

This hiddenness does not imply absence, as if God were not present and creating everywhere, or as if a god could not be posited in some sense as creator and the human in some sense as image. Instead, it signals indeterminacy and pluriformity. This is what is shown in the creation accounts and divine images of Israel's neighbors. The primordial chaos of these accounts reflects an ontological plurality which must be violently reduced to one, in the cosmos and in human

society. Marduk (the king) slays Tiamat (his enemies), and from her corpse creates an ordered world.

The problem is only intensified by the variety of Israel's own image of God traditions and their ambiguous scope. Considered as separate strands, they do not appear so different from their pagan counterparts. It is in Israel's peculiar confession of the one God, in the binding of these traditions into a single body, that the distinction lies. The image of God is the living human, but Israel's psalms also address images of false gods:

> "Our God is in the heavens;
> he does whatever he pleases.
> Their idols are silver and gold,
> the work of human hands.
> They have mouths, but do not speak;
> eyes, but do not see.
> They have ears, but do not hear;
> noses, but do not smell.
> They have hands, but do not feel;
> feet, but do not walk;
> they make no sound in their throats.
> Those who make them are like them;
> so are all who trust in them." (Psalm 115:4-8)

Such images - the manufactured idols and their worshippers together - are not alive, and in that sense the worshippers are not even human. Here, and in the nearly identical phrasing of Psalm 135:15-18, the likeness is a question of faith or trust. Genesis 1 with its universal scope makes no such explicit stipulation, but on reflection, a too easily "democratized" image of God terrorizes rather than liberates. The mere assemblage of the whole human species, moving, thinking, and worshiping at odds with one another, embodies and manifests chaos, not the

one God. The image of God is hidden under conflict and contrast, which is to say, under sin.

This may account for the disappearance of even the phrase “image of God” after Genesis 9. The progressive catastrophe of Genesis 3-11, humanity’s spiraling rebellion against God and enmity with one another, eventually chokes out any appearance of the divine image. That it might occasionally manifest itself in suggestions and glimpses, in the temple cult, through a handful of representatives, and negatively in the polemics against idolatry, all fits this picture. The second part of the impasse is therefore expressed by the polarity in the image between one and many, individual and species. On the one hand, the image of God is clearly stated of a universal humanity that does not appear to manifest any unity; on the other, it is manifested but at best indirectly stated of particular representatives whose relationship to one another and the whole is unclear.

3. The Spoken Image

In light of this impasse, we return to Barr’s assessment of image of God language as arising from the need to clarify speech about God. This analysis is intriguing, though subtly misleading. Speech about God is necessary, but left to itself readily takes on the character of innumerable misguided essays into the image of God – just one more attempt to lay bare in description that which is well and truly hidden. It issues in the sort of hopeless fragmentation previously described. Another way must be taken.

Once again, the instruction to pay heed to the Genesis 1 context of the image is felicitous. The image does not arise within speech about God, but specifically within God’s own speech, an address which creates. This is the correct place for Barr’s observation that a proper analysis of the image of God concerns the effect of the words in Genesis 1. The sort of repetitive, highly structured speech

encountered in Genesis 1, an ordered speech which constructs a cosmic temple, has a liturgical character. This is not to claim that Genesis 1 is a liturgy - at least, not a historic, human liturgy.
Consider, however, a historical speculation following along this trajectory: that the Priestly writer or those who subsequently employed his text were priests. As such, it may well have lain within their ambit to on occasion speak words in a liturgical setting. Some of these words must have been about God, but more importantly, some must have been spoken *for* God, as God's own words, as a divine address to the hearer. This is not pure speculation; the Bible is full of such material, some given explicitly to the priests to speak.[93]

The priest of Marduk recited his incantation as if he had been, in that moment, Marduk. Bahrani emphasizes the possessive construction: "The incantation is Marduk's incantation, the exorcist-priest is Marduk's image." The reflexive divine "Let us make *adam* in our image, according to our likeness" of Genesis 1:26 is no less deliberate, but unfathomably greater in effect. It does not temporarily manifest the one spoken (*adam*) in the speaker (God), but creates the one spoken as the speaker's image. The writer of those words, and any other for whom they were meant, could hardly have escaped the connection between the image and likeness therein declared and the task of speaking for the God who declared and created him as image and likeness.

This is neither to straightforwardly equate the image with priesthood, nor to reduce it to the human power of speech, but to draw attention to the way in which the image of God is given and received in Genesis: it is spoken and heard.

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[93] Consider the blessing given to Aaron to speak in Numbers 6:22-27: "The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them, The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them." God's summary statement, "and I will bless them" indicates that it is through the words of the priests that God blesses. Aaron's words are God's words.

It is in the activity of speaking that it is given as a likeness. And it is in the hearing that it is received. Similarly, Genesis 1:26-27 is not merely a text about the image of God, nor even about the creation of the human in the image of God - it is a text in which God the creator and God's human image are revealed together by God's speaking. The human in the image of God is the purpose of God's words. Investigation of the divine image is therefore concerned with those words, not just as concepts but as activity, as the work of creation in the address to creatures, and as its mediation through the creature who is called an image of God.

V. Conclusion

Linguistic and historical evidence indicates broad biblical use of the concept of humans as divine images, and affirms many of the conclusions of recent functional descriptions, but leads to a double aporia. Definition of the image of God still appears impossible, and the scope of the image remains indeterminate. Attention to these problems redirects our attention to the words of Genesis 1:26-28 as an act of divine speech, and again to that act as transmitted in human words.

However, the words of Genesis 1 present the whole problem in miniature. No definition is given, but the oscillation between a collective and singular *adam,* given in a repeated shifting of pronouns - "Let *them* have dominion... in the image of God he created *him*; male and female he created *them*" - highlights the difference between a singular representative and the human species. Our attention next turns to the history of interpretation of Genesis 1 and the attempts to resolve both the hiddenness of the image and its scope through the person of a mediator, and so to the New Testament association of the image with Christ, and to early Christology as responsive to the problems of the hiddenness and scope of the image.

Chapter 2
Image of the Crucified

I. Introduction

The first chapter introduced *scope* and *hiddenness* as terms for a set of related, persistent problems in its analysis of the image of God. Scope is in a sense shorthand for the problem of the one and the many in reference to the *imago Dei* - does the image apply to all, or to some subset? Succinctly: Who is it? This polarity shows itself initially in the shift from plural to singular reference and back in Genesis 1:26-27, and is implicit in the tension between Genesis 1 and texts emphasizing specific figures. The problem of scope is intertwined with hiddenness, which refers to the dynamic non-appearance and revelation of the divine image. Succinctly: Where is it? The polarity in scope is also a polarity between the image's hiddenness in humanity at large and its manifestation in particular representatives. Such manifestation is principally communicated through the vehicle of divine speech.

This chapter examines the scope and hiddenness of the divine image and the manner of its mediation in the writings of some early Jewish and Christian interpreters, including the New Testament. It is intended as a series of soundings conducted in light of a particular phenomenon: the Christian association of the *imago Dei* with the man Jesus of Nazareth. This exploration is a variation on an already observed pattern. While the Hebrew Bible predicates the divine image to humanity as such, absent any manifest unity but shown in various representatives, New Testament and early Christian interpretations ascribe the image of God to Christ and relate universal humanity to him in the promise of a unity to come.

II. Second Temple Jewish Developments

The debates and theological responses that characterize early Christian interpretation of the *imago Dei* were in large part already present in early Judaism. Second Temple Judaism saw the image discussed in the Greek language and interpreted through the vocabularies of Hellenistic philosophy, and came to express the image as a mediator between God and the human. Divisions within Judaism on authority, cult, and daily practice pressed the questions of the scope and hiddenness of the divine image - where is it, and how is it manifest? Grant Macaskill observes that, to a great degree, these divisions were a matter of "ownership" of the stories of Israel: "As divided as the various groups within Judaism may have been, their division revolved around the question of who could truly claim to be Israel, to be the heirs of the stories told in those Scriptures broadly acknowledged as such."[1]

I take that question of ownership to relate closely to the problem here formulated as scope. The identification of humanity as God's image stood in productive tension with the vision of Israel as God's elect nation. Within this tension, the true Israel was not only chosen but exemplary of the divine purpose for humanity. Thus, the contest over ownership of Israel's stories entailed, to some extent, specifying where and in what manner the image of God would be rendered visible. The following section examines several early Jewish sources - the Septuagint text of Genesis, the books of Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon, and the writings of Philo of Alexandria - with an eye toward their refinement of the questions of scope and hiddenness of the *imago Dei* and the role of mediators prior to Christianity.

[1] Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the NT*, 103.

1. Greek Old Testament

Differences between the Hebrew and Greek texts of Genesis 1:26-27, 5:1-3, and 9:6, are, as measured against other parts of the Bible, relatively minor. However, the transition from Hebrew to Greek vocabulary had a subtle influence over the range of possible interpretations. Further, the Septuagint's phrasing presents a distinct problem of interpretation in its own right. These features suggest the Septuagint's increased, though limited, openness to interpretations of the divine image as abstracted from the concrete human.

a. Vocabulary

Most commonly, the Greek εἰκών (*eikon*) takes the place of *ṣelem* and ὁμοίωσις (*homoiosis*) or ὁμοίωμα (*homoioma*) substitutes for *demuth* in the Septuagint. While *homoiosis/homoioma* are close parallels to *demuth*, functioning as general terms for similarity, *eikon* presents a more complex case. The LXX carefully maintains the cultic associations and presumption of physicality that characterize *ṣelem*: *eikon* is only used when those features are in view, and so in context it retains the sense of a cult image. Outside the Septuagint, however, the term is not so restricted. In Plato, for example, it ranges from a simple comparison or likeness[2] to a mental image[3]. It is plausible that readers of the Septuagint familiar with Greek literature would countenance more abstract interpretations of *eikon*.[4]

As noted, the correspondence between *eikon* and *ṣelem* is not absolute. The Septuagint occasionally reverses the terms it associates with the Hebrew (e.g., 1 Samuel 6:5) - *homoioma* for *ṣelem*, or *eikon* for *demuth*. Numbers 33:52 and 2

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[2] Plato, Republic, VI 487e. "Your question," I said, "requires an answer expressed in a comparison or parable [*eikon*]."
[3] Plato, Timaeus, 29b. "Again, if these premises be granted, it is wholly necessary that this Cosmos should be a Copy [*eikon*] of something."
[4] See also *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2, 388-390.

Chronicles 23:17 translate *ṣelem* with εἴδωλον (*eidolon*), a term more specifically indicating an idol. Amos 5:26 uses τύπος (*typos* - usually an imprint or impression, though with an enormous range of extended meanings) to likewise indicate an idol. The cases in which *eikon* translates a word other than *ṣelem* (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:16, 2 Chronicles 33:7, Isaiah 40:19-20, Hosea 13:2) specifically involve other Hebrew terms for idols.[5]

Therefore, the principal difference between the Greek and Hebrew vocabularies for the image of God texts lies in the semantic range of *eikon* outside the scriptures. This difference is a critical component of the shift toward non-physical interpretations of the image, even as the Septuagint itself maintains the association of *eikon* with cult images.

b. Prepositions and Syntax

The Greek text of Genesis 1:26-27 differs from the Hebrew in two ways. First, where the Hebrew employs two different prepositions (-בְּ *beth* and -כְּ *kaph* prefixes) in reference to image and likeness in verse 26, the LXX uses only κατά (*kata*) with the accusative. As we saw in chapter one, while the senses of *beth* and *kaph* prefixes can be distinguished, they may also overlap, which in this case would provide the sense of "as". The single use of *kata* has a more straightforward sense of "according to" - it more often suggests distinction than identity of the terms it relates. Consequently, while in chapter one I argued that the Hebrew text supports a reading of the human created *as* the image and likeness, this is a more difficult reading in the LXX. The position taken by Grant Macaskill,[6] among others, is that *kata* indicates a third thing mediating between God and the human - an image which corresponds to God, and humanity created

[5] Including *pesel* and *massekah*.
[6] "The Greek translation reflects a differentiation between the likeness/image of God and man. Man is made 'according to' the pattern of that image and likeness..." Macaskill holds that the Hebrew also supports such a distinction, leaning on rabbinic readings for that case. *Union with Christ in the NT*, 135.

on the basis of that image, as to a pattern. The theological sensibilities a reader brings to *eikon* color such a reading significantly - is the *eikon* a physical image, and so an embodied prototype, or something ideal? Complex antique conversations about divine embodiment likewise shape interpretation at this point.

Second, the Septuagint maintains the same shift between singular and plural as the Hebrew in verse 27 - "in the image of God he created *him*, male and female he created *them*" - but lacks the corresponding ambiguity in its term for the human. ἄνθρωπος (*anthropos*) means the human generically, and cannot perform the same double duty as the Hebrew *adam*. Therefore the Greek text necessarily makes stronger judgments as to whether a given phrase refers to humans in general or to the individual Adam.[7]

Genesis 5:1-3 differs more significantly from the Hebrew. The same movement between the human as singular and plural occurs, but again without the ambiguity of the Hebrew *adam*. Rather, Adam is in Greek a proper name, in 5:2 nevertheless attributed to the created species: "he named *their* name Adam."[8] In verse 3, rather than likeness and image, the terms are ἰδέα (*idea*) and εἰκών (*eikon*) - form and image. Once again, the preposition is uniformly *kata* - according to. However, the sense cannot be presumed the same as in 1:26-27. It is implausible that Seth begotten "according to [Adam's] own image," should imply a mediator or prototype between Seth and Adam. Rather, it means simply that Seth is like Adam, as the human creature is like God in 1:26-27. This leans against a reading of *kata* as showing distinction between terms.

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[7] Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, xiv and 10-12.

[8] Bouteneff, *Beginnings,* 12. "In the same verse [5:1], the LXX then uses Adam as a kind of fulcrum, identifying it/him both with the generic plural that immediately precedes and proceeds as well as with the person who would be the forefather of Noah. Then in 5:2 Adam serves as the generic (or possibly even personal) term for a male/female humanity."

Genesis 9:6 shows little difference from the Hebrew, but varies from Genesis 1 and 5. In contrast to those texts, the preposition associated with image is not κατά but ἐν - "*in* the image of God I made the human." If a difference in sense from Genesis 1 is thereby intended, the meaning of that difference is not at all clear. We conclude that the distinction between *kata* and *en* is not meaningful for these passages, and thus that interpreting *kata* as if it implied the image as a third term or prototype - or at least, as if it obviously denied the identity of the created human with the image in 1:26-27 - lacks textual warrant.

This presents a difficult problem. The use of *kata* in the LXX complicates a reading similar to that argued for the Hebrew. However, a reading of *kata* as implying a third term - the image between God and the human, according to which the human is shaped - is also unlikely, perhaps ruled out by Genesis 5:3. Resolution in any particular direction is likely to rest on other grounds than language alone.[9] What is required is to reassess the theological steps by which interpreters address the matter.

2. Early Jewish Imago Dei Interpretation

Sirach, the Wisdom of Solomon, and several works by Philo of Alexandria are considered in this section. This selection is not intended as fully representative of early Judaism. Rather, these texts demonstrate approaches to the *imago Dei* tradition with clear similarities to, and likely influence upon, important early Christian interpretations. Attention to the scope and hiddenness of the image in these will cast light on similar strategies in early Christian literature, and indirectly highlight what is distinctive to Christian interpretation.

[9] Macaskill tacitly acknowledges this. His argument for 'according to' is as much theological as linguistic or historical: the distinction serves to ensure that, "an appropriate distance is maintained between the divine and human form." Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the NT,* 135.

a. Sirach

The Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira, or Sirach, was composed in Hebrew sometime in the early 2nd century BCE, and translated into Greek by the author's grandson.[10] It exists in fragments in Hebrew, and more completely in Greek, Latin, and Syriac translations. Its textual problems notwithstanding, Sirach is an important witness to one form of early Jewish traditions regarding the image of God. Chapter 17 contains an extended passage[11] concerning the creation of humans:

> 1 The Lord created a human being out of earth,
> and he returned him into it again.
> 2 He gave them days in number and a fixed time,
> and he gave them authority over the things upon it.
> 3 He clothed them in a strength like himself,[12]
> and in his image he made them.
> 4 He placed the fear of him upon all flesh,
> even to have dominion over beasts and birds.
> 6 Deliberation and a tongue and eyes, ears and a heart for thinking he gave them.
> 7 With knowledge of understanding he filled them,
> and good things and bad he showed to them.
> 8 He put the fear of him upon their hearts
> to show them the majesty of his works.
> 10 And they shall praise a name of holiness,
> 9 in order to proclaim the majesties of his works.[13]

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[10] Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 8-16.
[11] This passage begins at 16:26 with a description of God's creative activity, and continues through 17:24.
[12] Latin text. Greek reads: strength proper to them. Ziegler and several other interpreters emend the Greek text to agree with the Latin, though Skehan and Di Lella do not. Skehan and Di Lella, *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 281-282.
[13] Translation Benjamin G. Wright, from *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (NETS).

This account of the human's creation, even beyond its blending of the six days (Genesis 1:1-2:4) and paradise (Genesis 2:4ff.) narratives and the resulting ambiguity regarding *adam*,[14] hints at the problem of scope. The verses shift between singular and plural reference while speaking of humanity as a species in distinction from other species. In the larger passage, verses 11-14 address covenant and the giving of the law, and 17 is explicit regarding Israel's particularity: "He appointed a ruler for every nation, but Israel is the Lord's own portion." Verses 19-24 issue a call for repentance and return to the Lord. The whole passage may be read as a description of universal humanity in light of its culmination in God's relationship with Israel, and so progressing from the universal to the particular.

Sirach associates a number of gifts and characteristics with the image of God. These include the divine "clothing" of verse 3, and, in greater detail than Genesis 1, the bestowal of dominion. The fear of living creatures towards the human (v.4) has been transferred from the covenant with Noah in Genesis 9 into the original creation, and so more strongly associated with dominion and the image. The parallelism of the clauses in verse 3, if understood synthetically, further suggests a physical dimension to the divine image: it is manifest in strength appropriate to itself (the Greek text) or like God's (Latin). Dominion proceeds from this possibly godlike strength. Mental and physical powers are inextricably linked: the tongue is given for deliberation, and eyes, ears, and heart for thinking. In verse 13, eyes see and ears hear the divine glory. Sirach conceives the living human as an integral whole receptive to the divine.

Skehan and Di Lella differ on the ordering of verses 9 and 10, noting a very confused, likely damaged text and multiple attempts in the Greek to repair it. The missing verse 5, and an omitted portion of verse 8, are late additions to the Greek text only. *Wisdom of Ben Sira,* 279. Also Wright, NETS, 715f.

[14] Bouteneff recognizes the tension in the passage: "Adam is both all of humanity, and a specific person, the founding father of humanity." *Beginnings*, 19. While the Greek text of Sirach 17 does not use the name Adam, it alludes to the paradise creation story through the creation of humans from earth, and the name appears in 33:10: "All human beings [*anthropoi*] come from the ground, and *Adam* was created out of the dust."

Implicitly, one could understand the Latin text of Sirach 17:3 as assuming loss or damage to the image, as it seems unlikely that the intent is to attribute divine strength to present human existence - in Israel or otherwise. No fall or other diminution of humanity is mentioned in this passage, though 25:24 appears to blame death on the woman's sin.[15] The emphasis on Israel is an implicit acknowledgement of the hiddenness of the image - what is intended to be true for humans in general is manifest in Israel.

Sirach does not suggest a mediator representing the divine image itself, but personified Wisdom in 24:1-33 shares some features with the descriptions of Israel in chapter 17 and Simon the high priest in chapter 50. Wisdom's fullness is out of human reach (e.g., 24:28, "The first man did not know wisdom fully, nor will the last one fathom her"), so no simple embodiment is imagined.[16] Nevertheless, Wisdom adopts a particular location and function in Israel: "Among all these I sought a resting place; in whose territory should I abide? Then the Creator of all things gave me a command, and my Creator chose the place for my tent. He said, "Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance.""[17] This location is the place of worship and the temple cult: "In the holy tent I ministered before him, and so I was established in Zion."[18]

The functions of proclamation and praise in 17:9-10 cast the human in a priestly light, evidencing wisdom and showing the influence of Genesis 1 as reflecting a cultic role for humanity within the sanctuary of creation. This priestly orientation is typical of Sirach, which climaxes in its memory of Simon in chapter 50. He is described not only as a rebuilder of the temple (v.1-3) and the

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[15] Sirach 25:24, "From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die."
[16] This contra the excessive claim that Simon the High Priest "embodies" or "incarnates" Wisdom and the divine Glory. Fletcher-Louis, "The Cosmology of P," 7f., and Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 7, 52. Hayward's claim is more nuanced than Fletcher-Louis presents - he qualifies that Simon "in some measure" represents or embodies Wisdom "as he carries out his sacrificial duties in the temple."
[17] Sirach 24:7-8
[18] Sirach 24:10

city (v.4), but as shining like Moses with divine glory (v.5-10). The peak of that description is the relating of Simon's majesty in executing temple worship and performing the blessing from God (v.20). Thus, Simon appears, without explicit language of *imago Dei*, as an idealized human: he is a living, priestly image of God, full of wisdom, clothed in glory, and speaking God's own words to the people.[19] Crispin Fletcher-Louis draws attention to the link between the Sabbath (Genesis 2:1-3), the blessing spoken by Moses at the completion of the Tabernacle (Exodus 39:32; 39:43; and 40:33), and the blessing spoken by Simon at the completion of the temple service (Sirach 50:19-20).[20] Tying the blessing to the completion of creation suggests an eschatological dimension to the blessing and the divine image - albeit an eschatology realized within the cult rather than awaiting future fulfillment.

This comports with the picture of the human in 17:1-10 as a nearly divine being, whose life and death are dependent on God, but who stands over creation in super-animality, exercising physical dominion and ruling as a priest. Bouteneff assembles the pieces: the high status of Adam in 49:16[21] is appropriate to a first father of Israel, whose glory is visible (not hidden) in the high priest Simon.[22] In the absence of explicit future eschatology, Simon functions as a realized example of the telos of the human creature. Thus is explained the movement in scope from universal humanity to Israel and its priestly representatives.

b. Wisdom of Solomon

The Wisdom of Solomon is younger than Sirach, though its date is uncertain.[23] Composed in Greek, it shows substantial philosophical influence, and offers a

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[19] Fletcher-Louis, "The Cosmology of P," 46-49.
[20] Ibid., 49-54.
[21] "Shem and Seth and Enosh were honored, but above every other created living being was Adam."
[22] Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 18. "One must recognize here a nascent tradition of seeing Adam as a being endowed with primordial and royal glory, a tradition with possible reference to Ezekiel 28:13 and continuing through later Jewish literature."
[23] DeSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha*, 132f.

complex interpretation of the image of God, notably including Wisdom as a non-human mediator. One passage, Wisdom 2:23-24, makes explicit reference to the human as *imago Dei*:

> for God created the human [ἄνθρωπον] for incorruption,
> and made him an image [εἰκών] of his own eternity,[24]
> but through the devil's envy death entered the world,
> and those who belong to his company experience it.

The scope of this reference is unquestionably universal humanity. Unlike Sirach, which does not appear to admit such a possibility,[25] Wisdom identifies the image of God as a sharing of God's incorruption (*aphtharsia*) or eternity (*aidiotetos*); death implies loss or damage to the image. This loss is particularly attributed to the devil's envy, a tradition shared with the *Life of Adam and Eve*.[26] These features imply an elevated original status for humanity, with clear physical entailments. However, little more is specified, and the present fact of death implies the hiddenness of the divine image.

Incorruption is not only associated with human origins, but is given as a telos - God created humans *for* incorruption (*ep aphtharsia*). A restoration of immortality, and presumably of the divine image, is made explicit in the following verses. The righteous are "in the hand of God" (3:1), and though they may appear dead or dishonored, "their hope is full of immortality" (3:4). Dominion is given an eschatological shading in 3:7-8, and applied even to the rulership of the righteous over other humans: "In the time of their visitation they will shine forth, and will run like sparks through the stubble. They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them forever." The problems of scope and hiddenness are again manifested in a tension between

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[24] Some interpreters read *idiotetos* ("nature") rather than *aidiotetos* ("eternity") at this point. Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 19; Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, 112.
[25] References to death in Sirach carry no indication of further life. See 10:11, 17:27-28.
[26] *Life of Adam and Eve*, 12. See Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, 262.

humanity and a righteous subset; the divine image is related to all at creation but damaged through sin, and finally describes the righteous, who become eschatologically visible as divine images. This glorious appearance is similar to that which characterizes Simon in Sirach 50.

In contrast to 2:23-24, Wisdom 7:26 uses image language only for Wisdom herself, not for humans: "For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness." This verse is somewhat difficult to square with 2:23. The tension between humanity as image (no preposition connects to *eikon* in 2:23 - God created the human an image) and Wisdom as image may be related to the ambiguity of the image in the Septuagint of Genesis, but is not a strict grammatical parallel, as the *kata* construction is lacking. It may also be compared with the tension between anthropological and Christological references to the divine image in the New Testament. However, the difference is substantially starker in the case of the figure of Wisdom, as this use of the divine image is non-human and non-bodily. It would appear to owe little to the interpretation of image as idol, but rather, arises as a wholly abstract interpretation of *eikon*.

Despite these difficulties, one might tentatively begin to draw together the two references by considering Wisdom's stated role with human beings:

> Although she is but one, she can do all things,
> and while remaining in herself, she renews all things;
> in every generation she passes into holy souls
> and makes them friends of God, and prophets;
> for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom.[27]

This is in some respects similar to the description of Wisdom in Sirach 24, though Sirach never identifies Wisdom as a divine image. The double

[27] Wisdom 7:27-28

identification of the image of God suggests that activity of Wisdom *in* the human might therefore also be identified with the divine image, such that Wisdom both is and mediates the image. Wisdom is further associated with the creation of the human, and obliquely with the divine image, in 9:2-3, "...and by your wisdom have formed humankind to have dominion over the creatures you have made, and rule the world in holiness and righteousness, and pronounce judgment in uprightness of soul..." If Wisdom is considered in itself as the divine image, physical interpretation is hardly possible. Yet, by virtue of its link with physical creation, and insofar as Wisdom grants bodily incorruption to and works the image of God in the human, the image has a derivative physicality - though only in the righteous.[28] Further, Wisdom's activity eventuates in dominion, which is framed as divine speech, to "pronounce judgment in uprightness of soul." This anthropology has both priestly and royal shadings.

These passages are only two parts of a complex discussion on images in Wisdom, which also considers the misuse of images. Passages in chapters 13 and 14 take up the use of images in a fashion parallel to Old Testament polemics against idols. References to likenesses (*apeikasmata*)[29] of animals (13:10) and the image (*eikon*) of a human being (13:13) describe them as lifeless products of human hands, which cannot help but instead require help (13:16), needing to be fastened in place so they do not fall. In this lifelessness we see an inversion of the image as described in 2:23 and 7:26. The apparent images are not only not true gods, but are not living things at all - far beneath the human.

In an emotionally wrenching scene, Wisdom 14:15 describes a father who, at the loss of a child, makes and worships an image of his dead offspring. The link between a false image and death is as explicit as that between a true image and life in 2:23. In a precursor to von Rad's theory about royal images as extensions of reign, 14:17 extends the association with death to absence: "When people could

[28] Linebaugh, "God, Grace, and Righteousness in Wisdom of Solomon and Paul's Letter to the Romans," 162.
[29] This is not a usual piece of *imago Dei* terminology, but associated with idols.

not honor them in their presence, since they lived at a distance, they imagined their appearance far away, and made a visible image of the king whom they honored, so that by their zeal they might flatter the absent one as though present." Death and absence characterize false images as much as life and presence characterize true ones. The difference between these poles, and so between hiddenness and manifestation, is the presence of Wisdom who works human embodiment. Jonathan Linebaugh comments, "Death stands in explicit antithesis to the divine creative intention and, by extension, the very image of God in accordance with which humankind was fashioned."[30] It is the presence of Wisdom which determines the scope and the revelation of the *imago Dei* - the human in eternal life.

c. Philo of Alexandria

The works of Philo represent a third approach to the image of God within early Judaism, highly influential within early Christianity and showing the most obvious Platonic influence of the writings yet considered. Philo chiefly addresses the *imago Dei* in *De Opificio Mundi*, but also discusses it in other writings.[31]

In *De Opificio Mundi* 16-25, Philo argues that the creation of the sensible world must be preceded by the creation of an intelligible and incorporeal one as its pattern. This purely intelligible creation, not subject to becoming, exists only in the mind of the incorporeal God. Philo is surely aided in this judgment by the Septuagint's description of the earth in Genesis 1:2 as "invisible and unfinished" (*aoratos kai akataskeuastos*), such that a two-stage creation could be inferred. Likewise, for Philo the visible human is understood as made according to the invisible image of God.[32]

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[30] Linebaugh, 32.
[31] The principal references are Philo, *De Opificio Mundi,* 69-71 and 134-135; see also *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesin,* I.4-6, 8, II.62, *Legum Allegoriae,* I.43, *De Plantatione,* 18-20.
[32] Philo, *De Opificio,* 69-71.

However, the image of God is not a strictly human concept. The human is only a part of the whole,[33] and the visible creation is the image of the invisible divine image, the Logos. While nothing on earth is more like to God than the human, this likeness is non-bodily. It consists in the mind alone, which is invisible while seeing other things and so ruling over them, working after the pattern of the divine mind.[34] The human is therefore a microcosm, bearing the heavens and their gifts within himself as an image - thence the capacities for the arts and sciences, and for the virtues. Human rulership over other animals and created things is a function of this gifting.[35]

Philo further takes Genesis 2 and the creation of the human within it (Gen. 2:7) as evidence of the difference between the "molded" (*plastos*) human made out of earth[36] and that which was earlier created after the image of God: "For man as formed now is perceptible to the external senses, partaking of qualities, consisting of body and soul, man or woman, by nature mortal. But man according to the image of God, was an idea, or a genus, or a seal, perceptible only by the intellect, incorporeal, neither male nor female, imperishable by nature."[37] The image of God is associated with immortality, but precisely to the extent that the human is non-bodily. So too the first humans are considered to have been much superior to present ones,[38] as further generations are mere copies of copies in descending series. Human filiation implies bodily decline, while the mind remains according to the image of God.

The human body is nevertheless of superior form and beauty, a fit dwelling place - or rather, a shrine or temple - for the soul and the mind within it.[39] Philo shows further awareness of the cultic sense of the image when he refers to the

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[33] Ibid., 25
[34] Ibid., 69.
[35] Ibid., 69-71
[36] Ibid.,, 134-135, and *Quaestiones et Solutiones*, I.4.
[37] Philo, *De Opificio*, 134.
[38] Ibid., 140-141.
[39] Ibid., 137

“molded” man as a “statue” - the one shaped from earth and breathed into, who is not as such the one granted dominion.[40] The true image of God is the “second God,” the Logos,[41] in whose image the rational part of the human is made.

Philo’s writings on the image therefore maintain certain features in common with Sirach and Wisdom. Like Wisdom of Solomon, he identifies the image with divine wisdom[42] and incorruption. As with both Sirach and Wisdom, the image is expressed in the human as dominion. By attributing to the body the status of a fitting shrine for the image of God, Philo has maintained the tradition of living cult images within the sanctuary of creation.[43] However, his account differs regarding scope and hiddenness. Sirach and Wisdom display an impulse to hold the human image of God on the same ontological plane as the rest of creation. The treatment of Wisdom herself, in comparison with Philo’s Logos, demonstrates the difference: Wisdom may be divine, but Wisdom’s life is found bodily in creatures. For Philo, this is not quite the case, as the Logos alone is the true divine image. A division runs through creation as through its human microcosm, distinguishing visible and corporeal from intelligible. Only the latter is according to the image. Consequently, the scope of the image is the mind, which is most clearly related to the Logos. Likewise, Philo has followed the vocabulary of the Septuagint - the *aoratos* of Genesis 1:2 - and his own Platonic influences in assimilating hiddenness to invisibility and so intelligibility. Thus is Philo the clearest early statement of the spiritual interpretation of the *imago Dei*.

III. New Testament Interpretation

Early Judaism did not uniformly connect the *imago Dei* to a unique mediating figure. While Wisdom and Philo did so, in neither case is the mediator human.

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[40] Philo, Quaestiones et Solutiones, I.5
[41] Philo, *Quaestiones et Solutiones*, II.62
[42] Philo, *Legum Allegoriae*, I.43
[43] Philo combines the microcosm and temple traditions in *De Somniis*, I.215, identifying two temples: the world, whose high priest is God’s “firstborn son” the Logos, and the rational soul, of which the true (intelligible) man is the priest.

The difference between early Jewish and early Christian interpretation of the image of God is the unique human mediator, Christ himself. A key question to be answered is how New Testament identification of Christ as *imago Dei* relates to description of humans as divine images.

Macaskill notes that early church fathers commonly read *kat eikona* as "according to the image," indicating a distinction between the human and the image as original pattern, and urges attention to the same feature in the New Testament.[44] However, his consideration of both the evidence and the theological stakes may be misleading. He presents the issue as maintaining the sharp distinction between creature and creator:

> ...while humans can embody or represent the divine 'likeness', they do not constitute it, and their own being is secondary, patterned after it. When, therefore, Jesus is described as the *eikon* of God, we must be prepared to consider the possibility that this is not an Adamic but a divine title, associating him with the *kabod* [כָּבוֹד – glory] itself. The observation is simple: 'likeness' and 'image' language are used not just of Adam, but of the divine glory itself, and much of the literature is concerned to maintain the distinction between Adam's patterning 'according' to the image and the image itself.[45]

Here Macaskill refers not to patristic sources, but to early Jewish literature. As we have seen, his preferred reading is supported in Philo but not in Sirach or Wisdom.[46] In this respect, the legacy of early Judaism is more mixed than Macaskill allows. No particular position may yet be assumed as the proper background to the New Testament references. Neither Sirach nor Wisdom

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[44] Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the NT,* 135.
[45] Ibid., 136.
[46] Macaskill considers both Sirach and Wisdom on the place of Adam, but does not seem to note that neither text can support his interpretation of "according to the image" as implying distance. He correctly dismisses Philo as having little to do with the anthropology of 1 Corinthians 15, but apparently misses that Philo nevertheless supports his interpretation of the phrase in Genesis 1.

seems apt to confuse creature with creator, nor does either appear to focus the image through the person of Adam, though Adam plays a role for each. The choice between Adamic and divine may not be a fair division of the problem. Arguments about the place of Adam in early Judaism and Christianity must pull up short of entirely collapsing anthropology into Adamology.

Even more, the disjunction itself, the exclusive *or* between human and divine, Adam and the *kabod*, is at issue. The divine mediator of the image is the human Jesus. In asking interpreters to decide whether *eikon* applies to Christ's human nature or his divinity, Macaskill presumes an interpretation of Chalcedonian Christology in which such division is licit.[47] However, the New Testament presents the image of God as mediated in a way that does not fully comport with this presumption; somewhat different christological commitments are in order if we are to take that mediation seriously.

In one sense, image of God is a divine title, since an image communicates a divine presence. However, the term in its ancient Near Eastern context conveys mediation of presence through bodies that are not intrinsically divine, and in its Old Testament use applies to the human as a creature of God. From a New Testament perspective, the question might not be whether the title is anthropological or christological, but whether anthropology is Adamic or, one might say, Christic. Rather than speaking of the *imago Dei* as an attribute donated to and received by the human, we might consider whether the human as *imago Dei* is not so donated and received in Christ.[48] All this is to repeat the

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[47] In context, the binary of Adamic and divine that Macaskill posits, and the understanding of "according to the image" which he advocates, belong to the debate over Adam-Christology and Paul. Aspects of that debate are discussed below, esp. in connection with 1 Corinthians 15. Macaskill is attentive to historical and contemporary theology, and transparent as to his own theological commitments; this refreshing stance affords a window into the broader stakes of a somewhat narrow exegetical discussion.

[48] Closer to our approach is Francis Watson: "God has created a human counterpart who stands not on the far side of an ontological abyss but within God's own being; and this fact is the hermeneutical key not only to the divine identity but also to our human identity." *Text and Truth*, 292. His coordination of Christology and anthropology attends to scope on a fundamental level: "...the notion of an original universal creation of humankind in the image of God must be

assertion that the Christological mediation of the image is intimately bound up with the questions of its scope and its hiddenness.

1. Paul

In its Pauline[49] development, the image of God tradition achieves a complexity and prominence unmatched in other early interpreters. Like Philo and Wisdom, Paul identifies the image with a cosmic mediator, but breaks with prior interpretations in naming the mediator as a specific human person. All questions about the scope of the divine image, about its hiddenness and revelation, and about its function are thus refracted through the life of Jesus, Israel's crucified and risen Christ. So too Paul's association of image and likeness with the body (*soma*) and divine glory (*doxa*) find their moorings in Christ. The following discussion is concerned with that christological mediation, and with its notably apocalyptic character.

a. 1 Corinthians 11:7

While it presents considerable interpretive problems, 1 Corinthians 11:7 shows several features that typify Paul's thinking on the image of God. His description of Christ as the head of the man, and of the man as the head of the woman (1 Cor. 11:3), emerges within a broader discussion of idolatry and worship. In 10:14 Paul warns believers to flee from the worship of idols, moving quickly to discussion of sacrificed food. The Lord's Supper is invoked (10:16, 10:21) as a counterpoint to such cultic eating and drinking. The freedom of a believer's conscience and the accompanying ethical questions are to be oriented to the glory (*doxa*) of God (10:31). Following this Paul addresses the dispute about the covering of the head

understood to be retrospectively constituted." 291. For Watson's analysis, *Text and Truth*, 277-304.

[49] The following section is agnostic as to historical authorship. References to the image of God in Colossians share much with the undisputed Pauline letters, and at minimum represent a conscious development of that stream. Unless otherwise specified, "Paul" is used for simplicity's sake to refer to this tradition as a whole.

in prayer and prophecy - the use of the human body in the course of public, liturgical speaking to God and speaking for God. The general context, therefore, is a priestly concern for ethics in worship, and the proper attitude of the body (focused on the head) in that speaking-to and speaking-for, as befits the divine glory.

The unveiled (*akatakaluptos*) head of the woman - not in general, but in the act of public prayer or proclamation - is a disgrace to the head, just as covering the head of the man in the same act would be a disgrace to it. In 11:7 the language of head gives way to that of image and glory, issuing in a direct statement about the human image of God: "For a man ought not to cover (*katakaluptesthai*) the head, since he is the image (*eikon*) and glory (*doxa*) of God; but the woman is the glory (*doxa*) of man."

Glory is a challenging, polyvalent term, but there are a few indications here of its sense. Pairing *doxa* with *eikon* bears comparison to the parallelism of *homoiosis* and *eikon* in Genesis 1, and to the resonance of Psalm 8[50] with Genesis 1:26-28. The parallelism in 1 Corinthians 11:7 is not quite synonymous, but extends the concept of image by introducing glory to it, and, moving the opposite direction, restricts the sense of glory by assimilating it to image. Glory as paired with image in a liturgical context is unlikely to simply mean praise or reputation. While it may not be strictly synonymous with the divine *kabod* of the Old Testament (of P in particular), it draws on that sense of presence. It perhaps suggests donated or shared divine glory. This image and glory are connected to the unveiled head, conceived metaphorically as authority or source, and physically as the ruling part of the body. Elements of both bodily appearance and divine authority are present in this description, but again, set within the framework of prayer and prophecy. Paul's argument for the man's head to be uncovered stands in pointed contrast to Jewish temple practice - something (and for Paul, that "something" can only have to do with Christ himself) has forced a reversal in the usual

[50] Particularly 8:5, "...you have crowned him with glory and honor."

dynamics of covering and uncovering.

The problem of scope is implied by the distinction between man and woman, such that the man is straightforwardly (and without preposition) image and glory of God, but the woman ambiguously or derivatively so, as glory of man. This is a rough parallel to the ambiguous status of Seth in Genesis 5:3, where he is said to be in the image and likeness of Adam. The further statements that neither woman nor man is separate from the other in the Lord (1 Cor. 11:11) indicate that Paul does not mean to exclude women from the image, but the relation remains vague. Verse 15 further intensifies the link between glory and bodily appearance in identifying the woman's hair as her glory, and again associates that appearance with covering or veiling. Christ's place in relation to the image is indirectly stated, in the interplay between verses 11:3 and 11:7 - Christ is the head of the man who is the image of God.

b. 1 Corinthians 15:48-49

The discussion of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 explicitly ties the human to the person of Christ. Within that context comes the complex declaration in verses 48-49: "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. Just as we have borne the image of the earthly, we will also bear the image of the heavenly." This passage shows some of Paul's most developed thinking on the human body in light of Christ and the image of God.

Efforts to separate anthropological from christological interpretations of the *imago Dei* founder on this passage, which joins just as it distinguishes. Paul speaks of two images, a fascinating wrinkle within the discussion of scope. The human in their present state has borne the image of the first man, who was from the dust. This suggests Seth as the image of Adam in Genesis 5:3, but also that Paul follows tradition - cf. Sirach 17 and Wisdom 2:23 - in more directly reading

together the six days and paradise creation narratives. Philo's theory of a double creation[51] differs significantly from this, as Paul imagines not a bodiless logos-pattern corresponding to Genesis 1 and then an embodied, molded being corresponding to Genesis 2, but a first embodied human in whose image believers yet are, and a last embodied human in whose image they will be. The resurrected, spiritual body (*soma pneumatikon*) is the last body, that of Christ (vv.44-45).

In contrast to 1 Corinthians 11, there is an obvious eschatological note to this description of the image, conveyed both in the futurity of the image of the heavenly (*phoresomen*, "we will bear") and in the description of the heavenly as the last (*eschatos*) Adam. The scope of the image of Christ is the resurrection, distinguishable from the image of Adam. The image of the heavenly man, of Christ, is hidden precisely as the resurrection is hidden. In comparison with it, the present body is only a seed. However, these features raise questions centering on the relationship between Adam and Christ, and so protology and eschatology. Most basically, why does Paul connect Christ with Adam?

Some interpreters have leaned on the significance of Adam in early Judaism as formative for their accounts of early Christianity, providing the basis for Paul's Christology and the ascription of glory to Christ.[52] Macaskill questions this assumption of a "widespread myth of Adamic glory" in Second Temple Judaism, proposing the alternative that Christ's glory is divine glory, which is relationally donated to believers.[53] Macaskill is correct that the two references to Adam in 1 Corinthians 15 (vv.22 and 45) do not amount to an account of restoration of Adamic glory in Christ.[54] In fact, they weigh strongly against it. The first Adam became a living soul (*psychen zosan*), the last a life-giving spirit (*pneuma*

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[51] Philo, *De Opificio Mundi*, 69-71.
[52] Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 98-128; van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context*, 70.
[53] Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the NT,* 143.
[54] Ibid. "Christ's glory, and the glory that will be experienced by believers, is not presented here as a recovery of Adam's splendour, but as being of a different substance altogether. What Adam 'loses' in 1 Corinthians 15 is life, not glory."

zoopoioun), which is to say that Christ gives life; Adam only receives. The term "life-giving spirit" associates Christ with creation, not as Adam, but as the creator. Whatever role Adam traditions play as background to Paul's assertions, here they emphasize Christ's absolute preeminence (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:3).

The asymmetrical distinction between Adam and Christ, and so between their images, is clarified by the way Paul associates body (*soma*) and glory (*doxa*). Rather than one sort of glory gained, lost, and regained, each type of body is granted its own peculiar glory (vv.40-41). The body made from earth has its appropriate glory and image, and so does the body of heavenly stuff, the resurrected body. Glory might be considered a kind of complex attribute of body, or even a mode of communication of body. This sense appears to exceed a simple notion of honor or radiance to draw on the divine glory itself. Macaskill, citing Carey Newman, argues for the background of the term as indicating visible (and so in some sense bodily) presence: "The phrase [the glory of the Lord] is particularly associated with the visible presence of the Lord; that is, not with a secret or internal quality of God, but rather with his being in relation to (his) people."[55]

Along these lines, the image of the heavenly man would not be the restoration of "the crown of glory originally given to Adam,"[56] but a manifestation of the divine presence. Macaskill is careful to describe this glory as a property that may be both communicated and removed, put on and taken off, rather than inherent in humans: "While, in certain regards, person and place may participate in the glory of God, the fact that this is an alien reality, communicated by presence, is constantly maintained. The fall of the Davidic monarchy and the ultimate destiny of Solomon's temple confirm such a point: glory can be lost."[57]

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[55] Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the NT,* 111. Newman, Paul's Glory-Christology, 24.
[56] Jacob, *Conformed to the Image of His Son*, 84. This definition is offered specifically with respect to *doxa* in Romans, but Paul's use of image and glory is not radically different between the two books.
[57] Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the NT,* 112.

Macaskill's design, when confronted with an assertion of Adamic glory that appears to undercut the distinction between God and creature, is to claim image and glory as divine though communicable. The qualification is helpful, but may still be insufficient to Paul's account of specifically *resurrected* bodies, of bodies (and so humans) that are "of heaven," as Christ is. Immortality, power, glory, etc. do not read in 1 Corinthians 15 as donated properties of an essentially unchanged humanity so much as descriptions of a different kind of body altogether - a *soma pneumatikon* in place of the old *soma psychikon.*

Macaskill usefully observes the place of the Spirit in this discussion, comparing it to the place of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?"[58] This picture of the presence of the Spirit, redolent of Old Testament imagery of the presence of God in the temple and in the sanctuary of creation, clarifies the shortcoming (narrow as it may seem) of Macaskill's approach. Paul's rhetorical question in 1 Corinthians 15:35, "Then with what body do they come?" can only be answered by a series of antitheses between the old body and the new. The Spirit does not merely give life to the body, but constructs for itself a temple of radically transformed character. This disjunction is the relation between the dead seed that is sown, and the living, immortal body that is raised.

The new deathless body is without sin or law (v. 56), which powers are overcome in the victory of Jesus Christ. This overcoming of the law is in sharp contrast to Sirach's picture of the divine image as intensifying through the law.[59] Paul's hidden and eschatologically revealed image of God is not merely the image and glory of Adam, but actually like God in Christ - immortal, sinless, exercising dominion even over the law - and still bodily and human.

[58] Ibid., 154
[59] Sirach 17:11-12

c. 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:4

Paul again associates image and glory in 2 Corinthians 3:18, this time speaking directly of the transformation (*metamorphoumetha*) of the human: "And we all, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit."

The language of veiling and unveiling foregrounds the hiddenness of the image. Just as Moses wore a veil to cover the fading glory in his face (v.13), the minds of the people are hardened, veiled when they hear the law, until the veil is removed in Christ (v.14-16). The freedom given by the Spirit is the removal of the veil so that the glory of the Lord is seen. The transformation of believers into the image indicates that the hidden and now revealed glory is not simply that of God, but ultimately of humanity.

This transformation determines the scope of the image, which as object of transformation is singular even as it gathers up and contains the collective. Here, it truly is democratized - not only participation in the image but participation in the ministry of the Spirit, and so the mediation of the image to others, belongs to Paul's "we all."[60] This ministry communicates the greater and permanent glory in comparison to the fading glory set aside. The new ministry, image, and glory greatly surpass those attributed to Moses. Macaskill incorrectly equates them, arguing that, "Reflection, the kind of glorification experienced by Moses, is now the experience of 'all' believers, not just visionaries such as Paul."[61] On the contrary, Moses' fading glory is not only described as fading due to the arrival of a greater glory (v. 10), but specifically belongs to the ministry of condemnation and death, "chiseled in letters on stone tablets," (v.7), and opposed to the ministry of the Spirit and righteousness. The unveiled faces of believers attest to

[60] Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the NT,* 229-230.
[61] Ibid., 232.

Paul's confidence in the difference between their glory and ministry and that shared by Moses.

This interweaving of ministry, glory, image, and veiling/unveiling continues into 2 Corinthians 4, where Paul asserts that "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 image of God." (v.4). The image is again explicitly christological, though this should not be read as in tension with the pneumatological focus of chapter 3 - together, they attest to the basically Trinitarian character of Paul's account. Opposition to the revelation of the divine image is identified with the activity of the devil.

Paul's focus remains on the ministry of the gospel; the image of God is revealed and has its transformative power in the proclamation of Christ. The assertion "for we do not preach ourselves" (v.5) clarifies that the human preacher is not the image of God independently, but in Christ. Nevertheless, this connects to the original work of creation: "For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (v.6). The glory of God seen in the face of Jesus and revealed in the hearts and intellects of believers arrives through the gospel. This gospel is thus a divine creative work which, in continuity with the first word, "Let there be light," creates and reveals the human in Jesus and Jesus in the human. This human visibility is explicit in v.10-11, precisely in the bodily suffering and death of believers: "always always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh." The image and glory of God that shines in hearts and minds is a treasure held "in clay jars" (v. 7), whose very breakage becomes the moment for the revelation of the *imago Dei*. The preaching Paul intends is the preaching of the Crucified, who is put bodily on display in faith.

There is a difference in emphasis in these passages from 1 Corinthians 15, explained by their focus not on the finality of the resurrection, but on the present state of believers, their suffering, and their ministry. Where 1 Corinthians 15 speaks in an anticipatory disjunction between old and new, 2 Corinthians 3 and 4 speak in terms of a present experience and ongoing ministry characterized by a temporary overlap of these disjoined states. The image that will be true at the last in immortality is even now on display, but only paradoxically, as the suffering and death of mortal flesh may nevertheless proclaim it. This ministry belongs to the curious vocation of the *imago Dei* in the present age, which opposes the demonic concealment of the image by the "god of this world."

d. Romans 1:23 and 8:29

Romans contains two references to image, one of which, in 1:23, is oblique and negative: "and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles." The reference to cult images says nothing positive of a human image of God. However, both the use of image and the pairing of mortal and immortal is suggestive of Pauline *imago Dei* language. As with Wisdom, and Old Testament polemics against idols, the difference between a true and a false image is life vs. corruption. Creatures which can break down and die are unworthy of worship; their glory is far exceeded by the one who is life.

Romans 8:29 refers to the image of the Son: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family." Contextually, there is no difference between conformity to the image of God and the "image of his Son" - Christ is in the believer (8:10), who has the Spirit of Christ, belongs to him (v.9), suffers with him, and is an heir with him (v.17). The variant phrasing emphasizes conformity to Christ as the shape of the human *imago Dei*, and filiation as integral to that

picture. Haley Goranson Jacob is correct that the phrase "the image of his Son" indicates a single reality - "the image is the Son himself."[62]

Jacob argues that this reference is to Christ both as the awaited Davidic king, and as the new Adam, as suggested by the pairing of *eikon* and *prototokon* (firstborn).[63] The Adam connection is weak. The royal background of the image already takes filiation into account,[64] leaving the supposed Adam reference with little to explain. Furthermore, even were it granted that Adam is in view, this is insufficient to support a theology of the restoration of Adam's glory. Oddly, Jacob focuses on resonances with Genesis 1:26-27 to demonstrate the Adamic significance of Romans 8:29, though the Greek text of Genesis 1 does not mention Adam. This emphasis mistakes the direction of any Adam-Christ typology. Christ is not the "new Adam," and Paul does not really present him as such. Rather, Adam is re-interpreted in light of Christ, who is the true firstborn.[65] Immortal glory belongs to the Son, and those who are foreknown are predestined to be conformed to the Son.

From the perspective of the *imago Dei* question, Adam is peripheral. Genesis 1:26-27 concerns not just the first human, but humans as such. Paul's strategy is pointedly not to relate the image to the first human, but through the last. The same point may be made with respect to David, who is similarly peripheral - Paul assesses David in light of Christ, and not the other way around. It is helpful to consider the purpose, rather than simply the fact, of conformity to Christ, and so to aim toward human vocation, both original and eschatological[66] - but just so, the original vocation is to be interpreted in light of the end, not projected from

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[62]Jacob, *Conformed to the Image of His Son*, 193. Following this with the gloss, 'the perfect representation of Sonship' is unfortunate, muddying the picture by suggesting Sonship as implicitly separable from the particularity of Jesus.
[63] Ibid., 182f. and 191f.
[64] See Crouch, "Made in the Image of God," and chapter 1, n84.
[65] Cf. Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the NT,* 242. "...Adam does not dictate the terms of Christ's glory: the opposite is true, both for the protoplast and for the redeemed. To be conformed to the image of the Son is to be (re)made *kat eikona* (Gen 1:27)."
[66] Jacob, *Conformed to the Image of His Son,* 266.

Adam or David. Origin and eschatology are linked in the connection between foreknowledge and predestination on the one side, and conformation to the image of the Son on the other.

George van Kooten has insisted upon the Platonic background of Paul's *morphe*-language (e.g., *symmorphos* in v.29, and *metamorphoumetha* in 1 Corinthians 3:18) and its connection to image. This point is convincing with respect to the origin of some Pauline vocabulary, but van Kooten's account comes out closer to Philo than Paul's text warrants.[67] That conformity means conformity to Christ crucified, and so involves the death of the human subject, presents a special challenge for language of assimilation to God. Similarly, that this assimilation is as much bodily as spiritual - or rather, following 1 Corinthians 15, that it is bodily precisely *as* it is spiritual (note the parallel between co-suffering and co-glorification with Christ in Romans 8:17) - speaks to a conformity that differs significantly from a Platonic account. "Form" undoubtedly does some conceptual work for Paul, but one must distinguish the origin of the vocabulary from the purpose to which it is put, which is the creation of bodily, human images in the Son, and the means by which it is carried out, which is new creation through the resurrection of the dead in Christ.

That van Kooten misunderstands Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach's positions as indicating spiritual or intellectual conceptions of the image, and grants bodily likeness only to Christian sources[68] is indicative of his mistaken trajectory. He underplays the bodily nature of the image, mistakes the physical view as due to pagan influence on Christianity[69], and minimizes the death and resurrection of Jesus - and so of the believer - in favor of more general notions of

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[67] Evident, for example, in an almost purely noetic picture of salvation: "Baptism is the starting point for a renewal of man's individual, debased mind, and for a new understanding of true religion. The two converge in the definition of true religion as a rational form of worshipping God, which takes place through the renewal of one's mind and becomes tangible in a reflective rational-ethical examination of what is good and acceptable and perfect." van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context,* 392.
[68] Ibid., 38.
[69] Ibid., 62.

transformation.[70] He summarizes the differences between pagan and Pauline Platonism this way: "Naturally there are differences, but they do not concern the concept of assimilation as such, but rather the nature of the gods to whom believers assimilate, and the accessibility of the practice of assimilating to God."[71] If this is true, it is trivially so. When the God in question is to be known precisely as he assimilates himself bodily to the ungodly (not the virtuous), and they in turn are created anew out of the shame and dereliction of his death, how much can be said to remain of "the concept of assimilation as such"? Assimilation to God, as conformation to a hidden life and image, is radically *in*accessible for Paul; it may be preached, believed, and so bestowed, but this is God's own election. No philosophical technique or human striving approaches it at all. It is, as per Philippians 3:20-21, the heavenly (and so hidden) citizenship which awaits the coming of a savior who will transform the body of humiliation into the body of his glory, subjugating all things to himself.

e. Likeness - Romans 6:5 and 8:3 and Philippians 2:7

A few Pauline passages use likeness in a fashion relevant to the *imago Dei*. Romans 6:5 speaks of unity in death and resurrection as a likeness (*homoioma*) to Christ's own. While this language does not in itself demand interpretation as a reference to the divine image, it nevertheless fits the same structure as conformity to the image of the Son in Romans 8, and so may be interpreted as such a reference. Romans 8:3 speaks of the Son sent in the likeness (*homoioma*) of sinful flesh. This is a reversal similar to Philippians 2:7, and its reference to Christ who was in the "form of God" (*morphe theou*) having been made in human likeness (*homoioma*). While such likeness can mean simple similarity, it resonates against the background of the image of God.

[70] Cf. Ben Blackwell, *Christosis*, 161n168. "While van Kooten traces the Jewish background to image language, he primarily places Paul in a Greco-Roman context and thus deemphasizes the importance of resurrection in Paul's soteriology."
[71] van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context*, 210.

These passages suggest a double conformation - first, Christ to human likeness, then believers to Christ. The axis around which this conformation turns is the death and resurrection of Jesus. Where Philippians 2:8 locates the depth of Christ's humility,[72] Romans 6 speaks of a unity handed over in baptism into death (6:4) and realized in the new life shared by those united to the resurrection of Jesus. Again the divine glory is observed to function in relation to the life of the body - the glory which raised up Christ will make believers to walk in new life. Because the old human (*palaios anthropos*) was crucified with Christ (6:6), the body of sin (*soma tes hamartias*) is brought to nothing. New life is therefore characterized by freedom from death and sin, and ultimately, from the law (6:14). This conformation is effected liturgically in baptism, a divine act in which particular humans (the baptized) are included in the scope of the *imago Dei*.

f. Colossians 1:15, 2:9-12, and 3:10

Colossians combines and summarizes several previously observed features in its use of the image of God tradition. Colossians 1:15-20 offers the longest and most exacting Christological statement of the image. Jesus is, "the image (*eikon*) of the invisible (*aoratou*) God, the firstborn (*prototokos*) over all creation, because in him were created all things in the heavens and upon the earth, the visible (*orata*) and invisible (*aorata*), whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and unto him. He is before all things and all things hold together in him. He is the head of the body (*somatos*), the church, who is the beginning (*arche*), firstborn (*prototokos*) from the dead, so that he might become preeminent in all things, because in him all the fullness (*pleroma*) was pleased to dwell, and by him to reconcile all things to himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross, whether things on earth or things in the heavens."

In this passage, Hellenistic language of the invisibility of God is specifically

[72] "He humbled himself, having become obedient unto death, even death on a cross."

paired with Jesus as God's visible manifestation. Creation, too, is described as divided into things visible and invisible, though neither is given priority - both are under the one through, in, and unto whom they are created, who is God's image. Colossians is in this respect at odds with Philo's two stage creation, in which invisible things correspond to the Logos in its invisibility. The now-familiar language of firstborn occurs twice, once in reference to creation (so that Christ, and not Adam, is firstborn) and once to the resurrection. The author of Colossians has taken a familiar trope from the history of Israel, the matter of inheritance and the firstborn, and stretched it between the poles of creation and eschaton, granting creation an eschatological tilting in Christ. The "firstborn" is most prominently seen in the stories of the patriarchs, and applied to Israel as a nation in the Exodus (e.g., 4:22 - "You shall say to Pharaoh, "Israel my son, my firstborn""), simultaneously an act of divine redemption and the creation of a people. In applying *prototokos* definitively to Christ, Colossians has summarized the history and election of Israel within the person of Jesus, not as microcosm, but as paradoxically containing the full breadth of this story, as the origin (*arche*) and destiny of all creation. The paradox enters in the phrases "firstborn from the dead" and "by the blood of his cross," firmly locating Christ himself and his reconciliation within the creation he contains.

As head, Christ is the bodily image of God. Other humans do not exist apart from this image, but only in relation to him. Thus, Colossians aggressively presses the question of the image's scope: the image refers to this individual, but in him, to Israel the firstborn, and to those marked off as heirs in Israel's history. It summons up as well the death of the firstborn of Egypt in the Exodus, tying that to the cross of Jesus the firstborn. The question of filiation is inextricable from the matters of inheritance and election, and is finally located in the resurrection of Jesus the firstborn from the dead - and, implicitly, to those born from the dead through and in him.

In Colossians 2:9-12, this is explicitly extended to the many, without in any

respect diminishing the centrality of Christ. "For in him all the fullness (*pleroma*) of the Deity dwells bodily (*somatikos*), and you are complete (*pepleromenoi*) in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In whom also you were circumcised with a circumcision not performed by hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh (*somatos tes sarkos*), in the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." Baptism, as in Romans, is the uniting of believers with Christ in his death, and so the establishment of that one as a new body. If Christ is the image of God, so are the baptized - the fullness of God in him is their fullness. Their "circumcision not with human hands" is also a putting off of the flesh, and so a distinction of flesh from body, as of death from resurrection. This language of "not with human hands" is characteristic of a divine making - a reference to Genesis, echoed in the synoptic claim of Jesus' body as a temple not made with hands.[73] Scope is signaled in the interplay of singular and plural regarding *pleroma* - "you are in him *fullnesses*."

The theme of unity through death and resurrection is continued in Colossians 3:3-4, without mention of the image of God, but referring to "life" and "glory" (just as 2:9 emphasized "body"): "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life may be revealed, then you also will appear with him in glory." The life of believers - and so the image - is hidden with Christ "in God." In this passage, "you" is consistently plural, and life singular. The image is not yet visible. Nevertheless, this declaration of the hiddenness of life is not a gesture away from the body toward the mind, or away from visible creation to invisible, but a gesture toward an eschatological appearance, a manifestation of believers with Christ. This is the image of God in apocalyptic form. If glory is beyond death and "with him", then it signals, too, the defeat of death and sin and complete dominion over every worldly power.

[73] Cf. Mark 14:58, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands." As a more ancient religious background, one might compare the symbolic cutting off of the craftsman's hands in the *mis pi* ritual.

The apocalyptic Christoform image of God finds its final reference later in chapter 3, in verses 9 to 11. Ethical injunctions to believers are recast in a new frame: "Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old human (*anthropos*) with its practices and have put on the new one, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image (*kat eikona*) of its Creator. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all." Scope has surfaced by way of a rhetoric related to that in Galatians 3:28, which emphasizes the eschatological non-distinction of the nations and the unity of the new human, (in) Christ. The noetic emphasis is undeniable, but for all that inseparable from the body, since it is the whole human, the *anthropos*, who is renewed in Christ.

g. The Pauline Apocalyptic Image

The new and distinctive element in Paul's interpretation of the *imago Dei* is Christ himself, from whom creation issues and for whom creation was intended. Respecting anthropology, Christ supersedes Adam both as origin and as end, but the human image of God is seen from the perspective of the last. It is properly received as origin (*arche*) only insofar as it is understood as end. In the present time, in which neither origin nor end is in view, the image is hidden.

To whatever extent the human, considered as "old", as "in Adam", as "flesh", remains as an image of God is left unspoken. This hiddenness should not be construed as mere concealment, as if the truth of the *imago Dei* were obscure but unchallenged, and so its scope comfortably if implicitly universal. Human life finds itself under the power of "the god of this world," mastered by death and sin, and so opposed to the revealed image. The sense of idolatry in Romans 1:23 implies a conflict between a true human *imago Dei* and a false one, a conflict corresponding to that between life and death. This is the scope of the image of God revealed in dynamic contest.

Paul's *imago Dei* is therefore not merely a final revelation of the human, but an attack on the idolatry of the human. It is the assault upon deadly idolatry of the one in whom the unity of God with the human is neither idolatrous nor threatening. Within this conflict, the revelation of the image is paradoxical. It appears in this world not as evident glory, but as weakness and death, as humanity incomplete and wounded. Its sign in the lives of believers is just their unity with Christ in his death, accomplished through the Christomorphic apocalypse of baptism. Conformation to the image of God is conformation to Christ in his death and resurrection through this verbal-material instrument. Only the revelation of God can humanize.

2. The Gospels

While direct use of the image of God tradition appears scant in the Gospels, it is not absent, nor as rare as sometimes supposed.[74] Two synoptic pericopes clearly draw on the tradition, one explicitly and one implicitly. These references are consistent with an underlying theology of Jesus as the divine image. More broadly, the Gospel of John also contains several identifiable echoes of the image of God theme.

Beyond identification of Jesus as the divine image, the Gospels also touch on the scope of the image insofar as they imply a close identification of Jesus with his followers. The Lord's instructions to his disciples promise his presence among them as they engage in certain characteristic activities. These promises are consistent with a conception of the image of God as mediated through the ongoing ministry of the church.

[74] "The notion of the image of God is rare in the New Testament; it appears primarily in the Pauline literature..." Markschies, "Image of God", in *Religion Past & Present*, vol. 6, 415.

a. The Image of Caesar and the Image of God

The story related in Mark 12:13-17, Matthew 22:15-22, and Luke 20:19-26, often blandly labeled a question about taxes, makes a provocative statement about Jesus and the divine image. The vocabulary is largely consistent across the three accounts. In the Markan version, Pharisees and Herodians have been sent to entrap Jesus in his speech, approaching with remarkable flattery: "Teacher, we know that you are true (*alethes*), and not concerned about anyone, for you do not look on the appearance (*prosopon*, literally, face) of humans (*anthropon*), but teach the way of God on the basis of truth (*aletheias*). Is it lawful to pay tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or not pay?" (v.14).

Jesus calls for a denarius (named as such in all three Gospels), in order to look at it, and asks, "Whose image (*eikon*) is this, and whose inscription (*epigraphe*)?" Putting aside the historical question of what coin Jesus might have held, it is plausible that Mark describes a Tiberian silver denarius, and that early readers would have understood a coin of similar form.[75] That coin showed (on the obverse) not only Tiberius' head, but the inscription *TI[bierius] CAESAR DIVI AUG[usti] F[ilius] AUGUSTUS* - "Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Augustus." The reverse, not mentioned in the Gospels, depicts a seated female figure with scepter and olive branch (Tiberius' mother Livia, in the guise of Pax, the goddess of peace), and bears the inscription *Pontif[ex] Maxim[us]*, "High Priest." The precise iconography and titles vary somewhat for the denarii of later 1st century emperors, but remain obviously tied to the imperial cult.

The scene is thus pregnant with implications of idolatry.[76] However, it has already been stipulated in his opponents' words that Jesus is a disinterested observer who does not "look upon the face," and so is no worshiper of the imperial image. Rather, it is the opponents who find themselves caught when

[75] Finney, "The Rabbi and the Coin," 632-633. While this coin would have been uncommon in Roman Palestine, this is irrelevant to what Mark describes for his readers.
[76] Finney, "The Rabbi and the Coin," 633-640.

they answer Jesus' question: it is Caesar's image. The danger in that answer is not obvious until Jesus responds regarding the things of Caesar and of God. While the stamped image is of Caesar, the human face of Caesar is God's handiwork and image, and to say otherwise is to deny Genesis 1. The connection between filiation and image is only gestured at through the coin's inscription, but is significant to the passage's interpretation. The one who holds the coin, and who does not look upon the face, but is true, has already been declared "Son of God" - in Mark, as far back as the opening, thematic verse of the gospel. Even in the language of his opponents, he is like his Father.

This pericope indirectly presses the scope of the *imago Dei* while underscoring its cultic dimension. An implicit confrontation breaks out between Jesus and Caesar as opposing images, one true, the other blasphemous, the opponents unwittingly aligned with Caesar. A later scene in the gospels dramatically repeats and elucidates this confrontation. The word *epigraphe*, inscription, appears in the New Testament only in the scene with the coin and at the crucifixion in Mark and Luke, referring to the charge fixed over the crucified Jesus, "The king of the Jews." Reminiscent of Bahrani's description of text and image as integral within a *ṣalmu*, the inscriptions on the coin and over Christ each belong to their own respective images, not as commentary but as part of the whole, communicating the force and truth of the image, which in its royal and priestly aspects also communicates dominion. The question about taxes - revealed not to be about taxes but worship - demonstrates the dilemma of Jesus' opponents. They can neither acknowledge nor reject Caesar as an image of God without coming to terms with the divine image and son who stands before them and addresses them in Jesus.

Nicholas Perrin's interpretation of the coin passage overlaps with my own to some extent, setting the conflict between Jesus and Caesar in terms of rival priesthoods and cults.[77] However, Perrin concentrates upon Jesus' historical

[77] Perrin, *Jesus the Priest,* 240-247 and 257-260.

self-understanding, a speculative question to which this thesis is indifferent. Rather, the synoptic gospels interpret the image of God through Jesus, and suggest a priestly dimension to his ministry.

b. Son of Adam, Son of God

The link between filiation and the divine image is further reinforced through the genealogy in Luke 3:23-38. More than one recent interpreter has found this genealogy's curious termination with Adam, "son of God," difficult to square with the passage's context.[78] Francois Bovon finds it so troubling that he takes "son of God" as a redactional addition.[79] John Carroll adopts a more traditional approach in seeing the phrase as indicating that, "Jesus' family line originates in God."[80] Despite a variety of proposed solutions, the significance of the connection between v.38 and Genesis 5:3, and so the importance of the divine image to the genealogy as a whole, has been generally overlooked.

Far from an unprecedented claim, "son of God" for Adam is a restatement of the relation implied in Genesis 2 and clearly set out in Genesis 5. The account in Genesis 5:1-2 repeats the creation of humans in the likeness of God, followed in 5:3 by the birth of Adam's son Seth, begotten in Adam's image and likeness. The repetition of image and likeness as the connection between Seth and Adam, and between Adam (or humans generally) and God, is held virtually equivalent to Seth's status as begotten of Adam. On this basis, "son of Seth, son of Adam, son of God" simply recalls the *imago Dei* as divine filiation. This does not by itself answer what Luke intends by this emphasis, but it does clarify that Luke 3 connects Jesus with the *imago Dei* through the sequence Seth, Adam, God. The

[78] Cf. Kochenash, "'Adam, Son of God' (Luke 3.38)," 307-308. "Although interpreters offer credible explanations for the extension of Jesus' genealogy to Adam, many find the filial connection of Adam to God confounding."
[79] Bovon, *Luke*, I.136.
[80] Carroll, *Luke,* 99.

trouble is that every human would have, on the basis of Adam, the same divine filiation. In terms of scope, this is the pole of universality.

Universality has its counterpart immediately preceding the genealogy, in the divine declaration accompanying Jesus' baptism, "You are my son, the beloved; in you I am well pleased." Here, filiation is direct, not derivative. What follows the declaration cannot be a justification of the divine words, as if Jesus' sonship were rooted in Adam's, or even comprehensible in terms of Adam's. Luke has barely provided a genealogy at all, certainly not a genealogy of Jesus, for it is interrupted as soon as it begins, with the odd locution, "He was the son, as it was supposed (*hos enomizeto*), of Joseph..." To understand this passage as demonstrating Jesus' divine descent, and thus suggesting a form of Adam-Christology, does violence to Luke's structure. The account does not begin with Adam and so seek to understand Christ from within that horizon. Luke shows no interest in a divine bloodline, as if Jesus were a king of Mercia claiming descent from Woden, or a Roman from Mars. Rather, the genealogy begins from Jesus, looking backward. It arrives at Adam, and so means to speak about Adam, as about humanity at large, in light of the unique sonship of Jesus.

Jesus is no new Adam, nor does the genealogy root Jesus in the history of Israel. Rather, it retrospectively roots Adam and Israel in the beloved son. The entire historically contested matter of sonship, and so the question of election, of humanity's universality and Israel's particularity, is concentrated in Jesus. If this is the beloved son who reveals God, who alone knows the Father (Luke 10:22, cf. Matthew 11:27), then Adam's sonship, and Seth's, and that filiation of the whole human line, is now set in relation to him.

Tracing in reverse from Jesus the son in the eschatological moment of his baptism, and across the broken territory of Joseph, the line reaches Seth, son of Adam, who is now revealed to be son of God. Adam's origin is in God precisely as that origin is revealed in the son of Mary. This is a reading of Genesis as

apocalyptic protology, or hidden eschatology turned explicit by Luke. All things are seen from the one who stands at the end, so that the genealogy represents a Christ-Adamology, or less awkwardly, a Christ-anthropology.[81] The universal is viewed through the particular disclosed in the theophany of Jesus' baptism. Divine filiation says the same thing as "image of God", and is rooted in the same divine speech. "You are my son, the beloved," is of a piece with "Let us make *adam/anthropos* in our image..."

c. Johannine Echoes

Explicit image of God language is absent from the Gospel of John, though several passages are highly suggestive. First among these is John 14:9, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." While undoubtedly similar to the synoptic, "no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son..," (Matthew 11:27 and Luke 10:22) the sensory vocabulary raises the possibility of image. The Father is not merely known and revealed by, but seen in the Son. Conceptually, this expresses the ancient theology of images in proto-Trinitarian form, as Jesus is the Father's own manifestation and presence. "We have seen his glory, glory as of a father's only son," (John 1:14) expresses a nearly identical thought using the language of glory, which has been discussed as analogous to image.

John Behr identifies a second suggestion of the *imago Dei* in his connection of Pilate's "Behold the man (*anthropos*)," (John 19:5) and Jesus', "It is finished," (John 19:30) with the "Let us make..." of Genesis 1:26. Behr argues that this implies that the divine work of making a human is left incomplete in Genesis 1, and finally brought to completion in the passion of Jesus. The indication of this within Genesis is that the creation of the human is differentiated from the other acts of creation by its occurring outside a divine fiat. Rather than, "Let there be,"

[81] C. Kavin Rowe also affirms a Lukan *imago Dei* teaching of this form: "For the Gospel of Luke, as for Paul, the Adam - the human - is Jesus the Lord, the Son of God." *Christianity's Surprise*, 39.

God says, “Let us make the human,” an action which in the Johannine frame is brought to its fullness in the death and glorification of Jesus.[82] Along these lines, one may see the entirety of the Gospel of John as culminating in the creation of the true human as divine image.

Several additional pieces of evidence support Behr’s conclusion. The strong tie between Genesis 1 and John 1 establishes the creational subtext of the Gospel and so implies its priestly orientation. That orientation is visible in John’s interest, considerably greater than that of the synoptics, in the temple liturgy and Jerusalem priesthood, as Jesus attends festivals and echoes liturgical rites in his discourses,[83] and as Caiaphas is presented as an opponent to Jesus.

A sequence of Old Testament allusions in John 20:12-15 may also support this reading.[84] In verse 12, Mary Magdalene looks into the tomb, seeing the place where Jesus had been laid, and two angels - one at the head, and one at the feet. This functions as an abstracted visual reference to the Ark of the Covenant, or more particularly to the *kapporet*, the mercy seat, of Exodus 25:17-22. The space where Jesus is pointedly not seen is represented by a rectangular, flat surface with a divine messenger or guardian sitting atop it at each end, John’s angels taking the place of the cherubim of Exodus. When Mary turns around, she then sees Jesus outside the tomb, who addresses her. Mary responds without recognition, “thinking him to be the gardener,” at which point Jesus speaks her name, and she knows him. The location in a garden (*kepos*) and identification of Jesus as a putative gardener (*kepouros*), as well as the presence of a man and woman in this place, suggest the garden of Genesis 2 and the creation of Adam

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[82] Behr, *John the Theologian*, 211ff. Part of Behr’s distinction between “Let there be,” and “Let us make,” depends upon cooperation through an answering *fiat* from the creature, “Let it be.” This is provocative, but ambiguous - the response of faith is itself already human. Completion of the human produces such an answer, but cannot depend upon it.

[83] E.g., the placement of Jesus’ claim, “I am the light of the world,” within the Festival of Booths. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel, 2nd ed.,* 156-159.

[84] A curious feature of the Gospel of John is that, with the crucifixion and burial of Jesus in chapter 19, all citations of the Old Testament cease. Chapters 20 and 21 contain a number of allusions to the scriptures, but no direct references.

and Eve, and perhaps the male and female of Genesis 1.[85]

The scene as a whole is associated with Genesis 1 through the detail that the resurrection takes place on the first day of the week (*mia ton sabbaton*), placing it within the context of the six days narrative and the Sabbath, and implying an act of creation. In this scene, the one who had been "enthroned above the cherubim" but not seen there becomes visible and recognizable in his address to Mary - and to the reader of the Gospel, implicitly, by Mary's relating of this appearance (verse 18, "I have seen the Lord."). Speech discloses the divine image as the centerpiece of a new creation.

d. Jesus Among his Disciples

A few scholars have argued at length for an overlooked priestly dimension to the Gospel portrayals of Jesus.[86] While the bulk of those discussions lie well beyond our scope, they recognize the association of priesthood with the divine image and so imply the relevance of the *imago Dei* to Jesus' ministry. However, Jesus also promises his own ongoing presence and activity among his disciples as they go about the work with which he has charged them, particularly as they speak for him. The implied priesthood of Jesus' disciples, and so the proclamation of the church, is itself a mediation of the *imago Dei*.

Jesus' appointment of the seventy in Luke 10, in which their ministry parallels his own, culminates in an identification in v.16: "Whoever hears you hears me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me." In their words, the seventy individually are the presence of Jesus, who is himself the presence and word of the Father. In this way they recall the theory of images as outcroppings and extensions of a king's rule; however, they do so

[85] The Septuagint uses *paradeisos* for the garden in Genesis 2 and 3; however, the Hebrew text uses the same word for garden, *gan,* which is elsewhere (cf. Deuteronomy 11:10) translated with *kepos.* It is at least dimly possible that the incidental similarity of *kepos/kepouros* and *kapporet* is an intentional if obscure pun.
[86] Fletcher-Louis, "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah," Parts 1 and 2. Perrin, *Jesus the Priest*.

not merely as signs of the kingdom, but as the real, bodily form of the ruler. Their message, "The kingdom of God has come near to you," is to be understood in the same way as Jesus' own proclamation of the kingdom, together with his words in the synagogue (Luke 4:21), "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." The proclamation of Jesus and his kingdom is the presence of Jesus, and should be received as such - in a formal sense, this resembles the old Babylonian incantation, "The word of the priest is the word of Marduk. The priest is the image of Marduk." Jesus' words, however, imply a significantly greater mutuality and vulnerability, and a greater power. The God thus manifest, whose authority is absolute, is subject to rejection together with his disciples.[87]

A similar structure can be discerned in several Matthean statements. The authority of binding and loosing, first given in response to Peter's confession (Matthew 16:19), and then more generally to the disciples (18:18), suggests not that Jesus lends out an abstracted power to enjoin and forgive, but that these particular human acts are God's acts, given eternal significance. Jesus' promised presence in the midst of his disciples when they gather in his name (18:20) could be misconstrued as simply an additional presence, as of an extra chair set out for an invisible guest - this, however, fails to account for why the promise might attend two or three but not one alone. It might more fruitfully be imagined as the gathered mediating Jesus' presence one to another in their proclamation, prayer, and thanksgiving. This constitutes a significant reinterpretation of the Deuteronomic theology of the divine name as point of access.[88]

The Gospel of John contains a similar sense of mediation, with an added pneumatological shading. The appearance of the risen Jesus among his disciples in John 20:19-23 includes a commissioning of the disciples as a repetition of Jesus' own relationship to the Father: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent

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[87] "See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you." Luke 10:19

[88] E.g., 2 Samuel 7:13, "He shall build a house for my name...," and the repeated references in Deuteronomy to the temple as the "place that YHWH will choose as a dwelling for his name."

me, so I send you." This is realized through the gift of the Spirit, which is expressed in the authority to forgive sins: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." The function of the Spirit is similar to what was observed for Paul. The Spirit is bestowed bodily by Jesus in the act of breathing and speaking, refashioning the disciples as his images.

Beyond the Gospel itself, a Johannine theology of filiation, and so mediation of the image, is expressed in 1 John 3:2 - "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is." Language of sin and purification in the following verses (e.g., v. 5, "You know that he appeared in order to take away sins...") strongly suggests a priestly dimension to the text. The beloved are purified from sin by their hope in the appearance of Jesus the Son, who destroys the works of the devil (v.8); those who are born of God are therefore sinless as he is. The revelation of Jesus is not only his appearance as the image of the Father, but the promise and revelation of the same for the children of God.

In summary, we can see a relatively consistent theology of Jesus as the embodied divine image expressed across the Gospels. This is most fully developed in Luke, but to some extent apparent in Mark and Matthew, and John contains a parallel theology without the vocabulary of image. The question of scope emerges in each as we consider the mediation of the image to and through Jesus' disciples. While the gospels do not speak of the *imago Dei* as unambiguously universal, they attest to its plurality. To be addressed by the one who says, "Whoever hears you hears me," is to be incorporated into an expanding repetition of the image through particular representatives, coincident with the church and its proclamation. The image remains, however, as hidden in the church as it is in Christ himself, paradoxically evident only in the

resemblance of suffering, rejection, and death, and in the entrusted message of liberation.

3. A New Testament Theology of the Divine Image?

A few other biblical texts make use of the image of God tradition. Hebrews 1, despite lacking the vocabulary of *eikon* or *homoiosis*, almost certainly does so. Concepts associated with the imago Dei abound in Hebrews 1:1-4: the Son is the heir of all things through whom God made the worlds, the radiance (*apaugasma*) of the glory (*doxa*), and the imprint or stamp (*character*) of the divine substance (*hypostasis*), upholding all things through his word of power. This creative power has a clear priestly dimension, which is united with royal authority: "When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high..." If this purification is understood in reference to the cross, the passage shows a progression from creation and cosmic sustenance to purification reminiscent of Colossians 1:15-20. Given this strong cultic note, and the close tie between *doxa* and image, the term *character* is easily taken as a substitute for *eikon*.

Jesus is explicitly called priest and sacrifice, though of a priesthood and type of sacrifice that stand beyond the law. By implication, believers belong to a priesthood like that of Jesus, offering sacrifices of thanksgiving to God through him (Hebrews 13:15). The parallel between the royal priesthood of Jesus ("of the order of Melchizedek," Hebrews 7:17) and the priesthood and inherited kingdom (Hebrews 12:28) of his disciples, and so between his humanity and theirs[89], does not amount to an explicit claim of mediating or repeating the divine image in believers, but it is open to interpretation in that direction.

Hebrews 10:1 includes a curious use of *eikon*, often overlooked in relation to the *imago Dei*. The law is referred to as having a shadow (*skia*) of the good things to

[89] See Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the NT,* 182.

come, rather than their *eikon* (often translated as form or reality). Therefore, the passage continues, the sacrifices of the law cannot remove sins. Judged in isolation from its context, there is nothing either Christological or anthropological about this usage, and no reason to connect *eikon* with Genesis 1. However, the “good things to come" are those which bring an end to sacrifice by effecting the forgiveness of sins (v. 18), identified as Christ’s bodily (v.10), high priestly activity - that is, his singular self-offering. It is therefore reasonable to read 10:1 as referring to Christ’s sacrifice as the eschatological appearance of the divine image. If this reading is accepted, the sense of image as presence, as the thing itself rather than bare sign, is further reinforced. That such presence is extra-legal indicates a fundamental de-coupling of the concepts of creation and law in the divine image.

Finally, James 3:9 offers a clear reference to humans as made in the likeness (*homoiosis*) of God. The condemnation of the tongue as unruled and deadly is not only an ethical injunction, but an expression of priestly power rooted in creation. The tongue blesses God but curses the divine image, a result as impossible and unnatural as a fig tree producing olives or a salty spring generating fresh water. Nothing in the passage suggests or outright excludes a Christological understanding of the image.

The various New Testament uses of the image of God thus show a striking consistency compared to even our very limited sample of early Jewish interpretation. While commonalities were observed among Sirach, Wisdom, and Philo - all, for example, showed awareness of the cultic dimension - these works were divided on the scope of the divine image, its relation to human corporeality, and the concept of a mediator. By comparison, the New Testament authors show few obvious points of incompatibility on the image. Despite differences in vocabulary and emphasis, several elements of a possible common understanding emerge: 1) Jesus, as the true human, is the image of God, 2) others are called “image of God” in relation to Jesus, both eschatologically and

protologically, 3) the human image includes the human body, and 4) its mediation *in* Jesus takes place through the Spirited mediation *of* Jesus from one human believer to another (the church and its proclamation). My contention is not that the New Testament texts agree in every nuance on the *imago Dei*. As it stands, however, little in the discussed passages weighs against the broad understanding I have proposed - while certain texts contribute to it more strongly than others, virtually none contradict it.[90]

This framework signals a broad agreement on the questions of the scope and hiddenness of the image. Whether all humans simply are divine images is not addressed in the New Testament; at the very least, they cannot be called *manifestly* so. Humans, even those to whom the teaching about the image of God has been given, stand in their sin in opposition to God and to the one God has sent, and curse those made in the likeness of God. The divine image thus names a place of conflict, a battlefield. It cannot be understood as a mere attribute or donated property, or as if an abstract notion of participation sufficed to communicate the image. The divine image is spoken of sinful humans as they are renewed in the one who overcomes sin and death. Jesus' resurrection reveals him as true human as much as it reveals him as divine; in the proclamation that reveals him, the many are likewise declared as children and images of God. Such proclamation is properly transformative because it is the vehicle of the Spirit. It is on this proclamation, on the various forms of speaking and hearing, that so much of the emphasis of the New Testament books lies.

IV. Trajectories in the Fathers

Patristic interpretation of the *imago Dei* is a rich subject of its own, impossible to summarize here in a systematic or thorough way. Instead, this section will examine the ways in which three early interpreters, Irenaeus (c. 130 - 200),

[90] It is possible, of course, to read James as if it disagrees with the above, though the book does not say enough to establish this.

Origen (c. 185 - 253), and Gregory Nazianzen (c. 329 - 390), repeat and reconfigure features already observed in early Jewish and New Testament writers. These figures are selected because of the clarity with which they exemplify such tendencies. Augustine is not a focus of this study, but as the template for further interpretation in the West for more than a millennium, his account is taken up to a limited extent in the next chapter, in relation to the development of Luther's interpretation of the divine image.

1. Irenaeus of Lyons

The image of God occupies an organizing position in the theology of Irenaeus. Its frequent invocations in *Against Heresies* arise in a wide variety of contexts, impossible to confine to a single doctrine or question. Rather, it is, as Gustaf Wingren observed, "of fundamental significance,"[91] naming an essential aspect of the divine economy, defining the purpose of the creation of the human, and determining the meaning of the Incarnation. Its significance is such that it is stressed in the final words of the work as a whole.[92] Irenaeus' biblical citations mirror this structural use of the *imago Dei*, tying together passages in various contexts into a distinctive synthesis. He strongly affirms the four identified characteristics of New Testament theology of the image.[93]

Following Paul, Irenaeus reads together the hexameron and paradise narratives of Genesis 1 and 2, understanding Genesis 2 to describe the molding of Adam whose creation is declared in 1:26-27. That initial declaration speaks not only the origin, but the goal of humanity, and so the union of creation with salvation and eschatology. This is mirrored by what Behr labels the most essentially Irenaean

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[91] Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, xiv.
[92] AH 5.36.3 "the great mystery, which the angels would look into, that the Son should descend to the creature which is moulded and be contained by him, and the creature should contain the Word, and ascend to him beyond the angels, and be made after the image and likeness of God."
[93] Briefly, that Jesus is the *imago Dei* as the true human, that others are called image of God only in relation to Jesus, that this image includes the body, and that it is mediated between humans through the proclamation of the church.

insight, that "the beginning appeared at the end."[94] The divine economy can only be contemplated from the eschatological event of Christ's coming, in which the human is revealed as the image of God in the one who is himself the creator. Adam is understood as a type of Christ, but not only Adam. Irenaeus interprets the genealogy in Luke 3 as the recapitulation of humanity in Christ: "Wherefore Luke points out that the pedigree which traces the generation of our Lord back to Adam contains seventy-two generations, connecting the end with the beginning, and implying that it is He who has summed up in Himself all nations dispersed from Adam downwards, and all languages and generations of men, together with Adam himself."[95]

There is no question as to whether the image of God is more a Christological or an anthropological concept - to ask is already to separate Christ from the creature rooted in him, to drive a wedge between origin and eschaton, and so disturb the unity of the divine work. This unity is evident in the Trinitarian structure of the divine economy. The Father and his two "hands," the Son and Spirit, proceed deliberately and harmoniously to produce the living human.[96] Adam is molded after the image, who is the Word and the vehicle of creation,[97] and grows up through the breath of the Spirit into the divine likeness of Christ.

While Irenaeus in places[98] distinguishes image from likeness, this manner of distinction is hardly thoroughgoing, and cannot be mapped onto his conception of the creation and growth of the human in a consistent fashion. In AH 5.6.1, the *similitudo* is identified with the working of the Spirit, but in 5.8.1, the growth given by the Spirit is responsible for both image and likeness.[99] More clear by far

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[94] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons,* 145.
[95] AH 3.22.3 Cf. Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 145-149.
[96] AH 4.20.1
[97]AH 5.16.1
[98] AH 5.6.1
[99] AH 5.8.1 "For if the pledge, gathering man into itself, does even now cause him to cry, "Abba, Father," what shall the complete grace of the Spirit effect, which shall be given to men by God? It will render us like unto Him, and accomplish the will of the Father; for it shall make man after the image and likeness of God." Translation altered.

than the distinction between image and likeness is that Irenaeus considers growth into the fullness of the image and likeness of God to be necessary - what is spoken in the beginning is completed in the fullness of time, through the Father's planning, the Son's creation, and the Spirit-given growth.[100]

This growth is necessary because the human image of God is and always was, properly, Christ himself. Christ comes first, and then Adam, though Christ was not at the start visible:

For in times long past, it was said that man was created after the image of God, but it was not shown; for the Word was as yet invisible, after whose image man was created, wherefore also he did easily lose the similitude. When, however, the Word of God became flesh, He confirmed both these: for He both showed forth the image truly, since He became Himself what was His image; and He re-established the similitude after a sure manner, by assimilating man to the invisible Father through means of the visible Word.[101]

While Irenaeus conceives the newly created Adam as childlike, an "infant," and so requiring maturation,[102] the loss of likeness goes far beyond native immaturity. It is not merely an inferior degree of correspondence to God, but a form of opposition, at odds with the *imago Dei*. Following Paul's distinction between the image of the man of earth and that of the man of heaven (1 Corinthians 15:49), Irenaeus interprets loss of the image as a kind of malformation of and in Adam, a differentiation accomplished by the "works of the flesh" being worked in us, and reversed by baptism into Christ, which

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[100] Wingren considers image and likeness as hendiadys, and not typically distinguished. *Man and the Incarnation*, 14-15. Bouteneff likewise de-emphasizes the distinction, arguing that it appears clearly in only AH 5.16.2. *Beginnings*, 80. Markschies' contention via AH 5.6.1 that image refers to body and likeness to soul is difficult to sustain, insofar as other passages associate likeness with the whole human. *God's Body*, 195.
[101] AH 5.16.2
[102] AH 4.38.1

bestows the Holy Spirit.[103] The destruction of Satan and the perfection of the human after the image and likeness of God are thus conceived as united in a single divine economy, accomplished in the eschatological appearance of the Son.[104]

The theme of the hiddenness of the divine image is evident. While the image is declared at the beginning, it is not "shown", and on account of this the human becomes unlike the true image. Restoration and perfection of the human image and likeness depends on the revelation of Christ. Likeness is restored not by sloughing off the visible and material, but by means of the Son becoming visible - the bodily nature of the image of God is maintained. In this respect, Irenaeus' closeness to Paul and Colossians may be contrasted with Philo. For Philo, the invisible portion of the human corresponds to the invisibility, and so incorporeality, of the Logos. But Irenaeus refuses to treat the Logos as any other than the incarnate (and so crucified) Jesus, even from the beginning: "In effect, *the crucified and risen Lord* comes first, and Adam is made with reference to him."[105] The body does not conceal the divine image, but is necessary to it.[106]

Just as Irenaeus speaks of the hiddenness of the Son, he also speaks of the corresponding hiddenness of the human. In a remarkable passage, he links Jesus' healing of the man born blind (John 9) to Adam's hiding from God in the garden:

> But he who moulded Adam at the beginning, and with whom the Father spoke, "Let us make the human after our image and likeness," revealing Himself in these last times to men, formed sight for him who was blind from Adam. And on account of this, scripture says, signifying what would

[103] AH 5.11.2 "Now we have washed away, not the substance of our body, nor the image of our formation, but the former vain way of life."
[104] AH 5.21.2
[105] Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 82.
[106] Ibid., 83: "Irenaeus understands that an image presupposes both *form* and *material substrate."*

> come to pass, that when Adam hid himself because of his disobedience, the Lord came to him in the evening, and called out to him and said, "Where are you?" That is, in the last times the same Word of God came to call the human, reminding him of his works, continuing in which he had been hidden from the Lord. For just as at that time God spoke to Adam in the evening, searching him out; so in the last times, through the same voice, he has seen his kind, searching them out.[107]

The visual logic here is complex, as blindness is linked with concealment. The blind man is like Adam who hides, not seeing God and so by his works concealed from God and from himself. In each case it is Christ the Word who seeks out the human and reveals him, by way of revealing himself. In this sense, the loss of the divine likeness may be seen as the human's own hopeless self-concealment in the works of the flesh.

The hiddenness and revelation of the imago Dei is necessarily intertwined with the question of its scope, which is determined within the single divine economy. It would be erroneous to speak of humans as presently the image and likeness of God. Christ is ever the true image, but perfection in image and likeness is worked in humans as an eschatological gift. "Let us make the human in our image," is in this respect a promise, a declaration at the beginning of that which is the end. The eschatological scope of the *imago Dei* is the scope of salvation in Christ, as these are fundamentally the same. Repeatedly, Irenaeus stresses the instrumentality of the church. It is the Word and Spirit, God's hands, who bring to life and salvation through the means of Baptism, the Eucharist, and the proclamation of the Gospel.[108] The end is found in a term often associated with the divine image - glory. If, for Irenaeus, "the glory of God is a living human,"[109] that life is the incorruptible life of the Son, the image of God.

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[107] AH 5.15.4
[108] AH 5.28.4
[109] AH 4.20.7; Regarding proclamation, AH 3 Preface, 3.1, 4.26.1

2. Origen of Alexandria

Origen's treatment of the *imago Dei* appears markedly different from that of Irenaeus, drawing upon the Alexandrian tradition of Jewish-Platonic exegesis traceable to Philo. That difference is most evident in discussion of the body and emphasis on the genus of rational beings rather than on the human as such. While Origen's account is not hostile to the body, it nevertheless approaches the body - and to an extent, the human - with ambivalence. Of the four points summarizing the New Testament witness on the image of God, two are clearly problematic for Origen. Though he affirms that Jesus is the true image of God and became truly human, it would go too far to say that Jesus is the image of God precisely *as* the true human. Origen does not associate the divine image with humanity, but with rational beings (of which human is but one sort, and perhaps a temporary sort) in their affinity to the *logos*. Since what is rational is invisible - that is, non-sensible - it is non-bodily, and so neither can the image and likeness of God include the human body.

The first part of *On First Principles* opens with the assertion that God is without body.[110] This is argued from divine hiddenness, understood as invisibility, which like Philo, Origen takes as belonging to the divine nature: "by nature it is impossible for him to be seen."[111] The most immediate consequence for the *imago Dei* is that the *logos* is also invisible: "as he is himself invisible by nature, so also he has begotten an image that is invisible."[112]

Since, "the Son is the Word (*logos*), and therefore it is understood that nothing in him is perceptible to the senses," the way to the Son, as to the Father, is intellection.[113] The image of God is to be understood, not seen. Origen thus refers the image to the soul, not the body, and associates it with the eternal *logos*, rather

[110] Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.1.1; p25. Page numbers refer to Behr translation.
[111] Ibid, 1.1.8; p37.
[112] Ibid, 1.2.6; p49.
[113] Ibid.

than with the incarnation. The Son as Word and Wisdom instructs the created intellect in order to restore it to the image and likeness of God,[114] and even to stretch beyond likeness to real unity with God.[115]

Origen's interpretation of creation resembles Philo's, in that Genesis 1 and 2 name two different divine acts. However, for Philo these are differentiated as idea and material execution. While one is purely intelligible and the other sensible, one incorruptible and the other corruptible, the second stage is not conceived as a response to sin. For Origen, the molding of the human body out of earth is itself viewed as the consequence of a fall. This is expressed in his Commentary on John:

> Because, therefore, the first human being fell away from the superior things and desired a life different from the better life, he deserved to be a beginning neither of something created nor made, but *of something moulded by the Lord, made to be mocked by the angels.* Now, our superior being is in our being made *according to the image* of the Creator, but that resulting from a cause is in the thing moulded, which was received from the dust of the earth.[116]

Behr points toward the Christological resonance of the passage, as the earthly body's mockery by the angels runs parallel to that experienced by Christ himself in the body.[117] The human body in its present state is a form of humiliation for the soul. This does not mean that it is a punishment, or evil. Rather, the body's weakness is a condescension to the soul's falling away, a divine work fitting to the degree to which each soul has descended from its original purity. Christ himself, as "the beginning" is the origin and firstborn of every creature, and just

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[114] Ibid., 2.11.3; p271-273.
[115] Ibid., 3.6.1; p443. "In this the likeness itself already seems, if we may so say, to advance, and from being similar to become one, for the reason, no doubt, that in the consummation or end God is all and in all."
[116] Ibid., tr. Behr, lxi. From *Commentary on John*, 20.182.
[117] Ibid.

as he is with God, invisible, and purely rational, so were they.[118] His incarnation is necessitated by their fallen state, which is an abandonment of the divine image: "For this reason, our Savior, who is the image of God, moved with compassion for the human person who had been made according to his likeness, seeing him, his own image having been lain aside, to have put on the image of the evil one, assumed the image of man and came to him."[119]

In Origen's conception, the bodily difference between humans as "rational animals"[120] and other rational beings, whether higher or lower, including angels, demons, and the stars,[121] is a question of the depth to which each has fallen from the original unity. He has little sense of created diversity as an end. Diversity is alienation from God, its degree determined through the vice or virtue of rational creatures, which rise and fall in relation to their creator based on their own free wills.[122] This is a matter of divine justice; God is not unfair in assigning some to rule and others to be ruled, as each creature is responsible for its own station.[123] Diversity of body is an effect of diversity of soul, not as original design, but an adaptation. Matter is the good servant of God which accommodates the need for diverse bodies. However, insofar as creation is brought to its consummation in God, and so hastens to unity, diversity must pass away.[124] This is the meaning of Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17: "that they may be one, as we are one."

There is nevertheless a distinction between the Son and even restored rational beings, as only God may exist without material form.[125] Humans were not

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[118] Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 115, quoting from the start of the *Homilies on Genesis*: "What is 'the beginning' of all things except our Lord and Savior of all, Jesus Christ, the first-born of every creature?"
[119] Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*, 1.13.
[120] Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.5.2; p93.
[121] Ibid., 1.7.3; p125. Origen's understanding of astral bodies as living and rational beings is essentially Hebraic, corresponding with the function of "rule" in Genesis 1:16.
[122] Ibid., 2.9.6; p247. "And this, as we have already said before, is the cause of the diversity among rational creatures, drawing its origin not from the will or judgement of the Creator, but from the freedom of the individual will."
[123] Ibid., 1.8.2; p135.
[124] Ibid., 3.6.4; p447.
[125] Ibid., 1.6.4; p117.

originally disembodied souls, but their bodies were of more spiritual stuff.[126] Likewise, bodies will not utterly pass away in the eschaton, but be transformed to a more pure, ethereal substance. However, the distinction between humans and other rational beings fades to obscurity, just as the distinction of male and female is rendered moot. The Word is true God, but those who are restored in him are deified so as to be called gods, "as images of the prototype."[127] Humanity as such disappears from view insofar as the *imago Dei* is extended and restored in rational beings in conformity to the Son.

The scope of the *imago Dei* is thus separated from humanity and driven more directly to the metaphysical problem of the one and many. Concern for original unity and ambivalence regarding the body contribute to a picture in which the divine image is intellectual, not human. The rational (*logike*) is participation in the Logos, and so the intellect alone has affinity to God.[128] Since there is nothing distinctively human about rationality, neither is there any necessary link between the human and the image. Eschatological sharing in this image may well be universal, but it is not human.

The distinctively human belongs to what is visible, that is, sensible. From this perspective, humanity is not at all hidden, but evident to the body. What is hidden from the body is the reason within, in its affinity to the uncreated and invisible - and so, for reason, the image of God is likewise known rather than hidden. Insistence that creatures must have bodies, however rarified, keeps Origen's interpretation tethered to the biblical accounts - speculations are always given exegetical warrant. Nevertheless, the image of God has ceased to be an anthropological problem, as it is understood only in relation to the uncreated *logos* and under the heading of rational beings. This is perhaps the purest form of spiritual interpretation of the divine image.

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[126] Ramelli, "Origen." Cf. *On First Principles*, 4.4.8, p579.
[127] Origen, *Commentary on John* 2.17-18.
[128] Origen, *On First Principles*, 1.1.7; p35-37.

3. Gregory of Nazianzus

As with Irenaeus, the image of God plays a significant part in Gregory Nazianzen's theology, woven throughout without being strictly located in particular doctrines. Gregory's theological debt to Origen[129] is notable, but his theology of the divine image is distinct from Origen's in its anthropological focus and relation to the body. Furthermore, Gregory takes up the experience of being an *imago Dei* and the use of the divine image in the Christian life, rendering it an eminently practical element of Christian spirituality.

Gregory's account is, at its root, christological. Christ is the "identical image," (*aparallaktos eikon*) in distinction from all other human images.[130] The Son is in essence identical with the Father, not only as transcendent *logos*, but as incarnate. Thus, *eikon* does not refer to the Son in his invisibility, as with Origen, but to the visible Christ in the flesh.[131] The unity of divinity and humanity in Christ will not permit otherwise.[132] This unity, however, is also the vehicle for the salvation and remodeling of the human image of God. It is precisely Christ as the "identical image" who grounds and establishes human images, so much that Gregory may refer to the human person as the "*eikon* of Christ".[133] In this way the divine image repeats itself.

It is significant that Gregory reserves the title image of God for the human, rather than for rational beings at large. In fact, he reverses the condition of being an image: angels, who are spiritual intellects "without visible form" are never described as *eikones*, despite their proximity to God, while humans visibly image the Creator.[134] Though he accepts a form of two-stage creation, it differs

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[129] The influence of Origen also conveys that of Philo, which is evident in Gregory despite lack of direct citation. Thomas, *The Image of God in the Theology of Gregory of Nazianzus*, 14.
[130] Ibid., 36.
[131] Ibid., 46.
[132] Beeley, "Gregory of Nazianzus on the Unity of Christ." Gregory, Or 38.13.
[133] Thomas, *The Image of God in the theology of Gregory of Nazianzus*, 41.
[134] Ibid., 64-65. On the description of angels, see Gregory, Carm 1.1.7 (PG 37, 439-440).

from the interpretations of Philo and Origen, in that the visible realm is not conceived as a copy of the intellectual or a concession to its fall. Rather, "since the first things seemed good to God, [God] had in mind a second material and visible realm, and this is the structure and compound of heaven and earth and of things in between; praiseworthy according to each good natural part, but even more laudable because of the suitability and harmony of everything..."[135]

The concept of mixture (*mixis* or *krasis*) is important within Gregory's theology. In his interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2, the human is an intermingling of visible and invisible natures, and so an exemplar of the harmony described, just as the visible world is a mixture of matter and form. "From clay and breath a mortal *eikon* of the immortal One was established."[136] Thus, while Gregory frequently refers to the spiritual intellect (*nous*) as the image of God[137], this cannot exclude description of the human image as physical and visible. The human is dust, but dust infused with and transformed by the breath of the Spirit into a living divine image. His interpretation of the commandment against idols (Exodus 20:4) is illustrative. Substituting *eikon* for *eidolon* (idol), Gregory understands the commandment as, "You shall not set up an empty likeness and a breathless *eikon*."[138] By implication, the whole human - body and soul - is an *eikon* with breath, a living cult image. As in the Hebrew prophets, idolatry is forbidden not because visible representation of the invisible is inherently impossible, but because the living God produces his own living images.

That dust may be transformed and imbued with life is indicative of what Thomas terms the "porous" or "vulnerable" self in Gregory's thought. The human is susceptible to being acted upon and so changed, in multiple ways: in creation, as divine life is given in the first place; in the attack of the devil, who seeks to

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[135] Gregory, Or 38.10 (*Sources Chrétiennes* 358), quoted and translated in Thomas, *Image of God*, 65.
[136] Gregory, Carm. 1.1.8 (PG 37, 452), tr. in Thomas, *Image of God*, 23.
[137] On Gregory's tripartite anthropology and the inseparable joining of mind and body, see Matz, "Gregory of Nazianzus."
[138] Gregory, Carm. 1.1.15 (PG 37, 476), tr. in Thomas, *Image of God*, 24.

destroy the human image[139]; in salvation, through the Spirit's restoration and divinization of the human image. The last of these is of particular importance, as Gregory confidently refers to the human as divine, or as becoming a god. While Christ alone is the "identical image," the human image of God truly becomes a divine image. Just as the human is vulnerable, so is divinity communicable: "Who will renew the creature, and set forth the eikon, and fashion creatures for the world above, and even greater than that, to say we will be god and make others gods?"[140] Only Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are essentially and identically God, but the human is transformed into the divine life by God's presence.

What appears as a startlingly elevated view of the human is thus, at bottom, Gregory's characteristic emphasis on the divinity and work of the Spirit. The Spirit, as true God, renovates and inhabits the human image. The use of temple building themes and association of the image with cult and worship bears some resemblance to Sirach[141], though in connection with Gregory's pneumatology even more resembles Pauline rhetoric in 1 and 2 Corinthians. Oliver Langworthy notes Gregory's use of Pauline temple imagery, as when he asks why his opponents, "make me, who is a temple of the Holy Spirit, thus of God, the hut of a creature?"[142] The Spirit's transformation of the human renders her a fit habitation, not only capable of true worship, but to be honored and worshiped as an image of God. This leads the Christian into conflict. In a remarkable passage, Gregory describes the attack of the devil upon the human image and the appropriate response to it:

> If he should overcome you with insatiate desire, tracing out all the kingdoms, in one moment of time and view as though they belonged to

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[139] Satan is, among many other titles, "destroyer of the *eikon*." Gregory, Carm. 2.1.65 (PG 37, 1407). Thomas, *Image of God*, 33.
[140] Gregory, Or. 2.73 (SC 247), tr. in Thomas, *Image of God*, 118.
[141] There is a similarity between the worship toward the high priest Simon serving at the altar in Sirach 50:1-21, and the reverence toward Basil at the altar in Gregory, Oration 43.52. Neither text calls either figure an *eikon*, but in each something similar is implied. Basil is called statue-like, leading Thomas to interpret the scene through the *imago Dei*. Thomas, *Image of God*, 22.
[142] Langworthy, *Gregory of Nazianzus' Soteriological Pneumatology*, 116-117.

> him, demanding worship, look down on him as one who is poor. Say, confident in the seal [baptism], 'I, myself, am also an eikon of God, I have not yet been thrown down through pride from the glory above, like you. I am clothed in Christ; I have been remodelled Christ by baptism, you ought to worship me!' He will depart, I know well, yielding and being shamed by these words, as he was by Christ the first light, thus will he depart from those who are enlightened by the same Christ.[143]

The human is deserving of worship, not on her own account, but on account of Christ. Baptism marks this remodeling, and remains a potent weapon against temptation. This is a richly experiential picture of the divine image - precisely where a person feels weak and at the mercy of evil, there the image of God produces a sudden inversion. The image of God describes something that is felt, known, and used in the Christian life, though known paradoxically, as the visible image is nevertheless not seen directly, but viewed in the work of the Spirit through baptism into Christ. Gregory has a robust account of the image's day to day function.

Similarly, he is attentive to the image's mediation in the church. This is not only set in formal terms, but concretely applied to himself and his hearers by a rhetorical substitution, as these are woven into the biblical narrative. Bouteneff points out several instances of such rhetoric, noting that, "When Gregory speaks of the paradise episode, the main character is as often "me" or "us" as it is "Adam".[144] The serpent constantly seduces *us*.[145] In Oration 19, Gregory relates, "I came to know *my* nakedness and clothed *myself* in a garment of skin, and fell from the garden."[146] So too with salvation, when Christ, "gathered *me* to himself as he mounted the cross that he might crucify *my* sin, triumph over the serpent,

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[143] Gregory, Or. 40.10 (SC 358, 218), tr. in Thomas, *Image of God*, 143-144.
[144] Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 145.
[145] Gregory, Or. 14.26
[146] Gregory, Or 19.14.

sanctify the tree, vanquish pleasure, redeem Adam, and restore *our* fallen image."[147]

Regarding the scope of the *imago Dei*, Gregory maintains that image of God applies to Christ in his identity with the Father, but to humans as they are made "according to the image" (*kat eikona*) - yet this is a true deification. Does this apply to all? As concerns creation and the ethical responsibilities incumbent on dealing with a human, yes - this dignity applies to all. Nevertheless, he distinguishes between the image as on the one hand damaged, having become coarse and dull through the fall, and on the other as remodeled and elevated to divinity in Christ.

This mirrors Wisdom of Solomon in seeing the divine image as derivative of Wisdom but true of the human, distinguishing between the universal created image and the destiny of the righteous, and implying conflict between a living image and dead idols. Even more, Gregory's account follows Paul, particularly on Christ and the Spirit: transformation, illumination, the communication of the image, and the emphasis on proclamation all track Paul, as does his understanding of the divine image as contested by the devil (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Insistence on the bodily visibility of the image is not an assertion that it is simply apparent. To oneself, the human in this life remains a mystery. Gregory expresses this poetically: "Who was I at first? Moreover, who am I now? And, who shall I become? I don't know clearly."[148] How, then, is this hidden thing manifest? Since the whole human is a divine image, the divine image is as visible as the human. Indeed, it requires visibility, for it is to be honored and worshiped; but just so, it is only by the Spirit that the human is known as an image of *God*, as the Spirit reveals the Father and Son. This revelation comes through the instrumentality of Baptism and scripture, and if Gregory's own sermons are taken as an example, is meant to be heard in preaching. Such preaching is much

[147] Gregory, Or. 24.4. Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 144-145.
[148] Gregory, Carm 1.2.14, tr. in Thomas, *Image of God,* 1.

more than purely informative. Since it furnishes the human *eikon* with weapons to resist sin and the devil, it plays an active role in the preservation and function of the human image of God, determining hiddenness and scope. As with Irenaeus, all the essential features of the New Testament consensus on the divine image are maintained.

4. Christology and Anthropology

In each of the cases examined, the person of Christ takes center stage as the means by which individual humans can or cannot be described as divine images. Thus, the image names a particular coordination of Christology and anthropology: Christ is the image of God as the true human, and humans are images of God as they are in Christ. This applies even in the breach - when Origen loses sight of the distinctly human, and so obviates the anthropological questions of scope and hiddenness, he also demonstrates a christological weakness. Even so, Christ remains central to his account.

Significantly more might be said about early Christian reconfiguration of Jewish and New Testament interpretations of the image. The New Testament places election and image in close proximity, conjoining not only Christ and universal humanity, but also Israel.[149] Both the question of scope and the theme of Israel's election recede from view with the ascendance of gentile Christianity. Further, several pre-Nicene writers (Melito of Sardis, Pseudo-Hippolytus, Tertullian, and Methodius of Olympus) have been identified as developing "eikonic soteriologies," indicating an array of different combinations and developments of earlier features.[150] These suggest a rich and underexplored territory of theologies of the divine image in the first three centuries of Christianity.

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[149] Consider here Paul's movement from his declaration of believers as "predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son," in Romans 8:29 to consideration of the election of Israel in Romans 9:4 - "to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises."
[150] Giulea, *Pre-Nicene Christology in Paschal Contexts,* 127-158.

V. Conclusion

The primary concern of this chapter has been to trace how the aporiae of the hiddenness and scope of the image of God, as received from the scriptures of Israel, influenced interpretation of the image toward mediating figures. The first of these, the *logos* and Wisdom of God as variously conceived in early Judaism, were nonhuman. However, the *imago Dei* tradition never stood far from questions of human embodiment, drawing upon the biblical accounts of human creation and the examples of specific human representatives in the Old Testament.

These streams converged in the earliest Christian testimony, as re-interpreted through the person of Christ. The incident with the denarius may indicate that this re-interpretation stems from the teaching of Jesus himself. Regardless, the New Testament shows a consistent framework in which Christ stands uniquely as the image of God, but just so communicates renewal in the divine image to others. The scope of the divine image and its structure as hidden and revealed are refracted through the relation of individual humans to Christ in his death and resurrection.

However, important aspects of the New Testament framework proved difficult to maintain. Ambivalence about the body and the status of created diversity accompanied the long christological disputes of the early church, eventuating in teachings about the divine image which only partially represented the New Testament consensus. The increasing dominance of spiritual interpretations in antiquity points to a deficit in Christian anthropology and the gradual loss of connection between creation, soteriology, and eschatology. As a consequence, theological accounts of the divine image remained underdeveloped especially as concerns the animating questions of this study: the scope of the image (who is it?) and its character as hidden (where is it to be found?).

The apocalyptic urgency of the New Testament witness testifies to what is at stake in such questions. In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul speaks not from the perspective of final knowledge of the resurrection, but from the present suffering and conflict in which believers are immersed, "always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh." Gregory Nazianzen likewise speaks of the image of God, restored in baptism, as a present help against the attack of the evil one. The restoration of the image of God not only to a more theologically robust form, but as a practical help in Christian life and ministry, requires a work of retrieval.

While the dominance of Augustine's Trinitarian revision of the spiritual interpretation limited resources for such a retrieval within Latin theology, a significant step toward addressing hiddenness and scope was achieved in the 16th century. While the work of an Augustinian, its shape owes more to the Bible, in some respects also resembling the accounts of Irenaeus and Nazianzen. Luther's interpretation of the divine image as a preached promise did not begin as a radical revision, but developed over the course of his career. Its importance rests in its unparalleled attention to divine hiddenness and revelation in the Word, and so to hiddenness and scope in connection with creative divine speech, as well as to the eschatological horizon of justification. It is to that interpretation that we now turn.

Chapter 3
The Preached Human: Martin Luther and the Image of God

I. Introduction

Luther's interpretation of the *imago Dei* is in many respects a recovery of the trajectory of early Christian interpretation. While schooled in the Augustinian tradition, Luther's mature approach comes to resemble more closely that of the New Testament, Irenaeus, and Nazianzen, holding together creation, eschatology, and soteriology to an unusual degree. He diverges from Augustine and the medieval tradition of the soul as *imago Trinitatis*, often describing the divine image in bodily terms, but ultimately exceeding body and soul. Like Nazianzen, he explicitly surfaces the problem of the hiddenness of the human image of God. However, Luther thematizes hiddenness and revelation in a highly distinctive manner, and so positions the image of God above all in the context of Christian proclamation.

While Luther's professed ignorance of the image of God in humans has not generally been emphasized in studies of the topic[1], and its connection with his understanding of divine hiddenness has not been explored, these matters represent the theological center of Luther's contribution. The distinction between God hidden in himself (not preached) and hidden in his word (preached) represents a defining feature of Luther's theology and the point of integration between the disparate elements of his theology of *imago Dei*.

The image of God appears occasionally in earlier writings, but late in his career Luther revisits it alongside a turn toward the Old Testament and the doctrine of

[1] It is typical to elevate his emphasis on the loss of the image due to sin, but draw less significance from the refusal to identify it. Most recently, in a largely helpful study, Bengard considers both the Disputation on Man and the Genesis lectures, describing Luther's rejection of the spiritual interpretation. She does not deal with the image as hidden, but partially recognizes the problem of scope as oscillating between anthropological protology (Adam) and christological eschatology (Christ), suggesting the solution lies in a form of "narrative theology." Bengard, "Imago Dei: God's Grace and Distance." Cf. Peters, Der Mensch, 27-59.

creation. After tracing Luther's development through the earlier works, this chapter focuses on that later development. Two texts are treated at length: the *Lectures on Genesis* (1535-1545) and the *Disputation on Man* (1536). Though stylistically disparate, they are best taken as complementary, and afford a view of the divine image not only as a concept, but as a justifying promise.

II. Fundamental Concepts in Luther's Theology of *Imago Dei*

Three themes in Luther's theology are discussed below in order to provide context to his interpretation of the image of God. These themes relate to the image as a form of mediation, in which the polarities of hiddenness and scope are resolved in the concrete. Each theme represents in itself a related polarity: between God hidden outside his word and hidden in it, between creation as experienced in the present and as given in the futurity of the divine promise, and between the human in sin and in her eschatological life in Christ. We see in these three polarities the relation between Luther's theology and anthropology. The description offered is partial and synthetic, but should be kept in mind as Luther's writings on the *imago Dei* are discussed.

1. Naked God: Preached and Not-Preached

Perhaps the most basic distinction in Luther's theology - in the sense that it cannot be got behind, but rather all speech about God must fall on one side or the other of its division - pertains to his doctrine of God as hidden and revealed. This theology runs consistently through all but his earliest works, clearly visible from 1520 or so onward[2], and is laid out most explicitly in *The Bondage of the Will*. As Luther addresses Erasmus, he notes the problem presented by the assertion from Ezekiel 18 that God "desires not the death of a sinner."[3] Does God not also

[2] E.g., in the conclusion to *Freedom of a Christian*, wherein Luther castigates "hyper-religious" reason for attempting to grasp God according to the law. "If he himself does not teach our hearts this wisdom hidden in mystery, nature can only condemn it and judge it to be heretical because nature is offended by it and regards it as foolishness." LW 31, 377. WA 7, 73.
[3] This discussion pertains to Ezekiel 18:21-32 and 33:11. LW 33:135-140. WA 18, 682-685.

work death in sinners? Rather than waver on divine omnipotence or admit the middle ground of a self-orienting human will, Luther sets out the distinction:

> When now Diatribe[4] pertly asks, "Does the good Lord deplore the death of his people, which he himself works in them?"—for this really does seem absurd—we reply, as we have already said, that we have to argue in one way about God or the will of God as preached, revealed, offered, and worshiped, and in another way about God as he is not preached, not revealed, not offered, not worshiped. To the extent, therefore, that God hides himself and wills to be unknown to us, it is no business of ours. For here the saying truly applies, "Things above us are no business of ours."[5]

Luther speaks of God not as hidden but as hiding and willing to be unknown. Hiddenness is not an attribute of invisibility, nor simply a function of the difference between creature and creator, but a divine act. God wills to be known in certain ways, and wills to be unknown otherwise. Following the problem posed by Ezekiel 18, Luther's "solution" is that God wills to be unknown as working the death of sinners, but wills to be known as saving them. The implication of such a doctrine of God is that God's wills are found contrary to one another. Theology, therefore, requires a recognition of this contrariety and a specification of its subject. God is known only as he wills to be known, which is to say, as he publishes himself in his word:

> God must therefore be left to himself in his own majesty, for in this regard we have nothing to do with him, nor has he willed that we should have anything to do with him. But we have something to do with him insofar as he is clothed and set forth in his Word, through which he offers himself to us and which is the beauty and glory with which the psalmist celebrates

[4] The *Diatribe* was Erasmus' 1524 effort to finally distance himself from Luther. Luther delayed his response until 1525, but regarded it as one of his most important works. Erasmus, *Collected Works, Volume 76*. Kolb, *Bound Choice, Election, and Wittenberg Theological Method*.
[5] WA 18, 685. LW 33, 139.

> him as being clothed. In this regard we say, the good God does not deplore the death of his people which he works in them, but he deplores the death which he finds in his people and desires to remove from them. For it is this that God as he is preached is concerned with, namely, that sin and death should be taken away and we should be saved. For "he sent his word and healed them" [Ps. 107:20]. But God hidden in his majesty neither deplores nor takes away death, but works life, death, and all in all. For there he has not bound himself by his word, but has kept himself free over all things.
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> Diatribe, however, deceives herself in her ignorance by not making any distinction between God preached and God hidden, that is, between the Word of God and God himself. God does many things that he does not disclose to us in his word; he also wills many things which he does not disclose himself as willing in his word. Thus he does not will the death of a sinner, according to his word; but he wills it according to that inscrutable will of his. It is our business, however, to pay attention to the word and leave that inscrutable will alone, for we must be guided by the word and not by that inscrutable will. After all, who can direct himself by a will completely inscrutable and unknowable? It is enough to know simply that there is a certain inscrutable will in God, and as to what, why, and how far it wills, that is something we have no right whatever to inquire into, hanker after, care about, or meddle with, but only to fear and adore.[6]

There is for Luther no possibility of grasping the naked God (*Deus nudus*),[7] God in absolute majesty. This is not because God has withdrawn from the world or is in no way evident. On the contrary, the God who "works life, death, and all in all," is present in all things, as reason may establish. Faith, however, looks elsewhere, to where God is known as "clothed and set forth in his Word," further specified

[6] LW 33, 139-140. WA 18, 685-686.
[7] This expression is used repeatedly, occurring in, e.g., the *Lectures on Isaiah* (LW 16, 55; WA 31.II, 38), and the *Lectures on Genesis* (LW 1, 11; WA 42, 9).

as “beauty” and “glory.”[8] Such faith acknowledges that God wills and works outside his word, but its distinctive character arises from its grasping and receiving God only where he communicates himself. Luther often speaks of the futility, even danger, of seeking God where he does not give himself: “It is extremely dangerous to speculate about the majesty of God and His dreadful judgments - how He destroyed the whole world with the flood, how he destroyed Sodom, etc.; for this brings men to the brink of despair and plunges them into total destruction, as I have shown before.”[9]

This distinction is not merely an assertion regarding the necessity of revelation, or that God is grasped only as he is spoken of in scripture. Luther sees the activity of God’s hidden will reflected in the Bible as well,[10] and so resists too clean an identification of scripture with God clothed in his word. Likewise, God’s hiding so as to be found is not limited to the Bible, but comes to humans in their own time through the work of the Spirit in the proclamation of the church. Luther’s distinction is not between God in nature and God in the Bible, but between God specifically as he is preached, giving himself in his word, and as he remains in majesty apart from his word.

Preaching and the word suggest christological and pneumatological dimensions to Luther’s distinction, an implicit Trinitarian structure.[11] This structure is commonly overlooked in the simple binary of hidden and revealed, and in the somewhat misleading identification of two “types” of hiddenness in Luther.[12] Such identification is correct that God’s hiding in himself is not his hiddenness

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[8] Mattes, *Martin Luther’s Theology of Beauty*, 92.
[9] 1531/1535 *Lectures on Galatians*. LW 26:42f. WA 40.I,99.
[10] Luther interprets some famously difficult passages precisely as displaying the conflict between God’s word and his activity outside the word. Jacob’s wrestling match in Genesis 32:22-32 is prototypical, advancing from deadly struggle to divine blessing (a name given). LW 6, 125-145; WA 44, 93-108.
[11] This Trinitarian structure to God’s hiding, and so to Luther’s doctrine of God, is the subject of Steven Paulson’s recent three volume study *Luther’s Outlaw God*, also the most thorough treatment of the distinction between God preached and not-preached.
[12] Often named as Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II following Gerrish, “To the Unknown God.”

in suffering and the cross as spoken of in the *Heidelberg Disputation,*[13] but misses the inner connection. God hides in himself so as not to be found - especially so as not to be found in those things which the sinful human desires. Just so, God hides in his word, whose beauty and glory are only those of the Crucified. God is thus hidden in weakness and death (*sub contrario*), not as a principle of negative revelation, but precisely in the humility of the Son. Further, God hides in the "word of the cross," the Spirit's publication through human mouths of the Son's life as given for sinners. The cross apart from its publication, the proclamation of the gospel, is really no gift or benefit at all.[14] God's hiding is thus soteriological, so that he may be received by sinners who have otherwise rejected him.

God hiding in his word therefore has the particular verbal character of an unconditional promise. It is the God who promises himself, who desires to be known only as he gives himself in that promise, who finally *is* known. In this sense, Luther's distinction between preached and not preached is not merely a theological strategy to account for contrariety and hiddenness in God, but is intended to preserve the purity and supremacy of the divine promise as distinct from the law.

2. Justification and Creation in the Promise

There is nothing distinctive to Luther about the claim that God makes promises, nor the observation that God promises himself, nor the connection between salvation and the promises of God. These are as clear in the Old Testament as in the New, and commonplace in the history of theology. However, Luther's

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[13] Eliding these is an old error found in von Loewenich, Elert, Althaus, and Ebeling, among other luminaries. For the reception of Luther's doctrine of hiddenness in modern German theology, see Miller, *Hanging by a Promise*, 41-115.

[14] "But if the work remained hidden so that no one knew of it, it would have been all in vain, all lost. In order that this treasure might not remain buried but be put to use and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to be published and proclaimed, in which he has given the Holy Spirit to offer and apply to us this treasure, this redemption." *Large Catechism*, BC, 436.

establishment of promise (*promissio*) as a central theme, and his arrangement of other topics in relation to it, is a different matter. Within the development of his theology through the 1520s and 1530s, Luther sets promise as definitive not only for soteriology, but for creation, anthropology, and so the image of God.

Specific identification of Luther's supposed "reformation breakthrough" is unnecessary to this account; nevertheless, Oswald Bayer's description of the transformative role of promise in Luther's theological development cannot be ignored.[15] This concept is apparent as early as the second half of 1518, particularly in the explanations to Luther's 95 Theses and in the subsequent dialogue between Luther and Cajetan at the imperial Diet of Augsburg.[16] In those early exchanges, the concern centers on the sacrament of penance. One pressing question circled around certainty - what made a valid confession, and what confidence could the penitent have that he would receive forgiveness? Luther insisted that an honest confession was impossible without certainty that the penitent would be forgiven; Cajetan was equally insistent that such certainty represented pride. To what can this difference be attributed? Both agreed that the word of the priest is effective in delivering a divine absolution.[17] Cajetan's diagnosis of pride follows from an understanding that absolution to some extent rests on the confession. Luther instead held that the authority of the priest was the issue, not as free-standing, but because it rests on the word of Christ. Christ has spoken: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven." In the absolution, the word of the priest is the word of Christ, who cannot lie. Therefore, the Christian approaches the father confessor in light of that promise, which does what it says. If the absolution is spoken, then forgiveness is not in any way

[15] Bayer, *Promissio.*
[16] Note thesis 7 as explained in LW 31, 98-107; WA 1, 539-545. Luther's account of the engagement with Cajetan, including discussion of this thesis, is in LW 259-292; WA 2, 6-26.
[17] On this point, Cajetan and Luther could both claim the support of Aquinas: "Wherefore, just as the priest in baptizing anyone, declares by deed and word that the person is washed inwardly, and this not only significatively but also effectively, so also when he says: "I absolve thee," he declares the man to be absolved not only significatively but also effectively." ST 3, q. 84, a. 3.

questionable - and paradoxically, the confession depends upon the promise of the absolution.

In such a way is the human justified before God, not as the result of becoming righteous, but precisely as righteous in light of an absolving word. The root, therefore, of Luther's doctrine of justification was his understanding of the word of God as actively and unconditionally bestowing what it says. Faith, as that certainty which approaches confession, is not cause but product of this word. It comes to be on account of the promise, subsists in relation to it, and takes its shape from it. This faith is the life of the human as promised in the divine word. In this, Luther's sacramental theology is of one piece with his understanding of preaching.[18] Each rests on the verbal delivery of specific divine promises, which are one in Christ though particular in form of expression (that is, Baptism is not interchangeable with the Supper, but each has its character in the specific unity of word and action which constitutes it). Such promises create faith, or rather, create a new human in and through faith, one who believes the promises and lives from them. In this way righteousness is not divorced from faith, but wedded to it.

This picture of justification has a clear eschatological dimension, apparent in the word "new" applied to the believer. Luther's language of newness (deriving from the New Testament's appropriation of this language in the exilic prophets - Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah[19]) indicates the connection between the justifying word and final judgment. The promise concerns not merely what is future in relation to what is present, but what is actually last, belonging to the kingdom, the age to come - and so belonging to Christ himself, and handed over in the Spirit. Its force is christological and pneumatological, just as it is

[18] This is the essential continuity between the ancient understanding of words as "participating in the real" (Bahrani), the Old Testament understanding of God whose speech is creation, and Luther's theology. The relation between words and things does not require some external explanation or theory. Divine words and things are convertible. What requires explanation is the falsehood of human speech.
[19] Cf. Jeremiah 31:31f; Ezekiel 11:19, 18:31, 36:26; Isaiah 42:9f, 43:19, 48:66, 65:17, 66:22.

eschatological. This proclaimed word does not point to a thing absent or attenuated by temporal distance, but effects its own arrival and bestowal in the present, and so rules over it. In that sense the promise is the presence of the future, an intrusion, pledge, and outpost of that which is surely coming.

This orientation of faith and justification to the promise has profound consequences for creation. As the believer is termed a new creation, so is implied in the promise of Christ's kingdom the new creation of the cosmos. However, Luther does not overlook creation as it now stands; this too attests to the promise and so to what is new. Bayer draws attention to a sermon from September 1538, on Christ's *ephphatha* of Mark 7:31-37 - "be opened."[20] Luther presents a paradox: "The entire world is deaf," but at the same time, "The whole earth is filled with speaking." If humans had ears to hear it, "even the grain would talk to us: 'Be joyful in God, eat, drink, use me and serve your neighbor with me.'" Creation is the field in which God addresses me; in fact, it is itself divine address (cf. Hamann in chapter five).[21] Just so, creation is entirely occluded by sin; the ears are stopped up, so that God cannot be heard in it.

The preaching of the gospel, as Christ's promise, gives ears to hear. The significance of "be opened" is double - both the opening of the believer to the world and the world to the believer. Both are new, fresh gifts from God, in a re-established relationship. The world is given back to us in faith. Thus, Luther cannot be accused of neglecting the topic of creation when he gives central place to justification. Justification concerns creation, and vice versa, such that they are found to have an inner unity.

This unity is on display in Luther's interpretation of the creation narratives of Genesis, particularly in Genesis 1. We observe in the whole narrative his understanding that the word which creates is promissory in character. Creation

[20] Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 106-112. WA 46:493-495.
[21] Bayer, *Schöpfung als Anrede*, 62- 79. Also Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 106-112.

is gospel, not law, bestowing what it says. The sequence, "'Let there be light'; and there was light," does not describe a verbal order which then sees fulfillment in a second act.[22] The speaking is itself an unconditional creative act. Creation is a sermon, a work of divine grace and goodness, spilling out to take real shape. As Bayer observes, this unity is expressed in both cosmic and personal terms in Luther's explanation of the first article of the Apostles' Creed in the Small Catechism:

> I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties. In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property -- along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life. God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all![23]

Here the characteristic language of justification, in the form of mercy, merit and worthiness, has been applied to creation.[24] It is an act of mercy, personally intended and given. As such, God in his word is always already the giver and justifier, and creation *ex nihilo* may be understood as a term for the doctrine of justification.

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[22] Also clear is Luther's rejection of the scheme originating with Philo, which perceives Genesis 1 as a map and Genesis 2 as material execution.
[23] BC, 354-355.
[24] Bayer points out the origin of the term "merit" in the dispute over justification, and "worthiness" in the dispute over the sacraments. *Martin Luther's Theology*, 96.

3. Righteous and Sinner - the Human in Two Ages

The language of 'new' creation which attends talk of justification and eschatology, and juxtaposed with the current state of the world, termed 'old', implies a distinct problem. Creation as such is no longer available, except as bound under sin. Luther's anthropology hinges on a conviction that it is necessary to speak of the human in two different ways, correlating to the eschatological distinction between old and new. The old Adam is played off against the new creature in faith. It is in light of this distinction that the formula *simul justus et peccator* - at once righteous and sinner - comes into play.[25] Though Luther also employs language of gradual and partial transformation, that language is subordinated to the more basic theological division between whole sinful and righteous persons. This language may be understood christologically, as the inverse side of the Pauline concept of exchange.[26]

This christological framing often uses language of spatial relation and intention. Just as Christ is righteous in himself, and becomes sin for us, the human is sinful in himself and righteous in Christ. This 'in Christ' is the fundamental eccentricity of Christian life. Its point is not a negation of the human, but is drawn from the Augustinian notion of sin as *incurvatus in se*. Human life is life in relation. Luther expresses this more finely when he says that the Christian lives in Christ through faith and in the neighbor through love[27], indicating not a tension between two different directions, but a depth to human relationality that embraces both God and other creatures, particularly as God is known in creatures.

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[25] While the phrase itself is not frequently used by Luther, the formula accurately describes not only the ongoing presence of sin in the believer, but the difference between eschatological and temporal vantage points which afford viewing this presence in terms of competing totalities.
[26] Here Erich Przywara reads Luther insightfully. See Morton, "Erich Przywara's Late Reception of Luther," 606.
[27] Luther, *Freedom of a Christian*, LW 31, 371. WA 7, 69.

However, the distinction of righteous and sinner is only partially understood if it is not also appreciated eschatologically. *Simul* is a temporal conjunction, and so speaks of both a joining and a distinction in times. What is sinful and self-isolating is also *old*. Likewise, what is in Christ is *new*, corresponding to the new creation. Time in this sense is no simple succession in which the present is poised between past and future. The present age appears to swallow past and future, consigning all to futility; it admits no possibility beyond itself, neither beginning nor end. Within the course of this world, all remains old and dying, even as God hiddenly gives life. 'New' names that which sinful creatures cannot and did not anticipate - it is the resurrection, and all that belongs to it, the fullness of Christ himself. The life of the believer is new in that it is rooted in Christ and unexpectedly irrupts - more precisely, is preached - into the old.

The eccentric life is thus not merely life outside itself, in Christ and the neighbor, but beyond itself, as life where life has already run short. This is life in the midst of death, under condemnation and yet out of the present time beyond any accusation - as Elvis Costello sang it, a man out of time (in both senses). The adverbial *simul* signals the double existence of the new within the old. Luther goes so far as to name two acting subjects, an old Adam and a new person in Christ, who are distinguished in the act of preaching. Charles Peguy's remarks on the Annunciation resemble what Luther says of the preached gospel: "It is the complete end of a world and the beginning of another... It is the final instant of the promise and at the same time the first instant of the keeping of the promise."[28] This proclamation divides between the old and new creatures, spelling the end of one and the beginning of the other.

The apocalyptic invasion of the old by the new indicates a struggle, but not one measurable by percentages or as a sort of turf battle. Each is a totality, and for its part the old does not recognize the new. The Gospel is only real for the new

[28] Peguy, *Notes on Bergson and Descartes*, 170. This similarity seems unlikely only if one neglects that Luther takes Mary as the prototype of the Christian life.

creature, for faith. This speaks not to its fictiveness, but precisely to the fiction of the old creature - the radical egotism and self-negation of the human as curved inward. Belief and unbelief then exist as complete states and persons, one daily suppressed and passing away, the other daily arising to ageless birth.[29] There is no partial faith, nor partial promise, and so no partial new creature.

There is, however, a contrast of experience, of life under the aegis of the promising God or of the sinful self. Far from operating through a purely formal forensicism, a declaration without content, Luther finds it unthinkable that the new creature would not embody this eschatological life. Faith must and will express itself - be active - in love, and so relations to all creatures must and will be changed. This is the sense of the Christian living in the neighbor, and of receiving creation as a gift. This change comes not through a demand, but by an unthwartable promise; it is exhibited freely and willingly by the creature whose will and life are nothing but what is promised in Christ, informed in total content by that word in which God hides himself. This change may not be evident to the old creature, even to the Christian herself as *simul*, but is as real as the promise itself and hidden within it.

III. Luther on Imago Dei

Already certain features of Luther's teaching on the *imago Dei* may be anticipated. That he comes to frame the image of God in terms of the connection between justification and creation, and so ties it to the proclamation of the Gospel, should be no surprise. Likewise, the essentially christological and eschatological character of the divine image are predictable. Some, but not all, of these features are visible from quite early. The following section traces their

[29] E.g., the *Small Catechism* on baptism: "What then is the significance of such a baptism with water? Answer: It signifies that the old Adam in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily contrition and repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever." BC, 360.

development and arrives at an account of Luther's mature interpretation of the image.

1. Development Up to 1530

Luther's earliest mentions of the image of God are heavily shaped by the psychological analogy of the Trinity in Augustine's *De Trinitate* and the varying stages of its scholastic reception. Jodocus Trutfetter, Luther's erstwhile teacher at the University of Erfurt, refers to this tradition in 1514:

> Still, someone might say: what does such a studious, or even painstaking, inquiry into the distinctions between the powers of the soul avail the theologians? It seems worthy to be left to the philosophers. Such a person should know that the issue is not unimportant to theologians for the sake of the proper assignment of the image of the blessed Trinity in the rational soul. Some authors maintain that the image consists of the three powers, which are memory, intellect and will, and others in another manner; according to the more recent it consists of the essence of the soul and of the acts of the two noblest powers, namely intellect and will, which can be more clearly seen in the discussions on the third distinction of Master [Peter Lombard's] first book [of the *Sentences*.][30]

Trutfetter's account is indebted to Ockham's, whose interpretation is reflected in the remark, "according to the more recent it consists of the essence of the soul and of the acts of the two noblest powers."[31] What Luther would have received, even more than a particular position, was immersion in this ongoing debate within the broad framework of Augustine's psychological analogy and its interpretation in Lombard's *Sentences*. Within this framework, many variations

[30] Trutfetter, *Summa in totam physicen*, f. Z4r. Translation from Kärkkäinen, "Interpretations of the Psychological Analogy from Aquinas to Biel."
[31] Kärkkäinen, 2.

are possible; all represent the Western continuation of the spiritual interpretation of the *imago Dei*, and concern the soul as a natural form of participation in God. To the extent that the image of God is viewed through Trinitarian analogy, it sits in a certain tension with Christology, especially regarding the body. The Trinitarian analogy does not exclude christological reference, but bends it toward the prevailing spiritual interpretation.

Luther's early marginalia on the *Sentences*[32] and on Augustine's *De vera religione*, both from around 1509, clearly represent the Augustinian tradition, but also show a preoccupation with the relation of nonhuman creatures to the *imago Dei*. Reflecting on Augustine's statement that "Truth makes all things true which are true, and likeness makes things like which are alike," Luther elaborates:

> God created humans in his image and likeness, that is, in his Son who is the image and likeness of the Father through whom all things are likenesses and images. As indeed it is by truth that true things are true, so by likeness are likenesses like, thus by image are images images. And thus truth is the form of truths, likeness of likenesses, and image of images.[33]

Likeness and image are conceived as natural participation in God through the Son. The scope of the *imago Dei* is addressed in the interplay between "God created humans" and "through whom *all things* are likenesses." There is a difference between humans and other creatures, but that difference is itself participation in the Trinity according to the psychological analogy: "For animals have the trinity, namely, imagination, memory, and appetite, but not judgment. This is confirmed in *De Trinitate* XV.23, where he [Augustine] gives difference and similarity."[34]

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[32] WA 9, 36-37.
[33] Ibid., 13. Augustine, *De vera religione* 66 (PL 34, 151-152)
[34] WA 9, 14.

An early lecture on Psalm 4, apparently from 1513, again expresses the Augustinian psychological image. This analogy represents a dynamic correspondence in which the image is enlarged or diminished through God's action:

> Thus it is clear that the blessed Trinity offers a threefold enlargement to His living image, which is man. The mind is enlarged through education and understanding, the memory, or substance or nature of the soul, is enlarged through the strength and vigor of grace, and the will is enlarged through joy and comfort. On the contrary, all of these are diminished by sin and error and sadness.[35]

Luther considers the scope of the image from a hermeneutical perspective. Scripture, like the saints, flows from Christ as its source, while being individuated into particular explanations as streams. Thus, the fourfold sense of Scripture testifies to the manner in which words spoken of Christ may also be applied to the saints. "So, for example, the present psalm is understood first of all concerning Christ, who calls and is heard; then, allegorically, concerning the church, His body; and finally, in a tropological sense, concerning any holy soul. It can also be understood thus with reference to the person of David and anyone at all. The reason for all is that God makes all His saints to be "conformed to the image of His Son" [Rom. 8:29]; for that reason the same words are suitable for all of them."[36] Unlike the earlier marginalia, the focus here is exclusively human. Conformation to the image is described in terms of tribulation and suffering, a conformation to the human suffering of Jesus.

A 1514 sermon on John 3 contains an extended meditation on the human as microcosm in relation to the *imago Dei*. The "world" beloved by God is glossed

[35] LW 10, 50. WA 3, 44-45.
[36] Ibid, 52. WA 3, 46.

further as the human, not so as to exclude non-human creation, but so as to represent the non-human within the human:

> What is the world? It is the human, just as is clear from the Gospel and philosophy. For all are likenesses in the human who is in the world. Whence Moses said, "God created the human in his image and likeness." Likeness and image consist in this, the soul in the likeness of the holy Trinity. It hides in the body, just as God is in the world invisibly: similarly it rules the body, and rightly seen, the ruler hides. The body is the visible heaven and earth, eyes are stars, thunder and lightning are the words of wrath, which darken the brow, i.e., heaven, and eyes, i.e., sun and stars. Hair is the scattered forests, and many other likenesses. The human therefore excels, who himself is master of his own world, free, ruler, under God alone. Therefore even if angels are more perfect, even so man is a marvelous animal... Thus man is microcosm.[37]

The soul, as the image of the Trinity, is hidden within the body in likeness to God's inhabitation of the world. The specification of the human as image and microcosm is maintained through the powers of reason and free will, which determine the human in relation to the world, and orient the human toward eternal life. In this sense, it is the hiddenness of the image as submerged reason and will which also determines its scope: particular to the human, but participated in by the whole creation.

A different sense of the hiddenness of the image emerges in the Romans lectures (1515-1516), in which Luther's new and relatively short-lived soteriology of humiliation gives the image a kenotic sense: "Thus all power and wisdom and righteousness must be hidden and buried and not apparent, altogether according to the image and likeness of Christ, who emptied Himself so that He might completely hide His power, wisdom, and goodness and instead put on weakness,

[37] WA 4, 599.

foolishness, and hardship. In the same way he who is powerful, wise, and attractive must have these things as if he did not have them."[38] The divine image is, in earlier texts, mainly applied to the divinity of Christ, as to the Trinity. While some such statements could be called christological, they are not much concerned with Jesus' humanity. Here, resembling the turn towards suffering in the lecture on Psalm 4, Luther refers the image not only to hidden divine attributes, but to Christ's self-emptying, and so brings fallen humanity to the fore.

A similar sentiment is repeated in the sermon on St. Thomas' Day, 1516. The image is considered through the distinction between God's alien and proper works, the crucifixion of the old man and the resurrection of the new. Using Romans 4:25, "who was handed over for our trespasses, and raised for our justification," Luther asserts that "conformity with the image of the Son of God includes both of these works."[39] This emphasis on the death of the old creature would seem to pose a problem for an account of the soul as *imago Trinitatis* - while Luther does not at this stage repudiate Augustine's view, reference to it rapidly diminishes in his writings.

The lectures on Hebrews (1517-1518) again display a christological sense of the image. Luther explains Hebrews 1:3 through Colossians 1:15 and Wisdom 7:26, exploring the relation between God's radiance or glory and invisibility. He distinguishes between the function of humans and angels as divine images and that of the Son, who is the, "figure of God's substance, not for us but for God Himself, so that God alone recognizes His own form in Himself."[40] From this perspective, the image of God is a form of communication of divinity. Luther does not have a model of divine self-realization in mind, but simply that it is God alone who knows the Son as image. The image exists in humans precisely so that it may be seen by humans: "For we are the images of God for ourselves rather

[38] LW 25, 151. WA 56, 171.
[39] LW 51, 19. WA 1, 113.
[40] LW 29, 111-112. WA 57, 100.

than for God, because God does not know Himself through us, but we know God through ourselves."[41] The relation between the human image of God and Christ the image is a conformation in faith,[42] which draws believers away from all visible and worldly images toward love, so that in that love they become the invisible and hidden things of God.[43]

A pair of writings from 1518 associate the image of God with the righteousness of Christ as received in faith. In the *Heidelberg Disputation* this receives an eschatological qualifier: "For he alone is our righteousness until we are made to conform with his image."[44] The *Explanation of the 95 Theses* focuses on that conformation in response to Luther's 4th thesis, "The penalty of sin remains as long as the hatred of self, that is, true inner repentance, until our entrance into the kingdom of heaven." Repentance must continue until, "the inveterate first Adam, along with its image, perishes, and the new Adam is perfected in the image of God."[45] Concerning thesis 58, the danger of indulgences is likened to a robbery, the removal of this repentance and so "taking away from men the image of the Son of God."[46]

Luther's 1518 tract on the Ten Commandments, based on sermons preached in 1516 and 1517, mentions the image of God in connection with the commandment to honor father and mother, employing 1 Corinthians 11:7. Luther recognizes the liturgical significance of that text, arguing that the husband should be honored by the wife because he "participates in the name and office of God." Therefore, he advises, "avert your eyes from the flesh and recognize and worship God in the man, and it will be easy to honor him."[47] Proper honor will be given in human relationships precisely as the image of God in the human is considered.

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[41] Ibid., 112. WA 57, 100-101.
[42] Ibid., 132. WA 57, 124.
[43] Ibid, 216-217. WA 57, 214-215. This is an oblique reference to Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* 4.15.
[44] LW 31, 64. WA 1, 371.
[45] LW 31, 89. WA 1, 534.
[46] Ibid., 227-228. WA 1, 614.
[47] WA 1, 456.

The early Galatians lectures (1519) speak of the image in a negative sense - those who lack faith also lack the image of the Father, and are "bastards."[48] It appears that Luther has removed the image from the old person entirely. *A Meditation on Christ's Passion* and *A Sermon on Preparing to Die* (both 1519) employ the image pastorally, both negatively and positively. In the former it is a threat of sorts. Everyone ought to consider Christ's passion and so be driven to repentance and self-knowledge, because all are subject to death and must face God: "For it is inevitable, whether in this life or in hell, that you will have to become conformable to Christ's image and suffering."[49] *A Sermon on Preparing to Die* makes complex and extended use of image language, referring to multiple images. The human is constantly confronted by images in the battle between faith and unbelief. Christ is a threefold image, the living and immortal image against death, the image of the grace of God against sin, and the heavenly image of the Son forsaken and damned by God who yet conquers in love. Furthermore, Christ himself, the very image, was confronted and tempted by the images of sin, death, and hell, just as the dying person is so tempted. Luther's pastoral urging is for Christians to heed the silence of Jesus in the face of these threats and temptations:

> We must, similarly, let these images slip away from us to wherever they wish or care to go, and remember only that we cling to God's will, which is that we hold to Christ and firmly believe our sin, death, and hell are overcome in him and no longer able to harm us. Only Christ's image must abide in us. With him alone we must confer and deal.[50]

Several features are evident in the development of Luther's theology of *imago Dei* before 1520. Luther begins with a traditional Augustinian account which later fades, both in identification of the image with the Trinity and with the soul. Increasingly, the image is considered through Christ and his suffering, within a

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[48] LW 27, 254. WA 2, 512.
[49] LW 42, 10-11. WA 2, 138.
[50] LW 42, 108. Extended passage on images 101-114. WA 2, 692 (686-697).

personal drama of repentance and faith. Hiddenness and invisibility are still to some extent equated, but in a changed manner - not as the capacities of the soul are hidden in the body, but as the will of God is hidden under suffering. The scope of the image likewise is condensed to the relation between Christ and the believer, leaving aside the earlier cosmic speculations. As a general rule, the image of God is conceived more in relation to soteriology than creation.

Discussions of the image in the 1520s expand only a little on this picture. *Freedom of a Christian* associates the image of God with the new and inner man of faith, drawing upon Paul's contrast between the inner man and the law of sin operating in the members in Romans 7: "The inner man, who by faith is created in the image of God, is both joyful and happy because of Christ in whom so many benefits are conferred upon him; and therefore it is his one occupation to serve God joyfully and without thought of gain, in love that is not constrained."[51] Does Luther here speak of the soul in contrast to the body? Not precisely. The body is to be disciplined and subjected to the Spirit so that it conforms to the "inner man."

His Christmas sermon on John 1 for the 1522 *Church Postil* includes a sophisticated rumination on the relationship between word and image, Christology, human and divine language, and the *imago Dei*. Luther observes regarding the word "Let there be light," that it indicates a divine word which pre-exists all creatures, and so is the divine image. "The word he speaks within himself and which remains within him, is never separated from him. Hence, following the apostle's thought, we must think that God carries on a dialogue with himself and that he utters a word from himself; however his word is not merely an exhalation or a noise, but it carries with it the whole essence of the divine nature and, as we said above in the Epistle where we dealt with brightness of his glory and image, divine nature is formed to accompany the

[51] LW 31, 359. WA 7, 60.

image and it becomes the very image itself."[52] He extends this thought to an observation about human speech: though in divine speech sign and meaning are never separated, and so constitute an essential image, in human speech they are separated. The human word does not carry its essence within itself, but only signifies, similarly to how a wooden or gold statue does not bear within it the essence of whom it portrays. Even so, it is only in human speech that the human heart is displayed. "Thus all the world fully agrees that no image of the heart is so nearly like it and true to it as are the words of the mouth. The bird is known by its song, for it sings as its beak allows exactly as if the heart were essentially in the word."[53]

Luther's "as if" should not be overlooked. The divine word and image are above any creaturely image or word: "in God, the word brings not only the sign and representation, but also the whole being and it is as full of God as he whose image or word it is."[54] Even so, Luther concludes this observation on an ambiguous note: "No doubt there have been very learned discussions about the inner word of the heart of man, which remains within man, since man was created after the image of God. But the discussion has remained deep and obscure, and will probably remain so; even the discussants do not understand it. So we shall not bother about it either and proceed to the Gospel which is, of itself, clear and obvious." The reference is likely to scholastic discussions, perhaps including that of Aquinas.[55] What Luther appears to resist is the notion that the image of God in humans is an essential likeness, a designation reserved for the Son alone. However, he presents an analogy: the divine word (the Son) is likened to human speech just as the image of God (the Son) is to the human as created in God's image.

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[52] LW 52, 45. WA 10.I.1, 186
[53] Ibid., 46. WA 10.I.1, 188.
[54] Ibid.
[55] ST I, q. 12.

On the occasions where Augustine's view comes up for discussion, as in a 1523 sermon on Genesis 1, it is described and then quickly left to the side.[56] The image of God is, rather, discussed in almost exclusively Pauline terms. Two developments, however, one explicitly tied to the *imago Dei* and one not, are relevant to our discussion.

First, a certain changeability or neutrality in the human image is noted during this period. The same sermon describes the human as able to be image of God or of the devil[57], indeed, the latter made from the former. Sin has not merely damaged the image, but practically made a different origin of the human. The image and humanity itself are grasped only in faith.[58] Faith restores humanity, and with that restoration grants all things as a gift.[59] These elements are repeated in a 1527 sermon on Genesis 1, which not only contrasts the images of Adam and Christ (the earthly from the heavenly, following 1 Corinthians 15), but refers to Adam "putting on" the image of the devil. Conformity to Christ is the re-creation of the human, in which the image of Christ is put on again - not only according to the qualities of the soul, particularly righteousness, but including whatever is in Christ (*quicquid est in Christo*), including the cross and all works.[60] Thus the presence of the Spirit is also identified with the divine image. In Luther's striking phrase, "a man who is full of the Spirit walks around as if drunk, always and everywhere doing good without knowing it."[61] This inclusion of the cross and works implies the significance of the body to the divine image, in contrast with earlier formulations.

Second, Luther addresses iconoclastic elements in the Radical Reformation on multiple occasions, beginning with the Invocavit sermons in 1522, in *Against the Heavenly Prophets* (1525), and in some of his commentaries on the Hebrew

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[56] WA 14, 110a-111a.
[57] Ibid., 111a. "Potest esse imago dei vel diaboli.."
[58] Ibid., 112a.
[59] Ibid., 115a.
[60] WA 24, 49a-50a.
[61] Ibid.

prophets in the later 1520s.[62] These texts include extensive discussion of images and idolatry, as Luther is compelled to distinguish a proper use of physical images (including in worship) from an idolatrous use. The discussions rarely mention the human as image of God, and do not directly connect idolatry or iconoclasm to the question of the *imago Dei*. However, there is throughout a similar vocabulary, and an association of images with faith. Faith makes an idol from a mere statue, just as faith makes the image of the true God from the image of the devil. As Luther's thinking about the prophets becomes more historical and materially grounded, his commentary, as in the prophets' polemics against idolatry, attends to physical making and use.

A final reference from the 1520s comes from the Marburg Colloquy (1529). In the discussion regarding the locality or non-locality of the body of Christ, Zwingli is purported to have employed Romans 8:29, that Christians should be "conformed to the image of his Son" - a thing which he concludes cannot occur in many places at once. Luther responds that, "God is above all mathematics," and that "Christ can keep his body outside of a place as well as in a place."[63] What is notable is the understanding, common to both sides, that the locality or non-locality of Christ's body is related to the image of God. Luther's assertion of bodily non-locality is indirect support for a notion of the image of God as bodily presence, in some sense a late continuation of the fluidity of divine bodies in the Hebrew Bible and in the ancient Near East. As such, it represents a negotiation of the scope of the image.

2. Genesis Lectures

Luther began his lectures on Genesis in early June 1535. These continued, with certain interruptions, until the latter part of 1545, Luther having covered the entirety of Genesis verse by verse. By late 1536, he was progressing through

[62] Including the *Lectures on Zechariah* (1526) and *Isaiah* (1527).
[63] LW 38, 82. WA 30.III, 158.

Genesis 9, and the primary texts dealing with the image of God had been covered.[64]

The concerns first raised by Peter Meinhold regarding interpolations in the lectures more reflective of Melanchthon than Luther can be easily dismissed.[65] Recent scholarship has considerably weakened the "Meinhold thesis" and the Genesis lectures are, at this point, considered largely as authentic Luther.[66] Further, our reading of the Genesis lectures is engaged with the sweep of Luther's arguments throughout his career and with contemporaneous writings on the *imago Dei*, making it unlikely that Melanchthon's view could be mistaken for Luther's. While in many respects Luther and Melanchthon taught similarly on the image of God, the distinctive historical and bodily emphases of the Genesis lectures sit at odds with Melanchthon's later, philosophically and psychologically inflected interpretation.[67]

a. God in the Wrapper

The topic of divine hiddenness is introduced early in the discussion of Genesis 1 and runs through the whole ten year cycle of lectures. Dismissing any question of God's activity before creation, Luther makes a clear assertion: "Let us, therefore, rid ourselves of such ideas and realize that God was incomprehensible in His essential rest before the creation of the world, but that now, after the creation, He is within, without, and above all creatures; that is, He is still incomprehensible. Nothing else can be said, because our mind cannot grasp what lies outside time."[68] God instead manifests himself "through his works and the Word," where he appears with various coverings or masks. Rather than

[64] LW 1, ix. Confirmed by Table Talk entry dated between October 27 and December 4, 1536: "Tomorrow I must read about Noah's drunkenness; therefore, this evening I will drink enough that I am able to speak of a bad thing from experience." WA Tr 3, n.3476.
[65] Meinhold, *Genesisvorlesung Luthers*, 370-428.
[66] Maxfield, *Luther's Lectures on Genesis and the Formation of Evangelical Identity*, 6-9.
[67] For Melanchthon's approach, Peters, Der Mensch, 64-67.
[68] LW 1, 11. WA 42, 9.

simply concealing God, the masks are given so that sinful humans may recognize and grasp God: "God envelops himself in his works in certain forms, as today he wraps himself up in baptism, in absolution, etc." [69] Luther associates this notion with the Old Testament language of the "face of God."

To theologize apart from the coverings - glossed as "without the Word" - is an attempted ascent into heaven without a ladder, doomed to destruction. Rather than expressing concern over the inaptness of anthropomorphic language for God, Luther defends it as a biblical way of speaking. Since we cannot grasp the essence of God without any covering at all, the anthropomorphic clothing of scripture is necessary, not only for children, but even for the learned.[70] "When God reveals himself to us, it is necessary for him to do so through some such veil or wrapper and to say: "Look! Under this wrapper you will be sure to take hold of me." When we embrace this wrapper, adoring, praying, and sacrificing to God there, we are said to be praying to God and sacrificing to him properly."[71] Veiling of this sort is thus understood not as obscuring God, but as constituting the creature's certainty about God. This is Luther's notion of God hiding so as to be found, as in a promise.

The theology of hiddenness is reflected in the closeness of God and human in the Genesis lectures. There is no sense of humanity as suffering from an ontological deficit; sin is a great problem, but the mere difference between God and creatures, no matter how great, is not in itself a problem at all. No separating chasm yawns between God and humans. Their difference implies intimacy, not alienation. Luther speculates that perhaps God appeared to Adam without a covering,[72] though the corruption of sin later required various masks and coverings: the mercy seat, the cloud and fire in the desert, and so on.[73] Noting

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[69] Ibid. WA 42, 10.
[70] Ibid., 14f. WA 42, 12-13.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Literally, "nude." (*Forte Adae apparuit nudus...*) LW 1, 11. WA 42, 9.
[73] Ibid. The covering is designed to produce the desired intimacy between God and human. It is a drawing nearer, not a withdrawal.

that the plural term *elohim* is applied not only to God, but to angels and men, Luther argues against any scandal: "Why shouldn't God assign us his name, when he assigns us his power and his office? For to forgive sins, to retain sins, to make alive, etc., are works of the Divine Majesty alone; nevertheless, the same works are given to human beings and are done through the Word which human beings teach....Therefore just as these works are truly works of God but may also be assigned to men and be performed by men, so the name of God in truth denotes God but may also be applied to human beings."[74] This closeness must be kept in mind as Luther approaches the image of God.

Because Luther views the Genesis narrative as a historical sequence, and largely eschews allegory,[75] many passages seem to lack connection to Christology. Even so, the entire creation account is christological as read historically, since the work of creation is given form and reality through the Son, the Word. God,

> does not speak grammatical words; he speaks true and existent realities. Accordingly, that which among us has the sound of a word is a reality with God. Thus sun, moon, heaven, earth, Peter, Paul, I, you, etc. -- we are all words of God, in fact only one single syllable or letter by comparison with the entire creation... The created word is brought into being by the uncreated Word. What else is the entire creation than the Word of God uttered by God, or extended to the outside?[76]

Creation is divine speech, the outward extension of the person of the Word. Already we can see the connection to the matter of divine hiddenness, and to the question of scope. Creation itself is a mask or covering within which the eternal and uncreated expresses himself by speaking, and this speaking relates the diversity of created things to the unity of the speaker.

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[74] Ibid., 12-13. WA 42, 10-11.
[75] Allegory is not rejected wholesale, but a broadly allegorical or typological interpretation is. LW 1, 19. WA 42, 15.
[76] Ibid, 21-22. WA 42, 17.

b. An Unknown Thing

Luther takes a self-consciously revisionist stance on the *imago Dei* in his remarks on Genesis 1. After discussing the plural "Let us make" in 1:26, he briefly outlines the Latin tradition, addressing Augustine's arguments from *De Trinitate* and points of subsequent medieval interpretation. Memory, intellect, and will constitute an image of the Trinity, and the relations of these powers are analogous to the processions of the persons. Similitude refers to the perfections of grace applied to the powers of the soul, with hope added to memory, faith to intellect, and will to love. Various other sorts of trinities have been posited in humans. Luther summarizes: "Although these not unattractive speculations point conclusively to keen and leisurely minds, they contribute very little toward the correct explanation of the image of God."[77]

In what, then, does the correct explanation of the image of God consist? If the soul is no candidate, has Luther's increasing enchantment with the body supplanted it? This is not the case. Rather, the image is an unknown thing (*res incognita*) after the fall, persisting as bare words (*nuda vocabula*), and so the prevailing interpretations are so much groundless speculation.[78] The conviction that the image cannot be understood in the present life is key to Luther's interpretation. He has adopted a rigorously *recusant* view of the *imago Dei*:

> I am afraid that since the loss of this image through sin we cannot understand it to any extent. Memory, will, and mind we have indeed; but they are most depraved and most seriously weakened, yes, to put it more clearly, they are utterly leprous and unclean. If these powers are the image of God, it will also follow that Satan was created according to the image of God, since he surely has these natural endowments, such as memory and a very superior intellect and a most determined will, to a far higher degree

[77] LW 1, 60. WA 42, 45. Cf. Mattox, "Imago diaboli?", 464f. Mattox takes Luther's assessment of this tradition positively, while acknowledging his holistic approach to the image.
[78] Ibid., 63. WA 42, 47.

> than we have them. Therefore the image of God is something far different, namely, a unique work of God.[79]

Luther considers the same evidence as Origen once did, and draws the opposite conclusion. Since the powers of the soul are available to all rational beings, even Satan, they cannot constitute the image of God. However, they are not unrelated to the image. Instead, they are seen through the contrast between the present life and that original life described in the Genesis narratives. The difference between the "leprous" powers of the soul and what they must have been in their origin implies a parallel difference of bodily powers, which points to the corrupting effect of sin.[80] Contrary to his usual anti-speculative impulses, Luther uses this difference to launch into a description of prelapsarian life in both its mental and bodily aspects:

> Therefore the image of God, according to which Adam was created, was something far more distinguished and excellent, since obviously no leprosy of sin adhered either to his reason or to his will. Both his inner and his outer sensations were all of the purest kind. His intellect was the clearest, his memory was the best, and his will was the most straightforward -- all in the most beautiful tranquility of mind, without any fear of death and without any anxiety. To these inner qualities came also those most beautiful and superb qualities of body and of all the limbs, qualities in which he surpassed all the remaining living creatures. I am fully convinced that before Adam's sin his eyes were so sharp and clear that they surpassed those of the lynx and eagle. He was stronger than the lions and the bears, whose strength is very great; and he handled them the way we handle puppies.[81]

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[79] Ibid., 61-62. WA 42, 46.
[80] Luther notes that the six days of Genesis 1 and the paradise story of Genesis 2-3 present distinct narratives, but nevertheless reads them as sections of a continuous history. Thus, he also takes a traditional line in reading together the individual Adam in Genesis 2 and the human of Genesis 1:26-27. Ibid., 82. WA 42, 62.
[81] Ibid., 62. WA 42, 46.

Similarly, human sexuality would have been entirely unembarrassed and holy. Sexual desire and disgust illustrate the degree to which every aspect of the human must have been altered. Luther does not reject the tradition which holds that even diminished capacities indicate the creator, but largely uncouples that insight from the image of God. Rather, he observes that difference (hiddenness) apparent from a comparison of Genesis 1 with the empirical conditions of human life: the image of God is spoken, but no longer seen. This "no longer" is due to a change that sin has wrought in nature itself: "Therefore no one can picture in his thoughts how much better nature was then than it is now."[82]

c. Faith as Image

At this point, Luther at last introduces a definition of sorts for the image of God. This definition proceeds neither from the capacities of the body nor the soul, though it has ramifications for both, but is instead framed as faith: "Therefore my understanding of the image of God is this: that Adam had it in his being (*in sua substantia*) and that he not only knew God and believed that he was good, but that he also lived in a life that was wholly godly; that is, he was without the fear of death or of any other danger, and was content with God's favor. In this form it reveals itself in the instance of Eve, who speaks with the serpent without any fear, as we do with a lamb or a dog."[83]

The substance of the human image of God is defined in faith toward God, and this faith expresses itself in a natural fearlessness toward creation. Consequently, the loss or corruption of the image is apparent in a lack of trust toward God and in anxiety toward other creatures. Such fear is grounded in the judgment and subsequent experience of death: "Adam and Eve, now you are living without fear; death you have not experienced, nor have you seen it. This is my image, by which you are living, just as God lives. But if you sin, you will lose

[82] Ibid. WA 42, 47. This assertion about nature extends beyond humans. The world itself is altered by sin, to the point that even the quality of fruits is diminished.
[83] Ibid., 62-63. WA 42, 47.

this image, and you will die."[84] For Luther, original sin, and so all sin, is just that absence of faith to which death is consequent.[85] Thus faith, in its presence or absence, determines the whole substance of the human - as living or dead, as image of God or not. This determination arises not out of faith's self-assertion or innate power, as there is no such thing, but in its total adherence to the Word that calls it forth and upon which it rests. This is the christological center of Luther's teaching on the image of God: faith in Christ and conformation to his image are one and the same.

Luther does not maintain consistent language regarding the loss of the image. What is at times described as simply "lost" is in other places "almost completely lost" or "obscured and corrupted." Most telling is the description of the divine image as inverted into an image of the devil (*imago diaboli*).[86] If faith is conformation to the image of God, that is, to the person of the Word, then unbelief is conformation to a different word, determining human existence under the shadow of death. The fears and anxieties that assail human life are signs of domination by the devil, and mark our difference from original creation: "We are never secure in God; apprehension and terror cause us concern even in sleep. These and similar evils are the image of the devil, who stamped them on us. But Adam lived in supreme bliss and in freedom from fear; he was not afraid of fire, of water, or of the other discomforts with which this life is beset and of which we are inordinately afraid."[87]

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[84] Ibid.

[85] This is clear in Luther's exegesis of Genesis 3. Eve's sin is not primarily a matter of desire, but of faith in relation to the Word. Before she sees the tree as desirable, she believes the word of the serpent rather than of God. "Although she has not yet eaten the fruit, she has already sinned against the Word and faith; for she has turned away from the Word to a lie, from faith to unbelief, from God to Satan, and from the worship of God to idolatry." LW 1, 159. WA 42, 119.

[86] Mattox, "Imago diaboli." Mattox's stress on a privative view of evil and continuity with the medieval tradition may understate Luther's reliance on John 8:44. There is a strong sense in which Luther is speaking of the devil as the "father" of sinful humanity. Here the disagreement over Luther's commitment to substance ontology comes to the fore. His words about the *imago diaboli* strain any substantial interpretation, as became clear in the debate between Matthias Flacius and Viktorin Strigel after Luther's death.

[87] LW 1, 63. WA 42, 47.

The consequence of such inversion is that the human is not merely confronted with an absence or mystery, but is misled: "Not only have we had no experience of it, but we continually experience the opposite."[88] This is plainly consistent with Luther's skepticism regarding the sinful human's capacities to know the true God. However, just here Luther opines again regarding humanity's *original* natural powers: "In Adam there was an enlightened reason, a true knowledge of God, and a most sincere desire to love God and his neighbor, so that Adam embraced Eve and at once acknowledged her to be his own flesh. Added to these were other lesser but exceedingly important gifts - if you draw a comparison with our weakness - namely, a perfect knowledge of the nature of the animals, the herbs, the fruits, the trees, and the remaining creatures."[89]

d. Human and Animal

Luther's rhapsodizing on the physical and mental gifts of original humanity does not appear to be a straightforward reading of Genesis. From what tradition or source could it derive? The most plausible candidate is to be found in his reception of Sirach 17:1-9. Despite his negative assessment of the book's canonicity,[90] Luther quotes Sirach throughout his career, including within the Genesis lectures.[91] His translation and preface to the book, first published in his 1534 Bible,[92] give evidence of careful work with both the Latin and Greek versions, though in places Luther's translation is indebted to neither, and comes across as unusually free.[93] Notably, he introduces a reference to the human-

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[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] This opinion is shared with Nicholas of Lyra and Jerome, both of whom Luther names in support of relocating several books under the heading of Apocrypha. LW 35, 350. WA DB 12, 290. Lyra, *Postilla super librum Edsrae*, cap.i. Jerome, *Praefatio Hieronymi In Libros Samuel Et Malachim* (PL 28, 555-557).
[91] By my count, 46 citations in the Genesis Lectures. The Genesis lectures are lengthy, occupying eight volumes of the American edition of Luther's Works, so this frequency is not high. Nevertheless, Luther does sometimes quote the book as an authority.
[92] Luther began translation of the Old Testament Apocrypha in 1529. He revised the translation for the 1545 Bible, though not in ways relevant to this discussion. LW 35, 229.
[93] This is clear in his translation of Sirach 17:3, in which the conflict between the Latin text's "strength like his own" and the Greek text's "strength proper to them" is resolved by altering the

animal relationship in 17:7, unprecedented in extant manuscripts of Sirach. In Luther's translation, "He gave them reason, speech, eyes, ears, understanding, and knowledge, and showed them both good and evil, *and has esteemed them above other animals*."[94] While he omits the phrase about strength "like his own" or "proper to them" from his translation of 17:3, it is similarly striking how, in the Genesis lectures, Luther compares the strength or power of prelapsarian humans with other creatures.

This double connection of human gifting with other animals - as both link to and elevation over them - is atypical of the traditions in which Luther was educated, and stands out as distinctive to his interpretation.[95] It is reflected in the manner in which he describes dominion as an irreducible constituent of life as *imago Dei*. Human knowledge of God implies natural mastery over other creatures: "Just as Adam and Eve acknowledged God as their Lord, so later on they themselves ruled over the other creatures in the air, in the water, and on the earth. Who could adequately describe this glory in words? I believe that Adam could command a lion with a single word, just as we give a command to a trained dog. And he was free to cultivate the soil to produce what he wished."[96]

While Luther speaks highly of the capacities of the soul, his description of those gifts differs from that typical in the spiritual interpretation. Memory, intellect, and will are not only insufficient to define the *imago Dei*, but are given a different, creaturely orientation. Adam and Eve are natural philosophers *par excellence*, granted immediate and comprehensive knowledge of all plants and animals, and also true knowledge of God. However, this knowledge is of God precisely as God is and works within creatures, themselves included:

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line. Luther assimilates it to Genesis 1:26-27, rendering the verse as, "God created them both, each according to its kind, and makes them after his image." Kind is glossed marginally as male and female, in clear reference to Genesis 1. WA DB 12, 192.

[94] *Vnd hat sie fur andern thieren sonderlich angesehen.* Sirach 17:5-7, Luther Bibel 1534. WA, DB 12, 192.

[95] More common by far would be a designation of the human as "rational animal," with reason providing the specific difference between the human animal and others.

[96] LW 1, 64. WA 42, 47-48.

> If, then, we are looking for an outstanding philosopher, let us not overlook our first parents while they were still free from sin. They had a most perfect knowledge of God, for how would they not know Him whose similitude they had and felt within themselves? Furthermore, they also had the most dependable knowledge of the stars and of the whole of astronomy.[97]

Even Adam and Eve possess no speculative knowledge of God hidden in himself. Prelapsarian knowledge differed from our own in that humans would know God as present in all created things. This is variously expressed in the Genesis lectures; a few examples will suffice. Making a connection to paganism, Luther describes an original solar worship: "Thus there is no doubt that our first parents worshiped God early in the morning, when the sun was rising, by marveling at the Creator in the creature or, to express myself more clearly, because they were urged on by the creature."[98] Similarly, physical operations such as the power of procreation, in this case of birds, are due to the presence of the Word within bodies. This is not a denial of physical causes, but a denial that causality means anything apart from the presence and activity of God: "This Word is present in the very body of the hen and in all living creatures; the heat with which the hen keeps her eggs warm is the result of the divine Word, because if it were without the Word, the heat would be useless and without effect."[99] In this light, one can see the orientation of both body and soul as toward creatures, and toward God through and in creatures. This is the inner connection between the powers that exercise dominion and the image of God.

Dominion certainly implies a clear distinction between humans and other creatures. However, even before the fall the difference between humans and other animals was, in many respects, not large. "The beasts greatly resemble

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[97] Ibid., 66. WA 42, 49-50.
[98] Ibid., 15. WA 42, 12.
[99] Ibid., 53. WA 42, 40.

man. They dwell together; they are fed together; they eat together; they receive their nourishment from the same materials; they sleep and rest among us. Therefore if you take into account their way of life, their food, and their support, the similarity is great."[100] In humanity's present condition, lacking true knowledge of God and with weakened capacities, this distinction is difficult to perceive, but still possible. Our knowledge is "feeble and almost completely obliterated," but in other animals it is absent. "They do not know their creator, their origin, and their end; they do not know out of what and why they were created. Therefore they certainly lack that similitude of God."[101] The difference between the divine words, "Let us make," and, "Let the earth bring forth," reinforces the same point: the image of God indicates a specific deliberation to set the human apart.

Luther refers to Peter Lombard, joining the divine image to the tradition of the human as microcosm: "The rest of the animals are designated as footprints of God; but man alone is God's image, as appears in the *Sentences*. In the remaining creatures God is recognized as by his footprints, but in the human being, especially Adam, he is truly recognized, because in him there is such wisdom, justice, and knowledge of all things that he may rightly be called a world in miniature (*mikrokosmos*, spelled out in Greek letters)."[102] Adam and Eve are set apart from other creatures not by a capacity wholly alien to the animals, but in those capacities which comprehend and embrace them. It is the knowledge of "heaven, earth, and all creatures" that renders the human a microcosm.

The present situation between humans and animals is not reflective of true dominion at all. The body has only some appearance (*speciem aliquam*) of dominion, brought about by industry and skill (*per industriam et artem*). Even domesticated animals are wild by nature, no longer obedient to the divine

[100] Ibid., 56. WA 42, 42.
[101] Ibid, 67. WA 42, 50.
[102] Ibid, 68. WA 42, 51.

voice.[103] Since Adam and Eve would have had no greed, and no need for clothing or money, and since food would have been provided from more excellent fruits, we cannot now even imagine the use to which humans would have put the animals: "only for the admiration of God and for a holy joy which is unknown to us in this corrupt state of nature."[104] The chief power of dominion, just as the image of God, belongs to the divine Word itself.

e. Double Life - Spirit Beyond Body and Soul

The distinction between humans and other animals, and so the scope of the divine image, comes into further focus in Luther's frequent turns to eschatology. This tendency within his discussion of the creation of humans is so strong that it can hardly be thought of as a digression. Rather, as with Paul and some of his early interpreters, Luther finds it difficult to describe the human as a creature of God without viewing that creation in light of its end in Christ.

He takes this up by way of a hypothetical, drawn from book 2 of Lombard's *Sentences*, and originating from Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram*: "Even if Adam had not fallen through his sin, still, after the appointed number of saints had been attained, God would have translated them from this animal life to the spiritual life."[105] While Luther's Works presents this as a quotation from the *Sentences*, in fact Luther is paraphrasing.

A proper understanding of Luther's argument is complicated by George Schick's translation of the Genesis lectures in Luther's Works. Two terms, *corporalis* and *animalis*, or variations thereof, are at issue. Schick usually renders *corporalis* as "physical," and often treats *animalis* in the same way. As a pair these are typically juxtaposed with *spiritualis*. The net effect is to imply a simple dualism of material and immaterial in Luther's anthropology. Even if the reader is aware

[103] Ibid, 67. WA 42, 50.
[104] Ibid., 71. WA 42, 54.
[105] LW 1, 56. WA 42, 42.

that this is suspect, the result is confusing. To counter this, I have endeavored to render these terms as literally as possible. *Animalis* appears as animal, a term which captures some of its ambiguity, indicating a living creature, but also implying the soul (*anima*). *Corporalis* appears as bodily, and *spiritualis* as spiritual.

The source of this triad is in the Vulgate of 1 Corinthians 15:44-45: "It is sown a natural body (*corpus animale*), it shall rise a spiritual body (*corpus spiritale*). If there be a natural body, there is also a spiritual body, as it is written: 'The first man Adam was made into a living soul; the last Adam into a quickening spirit.'"[106] Thus, behind Luther's talk of a second life lies Paul's distinction between the *soma psychikon* (*corpus animale*) and *soma pneumatikon* (*corpus spiritale*) - variously interpreted, but perhaps most literally rendered as a soul-ish body and a spiritual body. In one respect, Luther's language clearly differs from Paul's. Where Paul refers to two bodies, one ensouled and the other spiritual, Luther seems to conflate "animal" and "bodily," and does not use the term body or bodily in reference to the spiritual life.

The distinction between animal/bodily and spiritual life is drawn through a consideration of bodily needs, food in particular: "After this bodily life was to come a spiritual life, in which he would neither make use of bodily food nor do the other things which are customary in this life but would live an angelic and spiritual life. As the future life is pictured to us in Holy Scripture, we shall not drink, eat, or carry on any other bodily functions (*corporalia*). Therefore St. Paul says (1 Cor. 15:45): "The first man was made a living soul"; that is, he lived an animal life, which needs food, drink, sleep, etc."[107]

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[106] Tr: Douay-Rheims. Vulgate: "*seminatur corpus animale, surget corpus spiritale. Si est corpus animale, est et spiritale, sicut scriptum est: factus est primus homo Adam in animam viventem novissimus Adam in spiritum vivificantem.*"
[107] LW 1, 65; WA 42, 49b.

While the link between animal, body, and food is found in Augustine and quoted in Lombard,[108] Luther claims a scriptural source for his contention that "we shall not drink, eat, or carry on other *corporalia.*" Its identity is unclear. A possible candidate might be something like 1 Corinthians 15:32, "If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'" This, however, does not explain the view that eating and drinking should cease in the new life, which on its face seems to contradict New Testament passages referring to eschatological eating or drinking.[109]

In another passage, Luther expands the sunset of bodily activities to include procreation[110], growth, and sleep. He clarifies that he does not mean the disappearance of the body per se, though he still does not use the term in reference to spiritual life: "'Living soul' [Paul] calls animal life, which is to eat, drink, procreate, grow, which are also all present in the brutes. But by antithesis he says that the last Adam was made into a life-giving spirit, that is, such a life as does not need these conditions of animal life. Paul also teaches that even if Adam had not sinned, he would still have lived a bodily life, needing food, drink, rest, growth, procreation, etc., until he would have been translated by God to the spiritual life, in which he would have lived without animality, as I might say, from within, from God alone, and not from without, as he had previously from herbs and fruits. And thus, the human would nevertheless have flesh and bone, and would not be pure spirit as the angels are."[111]

Eschatological life is not without the body, and certainly not without physical substance. Rather, the life Luther describes is without bodily and animal *necessity*. What the beasts require for life, Adam, because he knows and lives from the Word, would at last receive from God alone. Strictly speaking, Luther

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[108] Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram libri duodecim*, IX, 3.6. Quoted in Lombard, *Sentences,* Book 2, Dist. XX, ch 3 (118), tr. Silano. p88.
[109] Cf. Matthew 8:11, Luke 12:37, 13:29, 22:18, 22:30.
[110] Likely in reference to Mark 12:25, "For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. " Cf. Matthew 22:30, and Luke 20:35.
[111] WA 42, 65. LW 1, 86.

does not reject the notion that in this spiritual life the human might taste and enjoy various creatures and activities. He rejects these as a requirement, the eternal dependence of the human on anything but Word and Spirit. In this light, Luther may have had in mind a text such as Revelation 7:16-17:

> They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;
> the sun will not strike them,
> nor any scorching heat;
> for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd,
> and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,
> and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.[112]

The spiritual life lacks nothing at all, loses nothing, not even flesh and bone. Luther retains hardly a vestige of Origen's notion of this body as concession, or his difficulty with created diversity. However, the terms under which life is now grasped, body and soul, are inadequate to what it shall be. Luther gestures no more toward a dis-embodied life than a de-souled life, terms speaking lack rather than fullness. He imagines a new life, a transformation to the image of God itself, and so a fundamental likeness (*similis*) to God "in life, righteousness, holiness, wisdom, etc."[113]

Spiritual life is life without the law which compels dependence on other creatures in order to maintain itself.[114] Does Adam then remain an animal? In one sense, no. While Luther's grasp of biology is typical of his time and at points fanciful,[115] the characteristics by which he identifies animal life, their eating and defecating, respiration and reproduction, remain scientifically meaningful today.

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[112] Cf. Isaiah 49:9-10.
[113] LW 1, 65; WA 42, 49.
[114] Taken this way, the spiritual life represents the eschatological end of the law. As with righteousness, the new and spiritual overflows rather than simply escapes demand - the Spirit's provision of the divine image exceeds and obviates legal necessity.
[115] For example, he repeats the theory that mice and flies are generated by decay. LW 1, 52. WA 42, 39.

If animality is understood by those requirements, it must be said to pass away. Whether this comes in the death now feared by sinners, or painlessly as in the translation of a hypothetically unfallen Adam and Eve, its effect is the same. The promise of the image of God, however, entails that the human has lost nothing except the requirement itself. All that is promised on the sixth day is true eternally. The closeness of Adam's relation to other creatures is in no way compromised, but fulfilled, as he may be described as like to God in life, and not only in hope. The human is animal, and more than animal, in likeness to Christ.

3. Disputation on Man

The connection between the *Disputation on Man* and the early part of the Genesis lectures is suggested in the Disputation's first thesis, which takes up the philosophical definition of the human as "an animal having reason, sensation, and body."[116] This connection is confirmed in the final six theses, which return to the creation of the human and the image of God, and in a parallel gesture to the Genesis lectures seek to interpret that creation from its end. The two texts should be understood as complementary and mutually interpreting. Just as the Genesis lectures locate the divine image squarely with the Word and the life to come, the Disputation identifies that Word in a fallen world as the justification of sinners, and so establishes the *imago Dei* as a matter of preaching.

a. Background

The *Disputation on Man* is a set of forty philosophical and theological theses composed by Luther in late 1535 or early 1536, and formally debated by students at the University of Wittenberg 14 January 1536, which was a Friday, a common day for disputations.[117] This was a regular instructional practice at Wittenberg, having been in place from the start of Luther's career until 1524, and then

[116] LW 34, 137-145. WA 39.I, 174-180.
[117] Ebeling, *Lutherstudien Bd. II: Disputatio de homine*, Teil 1, 6-8.

restored to the curriculum in 1533. Such disputations often functioned as examinations for graduation, but could also be practice exercises, known as circular disputations. While a faculty member would write the theses, it fell to a student to defend them, and professors might speak as the conversation warranted.[118]

The *Disputation on Man* was a circular disputation. The recorded conversation is fragmentary, amounting to several pages, and of those only two sentences are marked as coming from Luther's mouth. Most of the argument must be inferred from the theses themselves, without attending explanations by the author. The theses are provided in their entirety in the following sections.

Dating only six months after the commencement of the Genesis lectures in June 1535, the disputation theses are contemporaneous with that account of the creation of the human. Though different in form, the texts share common themes: the human as considered through Genesis 1:26-28, and the future life. They also share a common grappling with the vocabulary of Aristotelian anthropology - body and soul, but also matter and form, and specifically the disputed notion of prime matter.

b. "Philosophy or human wisdom" - Theses 1-10

1. Philosophy or human wisdom defines man as an animal having reason, sensation, and body.
2. It is not necessary at this time to debate whether man is properly or improperly called an animal.
3. But this must be known that this definition describes man only as a mortal and in relation to this life.

[118] Bühmann, "Wittenberg Disputation Culture and the Leipzig Debate," 61-73.

4. And it is certainly true that reason is the most important and the highest in rank among all things and, in comparison with other things of his life, the best and something divine (*divinum quiddam*).
5. It is the inventor and mentor of all the arts, medicines, laws, and of whatever wisdom, power, virtue, and glory men possess in this life.
6. By virtue of this fact it ought to be named the essential difference by which man is distinguished from the animals and other things.
7. Holy Scripture also makes it lord over the earth, birds, fish, and cattle, saying, "Have dominion."
8. That is, that it is a sun and a kind of god (*Numen quoddam*) appointed to administer these things in this life.
9. Nor did God after the fall of Adam take away this majesty of reason, but rather confirmed it.
10. In spite of the fact that it is of such majesty, it does not know itself a priori, but only a posteriori.

A distinction between philosophy as human wisdom and theology as divine wisdom is implicit in the first thesis, and governs the disputation as a whole. The human is not divided into higher and lower parts, but gathered together in all capacities - reason, sensation, and body - under the philosophical definition. Luther is again cautious about the term animal, but makes a more fundamental distinction in noting that all human capacities, and so the definition as rational animal, describe the human only as mortal.

Reason, the human wisdom governing this definition, is chief among the things of this life and marks the essential difference between human and animal. However, it is not set over created things as if it were of a fundamentally different kind. Reason is oriented to the administration of other creatures - in this respect it is something of a god,[119] to which divine revelation attests in the

[119] Luther typically uses *numen* to indicate pagan deities. Here he clearly means a created, lesser sort of divinity, not a divine likeness as such but a superior power and relation to other creatures.

gifting of dominion in Genesis 1:28. Whether before the fall or after, reason is considered in the same light, not as aspiring to or directly relating the human to God, but governing bodily and sensible things. It is grouped with and looks to things below, not above - reason peers down, not up, and belongs with the things it sees.

Within this human wisdom, therefore, there is not a hint of the image of God as such. One might ask what boundary Luther refers to in saying that reason knows itself only a posteriori - what sort of experience or event reveals reason, and so humanity, to itself? Here is yet another indication of the significance of eschatology in defining the human. Reason, as mortal, knows itself only in light of the last things, and so we approach the distinction in times implied by repeated references to "in this life."

c. "Fragmentary, fleeting, and exceedingly material" - Theses 11-19

11. Therefore, if philosophy or reason itself is compared with theology, it will appear that we know almost nothing about man,
12. Inasmuch as we seem scarcely to perceive his material cause sufficiently.
13. For philosophy does not know the efficient cause for certain, nor likewise the final cause,
14. Because it posits no other final cause than the peace of this life, and does not know that the efficient cause is God the creator.
15. Indeed, concerning the formal cause, which they call soul, there is not and never will be agreement among the philosophers.
16. For so far as Aristotle defines it as first act (*actum primum*) of the body, which has the potential to live (*vivere potentis*), he too wished to deceive readers and hearers.
17. Nor is there any hope that man in this principal part can himself know what he is until he sees himself in his origin which is God.

18. And what is deplorable is that he does not have full and unerring control over either his counsel or thought but is subject to error and deception therein.
19. But as this life is, such is the definition and knowledge of man, that is, fragmentary, fleeting, and exceedingly material.

The argument in this section is compressed, but still legible. Luther attacks Aristotelian causality, philosophy's representative, as incapable of grasping the human. The comparison with theology does not imply a simple relationship in which what is lacking in philosophy is filled up by revelation, or in which the identified causes are each given a new, theological interpretation. Instead, the causal structure itself comes into question, and will be reinterpreted at the end of the disputation. Theology concerns itself with the view from the end because it knows Christ.

Philosophy has an account of the material cause, the body, though qualified with *vix*, scarcely, and *satis*, sufficiently. Seemingly one of Luther's favorite philosophical bones to pick is that the concept of matter in Aristotle is more troublesome than typically assumed,[120] a question revisited at the end of the disputation. If the material cause is difficult, the efficient cause is yet more uncertain, because philosophy does not know God as the creator. Luther is of course aware of the concept of secondary causality, as evidenced by the example in the Genesis lectures of the hen warming her eggs, but just so insists on the causal efficacy of the Word, without which the heat would be "useless." In this sense God is the efficient cause of all things.

Regarding the final cause, philosophy is misled, aiming toward the present life only. Again, this is not merely an incompleteness; failure to grasp humanity from the perspective of the end alters the entire picture, and appears related to the failure to grasp God as creator. As to the formal cause, Luther is dismissive: the

[120] Arguments to this effect appear in both early writings and late, as in the philosophical theses of the *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518) as well as in the first chapter of the Genesis lectures.

philosophers have never agreed on this thing they call soul, and never will. The accusation of deception against Aristotle in thesis 16 is somewhat unclear, and completely opaque in Luther's Works. There, *actum primum* is unhelpfully rendered as "first driving force." Translating *vivere potentis* as "power to live" is more defensible, but despite Luther's use of the participle *potens* rather than the noun *potentia*, the sense is the distinction between act and potency. This is likely a version of Luther's long standing complaint against Aristotle's *De Anima* on the question of the soul's mortality.[121]

One can understand the entire disputation to this point as arguing what thesis 17 states, that the soul has no capacity of its own to know itself, except as it knows itself in God. However, thesis 17 makes a curious contrast with thesis 10, which asserts that reason knows itself a posteriori, by stressing origin rather than end. These appear difficult to square unless source and end are quite closely related, implying a convergence of eschatology and the doctrine of creation. This is what we have so far argued in Luther, and what will be confirmed by the final theses of the disputation. There is not merely a similarity in that both origin and end point to God, but the eschatological revelation of creation itself. Efficient, formal, and final causes are fused. What humans know of themselves in this life necessarily resembles that life: fragmentary, fleeting, and completely material.

d. Image of God as a false start (Theses 20-31)

20. Theology to be sure from the fullness of its wisdom defines man as whole and perfect:
21. Namely, that man is a creature of God consisting of body and a living soul, made in the beginning after the image of God, without sin, so that he should procreate and rule over the created things, and never die,

[121] Reflected in the *Heidelberg Disputation*, where it is also connected to the question of prime matter, arising again in this disputation and in the Genesis lectures. LW 31, 41. WA 1, 355.

22. But after the fall of Adam, certainly, he was subject to the power of the devil, sin and death, a twofold evil for his powers, unconquerable and eternal.
23. He can be freed and given eternal life only through the Son of God, Jesus Christ (if he believes in him).
24. Since these things stand firm and that most beautiful and most excellent of all creatures, which reason is even after sin, remains under the power of the devil, it must still be concluded
25. That the whole man and every man, whether he be king, lord, servant, wise, just, and richly endowed with the good things of this life, nevertheless is and remains guilty of sin and death, under the power of Satan.
26. Therefore those who say that natural things have remained untainted after the fall philosophize impiously in opposition to theology.
27. The same is true of those who say that a man "in doing what is in him" is able to merit the grace of God and life;
28. So also, of those who introduce Aristotle (who knows nothing of theological man) to witness that reason aspires to the best things;
29. Also, those who say that the light of God's countenance is in man, as an imprint on us, that is, free will which forms the precept right and the will good;
30. In like manner, that it rests with man to choose good and evil, or life and death, etc.
31. All such neither understand what man is nor do they know what they are talking about.

Since philosophy is declared unable to comprehend the human, we might anticipate a more sufficient theological definition. Luther grants this, however, only in a qualified manner. The fullness of theology's wisdom offers a deceptively complete definition, corresponding in every point to the description of unfallen Adam and Eve in the Genesis lectures: body and living soul, made after the image of God, sinless, procreating, ruling other creatures, and free from death. This correspondence signals a double incompleteness. First, the definition includes neither acknowledgment nor remedy for sin, and so has limited bearing

on this life. Second, just as Adam and Eve were intended for the spiritual life, so a further life must be anticipated beyond the scope of the definition as “whole and perfect.”

After the fall, human life is neither whole nor perfect, but subject to the power of the devil in the twin forms of sin and death. Rather than ruling, the human is ruled. Rather than living, the human dies. Reason itself, along with every other power, is held captive. Consequently, every attempt at inference from the image of God to the present condition fails. Whether the image is described as lost, damaged, or distorted is less important than that sin’s power over reason and will is acknowledged. What a person does not know, neither can he will. While reason remains the greatest of creatures, its orientation is fundamentally altered - it cannot be said to aspire to the good unless set free by faith in Christ.

The problem of reason’s orientation, and so of its self-knowledge, is inseparable from the matter of liberation from sin, death, and the devil. Humanity does not come into clear view except when this liberation is taken into account. Consequently, what Luther points to is not merely an incompleteness in a certain theological definition of the human. He points to an unjustified reliance of that definition on an assumption of the self-mastery of reason and will, a theological false start which cannot but distort the meaning of that “whole and perfect” definition. This is a grasping after divinity, even what Luther elsewhere calls the *imago diaboli*. Correction to this picture must come in the form of looking toward justification - the liberation of the human - and so toward the future life.

e. Justified by Faith and created ex nihilo (Theses 32-40)

32. Paul in Romans 3, "We hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works," briefly sums up the definition of man, saying, "Man is justified by faith."

33. Certainly, whoever says that a man must be justified says that he is a transgressor and unjust and thus asserts that he is guilty before God, but must be saved by grace.
34. And he takes man in general, that is, universally, so that he consigned the whole world, or whatever is called man, under sin.
35. Therefore, man in this life is the simple material of God for the form of his future life.
36. Just as the whole creation which is now subject to vanity is for God the material for its future glorious form.
37. And as earth and heaven were in the beginning for the form completed after six days, that is, its material,
38. So is man in this life for his future form, when the image of God has been remolded and perfected.
39. Meanwhile, man lives in sins and daily is either justified or becomes more polluted.
40. Hence, Paul does not even deign to call that realm of reason world, but rather calls it the form [*schema*] of the world.[122]

At this point Luther offers an alternative definition of a human: "justified by faith." On the face of it, such a definition is wildly improper. Is there no human until - and unless - justification happens, thus negating creation in the divine image? Or, alternately, is the human defined by the capacity to be justified by faith? These two readings repeat the problem of the scope of the *imago Dei*, shuttling between a particularity that risks exclusion of many existing humans and a universality that leaves the image without actual content, naming only potential. The distinctive feature of Luther's approach which resolves this polarity is not the definition per se, however unusual. Rather, Luther's definition relocates the resolution beyond itself, pointing to the word of justification as delivering the true human, and so the image of God.

[122] Both WA and LW incorrectly cite Galatians 4:3 here. Context and the word *schema* indicate the reference is to 1 Corinthians 7:31, "For the present form (*schema*) of this world is passing away."

The philosophical definition with which the disputation begins speaks timelessly by identifying a thing's essence through differential steps: a human is distinguished from the genus 'animal' by way of the distinction 'rational.' Such a definition implies knowledge of its object, but the human's self-knowledge is fragmentary and material (thesis 19), and so the definition misleads. The disputation repeatedly calls attention to this condition and so to the personal involvement of the questioner, who cannot speak from beyond sin but only under it. To say that a human must be justified is not merely assertion, but actually a confession (thesis 33) that the speaker is a sinner and unjust. Such confession is a form of self-knowledge, but rests on a basis beyond itself, awaiting justification.[123] This is in continuity with Luther's claim against Cajetan that a true confession rests on the promise of God as spoken through the priest. As such it anticipates the human *as promised*, without claiming to grasp its essence.

While this confession is personal, it is not purely individual, but also concerns humanity as such. No free or unstained human may be presumed, but everything that is now called human is consigned under sin. There is thus a trace of the human as microcosm in thesis 34, even within the perspective of universal sin: "the whole world, or whatever is called man" indicates that through the sinful human the world itself - or rather, the "form of the world" (thesis 40) - is subjected to futility.

Rather than proceeding timelessly, Luther introduces a temporal distinction from Pauline eschatology, implied in the distinction between self-knowledge *a priori* and *a posteriori*. Applying this to the definition of the human entails a division of the person in relation to the justifying promise of God. That a human

[123] This negative self-knowledge appears in the confession with which Luther begins his explanation of the third article of the Apostles' Creed in the Small Catechism: "I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him,..." BC, 355.

is justified by faith implies two contrary conditions, termed simply old and new, or sinful and righteous. Objections to the philosophical definition now appear in a new light. Philosophy has not simply missed a human potential to be justified by faith, but does not know the human because it assumes only one subject. If justification is imagined at all in such a framework, it might be considered as a possibility for the human. Theology does not consider the human through possibility or potential, but in the actuality of the preached and justifying Christ who marks a division - a new person. It speaks from the promise of an end which philosophy did not anticipate and cannot now know but in faith.

Given this eschatological stress, what of creation? What of the origin of a human, which is the other side of what Luther accuses philosophy of not knowing? The apparent danger of a division of the human subject into old and new is that of a rupture between creation and justification, beginning and end, nature and grace, such that true humanity in every case belongs to the latter in opposition to the former. However, Luther strongly links creation and eschatology, rather than opposing them. The coordination of these terms can be observed in an unusual use of hylomorphic language in the final six theses.

The human in this life is "the simple material of God for the form of his future life." While matter and form traditionally correspond to body and soul, such that the soul is the form of the human, here the eschatological horizon looms once again. The whole human, body and soul together, is in this life only "simple material" for the life to come. What does Luther intend by the phrase "simple material"? The reference is to the controversial topic of prime matter, which is also addressed in the Genesis lectures.

In commenting on Genesis 1, the views of both Nicholas of Lyra and Augustine are questioned. Luther rejects Lyra's opinion that a philosophical (Aristotelian) understanding of matter is useful to the interpretation of the six days of creation. "I am not sure that Lyra understood what it was that Aristotle called 'matter.'

Unlike Ovid, Aristotle does not designate the shapeless and crude chaos as matter."[124] Prime matter is discussed again in relating Genesis 1:1 to the six days, presenting the puzzle of an unformed mass termed not only "earth" but "heaven," prior to the separation of upper and lower waters. The formless mass cannot be considered, as Lyra has it, as pure potentiality with the power to take on form (the classical definition of prime matter). Likewise, Augustine's assertion in the *Confessions* that this original matter is "almost nothing, so close to nothing that there is no intermediate reality" cannot be maintained.[125]

Within a hylomorphic scheme, every real thing is a union of matter and form, with all intelligible characteristics belonging to form. Just so, in real objects identification of matter is relative. For example, a wooden table has both form (that of a table) and matter (the wood). Examination of that wood reveals it to have its own structure, being a composite of matter (what a thing is made out of) and form (what it is). In this sense, it is always possible to slide up and down the scale, considering objects at one level or another, never escaping the basic structure of matter and form. Things designated as matter from such a perspective are always "secondary matter." Pure or primary matter, which is potential without any actuality at all, cannot present itself, as it has no characteristics to present.

Thus, as Luther reads Genesis 1:2, the stuff it describes cannot be the Aristotelian *prima materia*. What Luther nevertheless calls prime matter is not utterly without form, but has few characteristics except the curious distinction of lighter waters from heavier earth, such that they surrounded it "like an ooze or dense fog." This differentiation is real, if minimal. The waters are "crude and formless masses," neither given orderly arrangement nor "graced with... specific shape," and most peculiarly, designated in Genesis 1 alternately as water, abyss, or

[124] LW 1, 5-6. WA 42, 5. The reference to chaos in Ovid is from the Metamorphoses, Book I: "Ante mare et terras et quod tegit omnia caelum / unus erat toto naturae vultus in orbe, / quem dixere chaos..."
[125] LW 1, 8. WA 42, 7. Augustine, *Confessions* XII, 6.6.

heaven.[126]

Why not the "pure potentiality" or "almost nothing" described by Augustine and Lyra? Beyond Luther's close reading of the Hebrew text, it is most probable that his objection is related to that challenge to Aristotle stated at the outset of the Genesis lectures,[127] and dating back to the philosophical theses of the *Heidelberg Disputation*,[128] that the world is not eternal. The notion of pure potentiality, a truly characteristic-less "matter" (and so indeed "almost nothing") implies its eternity, since any change, including coming to be, would be a change in form.[129] Since Genesis teaches that the world is created by God in time and not eternal, the implication is that prime matter is not pure potential, but a kind of created base stuff, already united with some minimal form and so possessing differentiation. The "without form and void" of Genesis 1 is not a nothing, but a shapeless *something*, itself created *ex nihilo*.

The sense of "pure, simple material" must be drawn from these explorations of matter in Genesis 1. The human in this life, body and soul (and so matter and form) is finally nothing but material for the new form of the future life. In parallel to the human, the whole creation, now subject to vanity, is likewise mere matter in relation to its future form. An analogy is drawn between creation and new creation, cosmos and human: "as earth and heaven were in the beginning for the form completed after six days, that is, its material, so is the human in this life for his future form, when the image of God has been remolded and perfected."

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[126] LW 1, 6-7. WA 42, 6.
[127] LW 1, 3-4. WA 42, 3-4. ""Although Aristotle leaves unsettled the problem whether the world is eternal, he leans toward the opinion that it is eternal...But from this very conclusion there follows the most dangerous opinion that the soul is mortal, for philosophy knows no more than one infinite."
[128] Thesis 31: "It was easy for Aristotle to believe that the world was eternal since he believed that the human soul was mortal." LW 31, 41. WA 1, 355.
[129] Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption*, 1.4.320a2-5; *Physics*, 1.7.190a33ff. Cf. Graham, "The Paradox of Prime Matter."

That the whole present life is matter in comparison with future form does not indicate that it is nothing or almost nothing. It has characteristics of its own - however, their preservation into new life comes into question. There is little room for continuity between new life and old in Luther's framework. Because the distinction between present and future life is a distinction of times, the sort of shifting up and down the scale (e.g., considering the wood as form rather than as matter) typical of a more conventional hylomorphic view is excluded. The present life is not merely a constituent of the future life which, if looked-for, could still be observed intact, any more than the original "without form and void" can yet be observed in the highly differentiated creation around us. Luther has substantially disrupted the sense of the soul as providing continuity across the eschatological divide. Neither, then, could it be the divine image. His rejection of the spiritual interpretation of the *imago Dei* is thoroughgoing, not only biblical but metaphysical.

Similarly, none of the characteristics of the world to come may be inferred from the existing state of the world. Present and future are as unlike as the original, chaotic matter is to the completed and adorned heavens and earth. It is important to recognize that Luther consistently presents the present life as a fallen, dying creation. Except in his hypothetical treatment of an unfallen Adam and Eve, the disjunction is always between the future life and a world (or a person) viewed as passing away. This is the significance of the last two theses. A human is in sins, and daily is either justified or becomes more polluted. No unfallen, untouched nature exists to compare with the life to come. For this reason, Paul refers to the "form (*schema*) of the world" passing away - a form which is manifestly and irrevocably marred by sin.

Luther does not, therefore, introduce an antithesis or rupture between creation and eschatology, but deems creation to have been already so undermined by the fall that its restoration and deliverance can only appear as death. While there is a difference between original creation and the new life to come, that difference is

portrayed as an essential harmony, not an antithesis. Creation points to eschatology as its own completion. From within the horizon of this old world, the hiddenness of the first things and the last things are one - and more important still, so is their revelation. That eschatological advent signified by the term "justification", which is the giving of a promise, is the bestowal to the hearer of the one who stands at the end, just as he was in the beginning. He alone is the continuity of creation and eschatology, because he is the Word of creation itself: "Just as in the beginning the heaven and the earth were unfinished masses, so to speak, before the light had been added, so the godly have within themselves that unfinished image which God will on the Last Day bring to perfection in those who have believed his Word."[130]

Luther's framing of 'old' in opposition to 'new' is not merely a statement of temporal priority, of an inexorable succession of one thing after another. Creation is not old because time has passed; under false dominion, it *becomes* old. Adam has grown old because he is a sinner, not because he is a creature. The life which is now seen wears the oppositional form of the *imago diaboli* until a new form is given, which is the image of God (thesis 39). The word of justification is thus the gift of new form in the person of Christ the risen, human image of God. He, as the form of the believer,[131] and of the world newly opened to the believer, determines and differentiates everything to a degree yet unimagined. In this way it is a new creation, and the new human truly is microcosm, even as the word "image of God" applies exclusively to the human.

IV. Conclusion

Between the Genesis lectures and the Disputation on Man, a picture emerges of the image of God, illustrating an important facet of Luther's soteriology.

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[130] LW 1, 65. WA 42, 48.

[131] Cf. Luther's 1535 Galatians Lectures: "Christ is my form." LW 26:167. WA 40.I, 283. Cf. Ebeling, *Lutherstudien Bd. II: Disputatio de homine*, Teil 3, 502. "Nicht einmal als Interpretament der Menschwerdung Gottes in Christus wäre es zulässig, hier Gott als die forma und die menschliche Natur als die materia aufzufassen."

Justification as a verbal event, a declaration of righteousness, has a thoroughgoing orientation to creation - or, conversely, creation is determined as forensic and verbal. The justifying word does not merely pardon, as if a more or less intact human were awaiting divine verdict as a supplement. Rather, the word makes the human anew in an act of creation *ex nihilo*, bestowing that life and freedom to which creation was always intended. From this perspective, grace is the bestowal of renewed nature in Christ, who sets it free from the futility of sin and death.

This act of new creation stands hidden to sight until the last day. Death appears to rule and the outlines of humanity are questionable, indicating that the image of God is similarly hidden. In fact, it is hidden in two distinct modes, which correlate with Luther's distinction between God as preached and not-preached. Without a promise, the human is hidden under sin and cannot be grasped apart from it. The image of God is impossible to discern, such that even its meaning in Genesis is obscure, and may only be fruitlessly speculated upon. Every proposal is controverted. The pole of universality of the image, considered in this isolation from preaching, yields nothing more than a term without specified content, which becomes a vehicle for projecting into God what we suppose to be true about the human.

Within the divine promise, however, the human is addressed as hidden in Christ, still not visible to sight, but openly declared in a concrete way. The image of God has determinate meaning within the word, as the believer is joined to Christ. That is, the divine image is hidden within a divine promise, which is heard by sinners in space and time, revealing, renewing, and freeing them as human.

The consequence of this framework is that the human is impossible to grasp speculatively or by mere definition. No theorization gives humanity, any more than salvation may be theorized rather than worked in the believer by the Spirit through human proclamation of the gospel. Rather, one is human and a living

image of God because one hears oneself spoken in the eschatological word who is Christ. This speaking is not a step of application or a bit of "practical ministry" added to theology, apart from which the whole theological edifice of the *imago Dei* still functions. It is integral to the constitution of the creature as the human image of God, because it is the Trinitarian work of creating that human. Apart from the preaching, theological description of the image is incomplete.

This is the sense of Luther's strange definition of humans as "justified by faith," which rests the essence of humanity on an apparently contingent event, such as a middle-aged clergyperson shuffling into a pulpit and orating rather poorly for fifteen minutes or so, or more generally one human speaking a certain word to another. Such are the masks of God. Even as humanity cannot be found by speculation, it is given, freely, in ordinary words. Where the gospel is preached, humanity is revealed. Where it is not preached, humanity remains contested. The image of God is hidden because God hides it - within his word, where it is sure and available, and nowhere else. Luther's approach thus asserts the futility of attempting to specify the *imago Dei* by theological argument alone.

In pressing justification's centrality to the image, Luther illuminates the connection between proclamation - the specific word to the specific sinner - and the concrete differentiation of human creatures. Rather than posing a problem or functioning as a temporary concession, created diversity arises from the particularity of the Word. Christ gives each creature its unique character, constitutes them as a word, and so is the form of humans. This bestowal takes place in the clothing of the particular promise, just as Christ is received in the particularity of his historical, Jewish flesh. Thus, the human person is an image of God in concrete difference, which is faith's particularity and individuality.

The preaching which conforms to the human Christ is in its entirety a humanization. Neither movement away from humanity toward divinity, nor the addition of divinity to heal an otherwise recognizable (if damaged) humanity is

possible or desirable. In Christ God is already human. Conformity to Christ is, rather, the proper creation of humans. This creation entails the death of that creature who, in diabolical opposition to God, reaches and grasps in order to elevate itself above God in promise and human flesh. Such a creature is just as it aspires to be, not human. The new creature in Christ is completely human, and in this is the image and likeness of God.

To this extent, much of the debate about theosis or union with Christ in Luther's theology, brought on by the research of Tuomo Mannermaa, comes across as somewhat askew.[132] The stress on ontology in defining union with Christ reveals a subtle confusion as to whether the problem is a matter of sin or of ontological deficit, and so cannot shake the sense that union with Christ functions by way of a supplement or addition to the human. Implicitly, this presupposes a rupture in being between God and humans, which rupture is then healed by absorption into the divine. This assumption is foreign to Luther's mature theology. Nevertheless, it would be inadequate to speak of anything short of a new creation of the human *in toto*, a pitfall which advocates of relational ontology in Luther sometimes miss.[133] Substance is relation, and vice versa, because the human is a creature of the Word.

Finally, it would be more accurate to speak of *anthroposis* than *theosis* in Luther, and perhaps better still to speak of justification as accomplishing what one might (if in want of a rather clunky word) call *theanthroposis*. This is acceptable as long as ontology is subordinated to the eschatological distinction between the old

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[132] Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*. Cf. Braaten and Jenson ed., *Union with Christ*.

[133] E.g.: "While traditionally the ontology of imago is substantialist, Luther quite clearly takes a different position describing it as relational. The image of God in men and women is the conception they have of God and thus also of their environment as a whole as God's creation. In other words, humans do not live as God's image, but in the sight of God who created them and sustains them in their existence and humans fully share the will of their creator. This state of mind is not expressed in any essential human qualities. Instead, it can be read in the human emotions." Bengard, "Imago Dei: God's Grace and Distance," 26. Cf. Ebeling, *Lutherstudien Bd. II: Disputatio de homine*, Teil 3, 500-507.

and new creatures: the old creature must die such that a new and completely human person is raised by the Spirit in likeness to God.

Chapter 4
Analogical Image and Eschatological Image

I. Introduction

I have thus far traced a trajectory from the problems of scope (*who* is it?) and hiddenness (*where* is it?) arising from the biblical sense of the image of God as bodily divine presence. The New Testament authors refracted these questions through Christ, resulting in a range of early Christian theologies in which the divine image mediates between creation and eschatology, as between anthropology and Christology. This mediation could take concrete verbal and liturgical shape, as in the baptismal theology of Gregory Nazianzen. The promissory character of the image was accentuated by Luther, for whom the divine image is inextricable from the preached Word.

This trajectory shares features with both recent and historical accounts; it is distinctive in explicitly surfacing the roles of scope and hiddenness, and in seeking their resolution through verbal proclamation. My claim is that proclamation is not an enrichment of the theology of the image of God, providing a salutary connection to sacramental and liturgical theology, or an application of a theology complete in itself, but its indispensable concluding step. Without it, the divine image cannot be expressed coherently except by arbitrary exclusion, as through refusing the body or denying real likeness between God and humans. Such efforts supplant the revealed human in favor of an invention. Alternative proposals can in part be assessed by their power to resolve hiddenness and scope without resorting to these methods.

One strand in contemporary theology stands out as particularly sensitive to hiddenness and scope, presenting a promising comparison to the direction of this study. While theological analogy is ancient, its classic modern expression arrives in the work of the Jesuit Erich Przywara, who casts the analogy of being

as the basic structure of Catholic theology. What Przywara's formulation offers over less metaphysically ambitious accounts of analogy is a mediating structure, the analogy of being, that might present an alternative to the theology of the preached word in this study. The comparison is heightened by Przywara's critical engagement with Luther, including Luther's concepts of divine hiddenness and proclamation, while maintaining analogy as concretely christological, anthropological, creational, and eschatological. Przywara frames the imago Dei in precisely these analogical terms.

This chapter therefore examines the *imago Dei* as preached in comparison with an analogical approach, considered through Luther and Przywara.[1] Przywara's reception of Luther and his own development of a theology of the divine image in light of that reception offer an apt test case, presenting a christological, apocalyptic account responsive to many Lutheran soteriological concerns, and highlighting where Luther's position stands apart from the analogy of being. Despite points of significant similarity to the view thus far advanced, the analogical *imago Dei* undermines its own movement toward concrete expression on the matters of both hiddenness and scope. Przywara holds the whole sweep of the God-world relation in tension with the particularity of Christ and Mary, without resolving who beside those two is a divine image. Likewise, similarity within ever greater difference blurs distinction between where the image is and is not, preventing resolution of hiddenness. A framework of proclamation better answers the questions on which this study is founded.

II. The Analogical Imago Dei

While analogy in general appears as a semantic rule, its extension to the analogy of being - a properly metaphysical analogy beyond the merely conceptual or semantic - provides clear ground for comparison with the image of God. The relation between God and creatures is defined by similarity within greater

[1] Elements of this chapter were previously published as Morton, "Erich Przywara's Late Reception of Luther."

dissimilarity, inviting connection with the likeness of human and God. Thus semantic and ontological structures overlap. Rather than demanding that likeness be understood positively (and potentially univocally), the analogy of being permits the image of God to be understood as an analogical predication, like God in its very unlikeness. This description, as articulated by Przywara, represents an original contribution to the history of interpretation of the *imago Dei*, not reducible to the approaches so far examined.

1. Erich Przywara and Theological Analogy

Within the various theories of theological analogy on offer, what about Przywara's account renders it particularly fitting for this discussion? First, Przywara has a distinctive place in the history of analogy as a theological concept. He was careful to position analogy as a Thomistic concept with roots in Aristotle, and to ground its dogmatic significance in the declaration of the Fourth Lateran Council that, "One cannot note any similarity between Creator and creature, however great, without being compelled to note an even greater dissimilarity between them."[2] However, the Jesuit's historical claims should not obscure the constructive brilliance and originality of his proposal. The analogy of being is a significant topic in the early 21st century largely because of Przywara's labors in the early 20th century; considered apart from that retrieval (which concerns Przywara's whole output, not only his 1932 masterwork *Analogia Entis*), its roots in ancient philosophy, in the conciliar response to Joachim de Fiore, in Thomas, or indeed its early modern interpretations in Thomas de Vio (Cardinal Cajetan) and Francisco Suarez do not account for its contemporary significance.

A further strength of Przywara, more visible in later writings, is his drive to achieve concreteness and christological focus. While the in-and-beyond structure of the creator-creature relation is highly abstract in its philosophical formulation, Przywara's later works insist, as even the published structure of

[2] Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 269.

Analogia Entis implies, that the true analogy is the proper theological analogy which concerns the concrete exchange between God and the human in Christ.[3] At this point Przywara engages Luther most deeply, considering him as one of the most important tradents in the theology of exchange (*katallage*, as in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21) originating from Paul. Within this exchange theology, the polarities that structure Przywara's thought are placed in close contact with the polarities in Luther's thinking. That which has been criticized as overly disjunctive and negative in Przywara[4] is just what allows his account to maintain a tension of opposites while still looking toward concrete realization in the Christian. Przywara's incorporation of Luther into his own analogical structure permits us to ask more closely about the relationship between the analogy of being and the theology of *imago Dei* as informed by Luther.

Przywara's account of course cannot stand for all possible expressions of the analogy of being, but it is highly likely that accounts veering toward more evident continuity between God and creatures would be vulnerable to criticism on that score. Such accounts would have a very different, and likely more traditional (i.e., spiritual) or reductive view of the image of God. This is not the case for Przywara, whose theology is at points remarkably resonant with the judgments so far developed, and who is highly critical of the spiritual interpretation of the image. The difference that emerges between Luther and Przywara rests specifically in the Dionysian heritage of the analogy of being, and so in opposing receptions of Dionysian negation.

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[3] As John Betz expresses it in the translator's introduction to *Analogia Entis*, "For in the end (if not already well before) it is clear that for Przywara the real bond, the real *analogia entis*, between God and the world is no abstract analogy (based upon a merely metaphysical Logos and a merely philosophical doctrine of participation), but precisely the *incarnate* Logos, the Logos-made-Flesh; and not only the incarnate Logos, but the Logos who was "slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8)." AE, 112. See also Przywara, *Logos*, 129f.

[4] Not least by his erstwhile disciple, Hans Urs von Balthasar. *Theo-drama III*, 220-221, n.51.

2. Przywara on the Imago Dei

Przywara's principal direct engagement with the *imago Dei* appears in two late essays: "Image, Likeness, Symbol, Mythos, Mysterium, Logos" from 1956[5], and "Imago Dei: On the Theological Message of Max Picard" from 1958.[6] Both show signs of engagement with Luther. Both also illustrate Przywara's penchant for etymology and word-study, as he locates his primary terms within their biblical and philosophical backgrounds. By this method he probes for instability, seeking to uncover the internal polarities that animate his account of analogy.

"Imago Dei" includes Przywara's most detailed treatment of the biblical texts and fullest theological development of the concept. Its counterpart "Image" touches on the key terms within a progression of other terms, and is less concerned with the image of God itself than with the structure of Dionysian ascent and descent within the sequence. Thus, while "Imago Dei" speaks of polarity and the in-and-beyond structure of analogy, "Image" speaks of a vertically arranged hierarchy of participation. The former essay tends toward the disjunctive and eschatological, the latter toward a form of Neoplatonic, unitive apocalyptic. Whether or not Przywara explicitly intended the essays to play off one another as a pair, emphasizing different aspects of his analogical vision, it is well within the structure of his thinking to read them in this way.

a. Imago Dei: On the Theological Message of Max Picard (1958)

Despite its subtitle, the essay only begins with Picard, and develops along the unmistakable pathways of Przywara's own thought. The polarities that drive the account emerge from a perceived ambiguity in Genesis 1:26-27 between the terms image and likeness. Przywara admits that the Hebrew sustains no meaningful difference between them, citing various authorities including Luther, and likewise states that the Septuagint "plainly indicates an equivalence of *eikon*

[5] Hereafter, "Image." AE, 430-462.
[6] Hereafter, "Imago Dei." AE, 556-569.

and *homoiosis*."[7] However, he still takes their juxtaposition as significant, and considers two possible directions for how likeness further defines image: either toward intensification and identity, or toward image qualified as a parabolic, "elliptical similarity."[8]

This pair of interpretations is mapped onto a question of whether the *imago Dei* relates more closely to the divine-human relation expressed through human dominion over other creatures, or whether to the relation between male and female as shared broadly with animal life, and so indicates difference from God. This distinction of two intervals or relations, between the human in lordship over creation and the human as male and female within creation, is a classical marker of analogy and indicates Przywara's framework for describing the *imago Dei*: "Accordingly, *homoiosis* indicates both the greatest possible similarity to God (as the *arche* of a *kurios*) and at the same time an ever greater difference from God (to the point of emphasizing humanity's similarity to vegetative and animal creation, which is physically constituted by the reality of sex...). It follows, therefore, that the *eikon theou*, the "image of God" proper to the human being, can be understood neither in unilinear nor in antithetical terms."[9] That is, it can be construed neither univocally nor equivocally, but only analogically, and so as a similarity within ever greater difference. The human as *imago Dei* is the image in-and-beyond the "subhuman vegetal and animal creation."

Przywara's account does not fit the spiritual interpretation of the image, which in identifying the image with the soul also tends toward a "unilinear" (univocal) interpretation.[10] Rather, his interpretation is holistic, impossible to reduce to a single factor or characteristic. He reads the creation of the man in Genesis 2:7 and the creation of the woman in Genesis 2:18-24 as the concrete rendering of

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[7] AE, 558.
[8] Ibid., 559.
[9] Ibid., 559-560.
[10] Perhaps surprisingly, Przywara speaks of such a unilinear interpretation of the image as "the tendency of all Augustinianism." This indicates the importance of the Dionysian element in analogy. Ibid., 560.

the analogical image, repeating the previously expressed polarity. Adam is formed from the dust, but with life breathed into him by God; likewise, Eve taken from Adam's rib is at once "from the man" and "counterpart to the man." Przywara also identifies Christ's genealogy in Luke 3:38, in its successive steps of Seth from Adam and Adam from God, as indicating the divine likeness.[11] However, the likeness "extends equally to (subhuman) creation," in the form of the bones of Adam compared to tree trunks as a skeletal frame and the dust of the earth likened to the vapor or vanity of Qoheleth, and so to nothingness and perishability. In this fashion all created things participate in the human divine image.

The human intellect plays a similar role for Pryzwara to its function for Luther. There is no emphasis on the understanding as directed toward God. Rather, Adam's likeness to God is shown in the bestowal of names on the animals, which implies an understanding of their creaturely essences. Likewise, Eve is the understanding counterpart[12] to Adam, who understands creation. Here, however, Przywara expresses a relative novelty, as he identifies the analogical image in terms of the distinct roles of man and woman: God in likeness to Adam is the "giver of names" and God in likeness to Eve is "house and home".[13]

Przywara summarizes his position thus far by a threefold rhythm: first, the double sense of *homoiosis* as indicating both similarity to God and to subhuman creation; second, the polarity within the male between dust and the breath of God, and within the female between emerging from the man and being built as a house and home[14] from God; third, between the "ever greater God as the archetype in the image man-woman," and the "however great" of the rootedness of man-woman in dust and so earthly nature. As a consequence, not only is a purely spiritual account of the image denied, even called a Gnostic perversion,

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[11] Ibid., 561.
[12] Przywara's interpretation of *boethos*, helper, in Genesis 2:18 and 2:20. Ibid.
[13] Ibid., 561-562.
[14] From the verb *oikodomesen* in the LXX of Genesis 2:22. Ibid., 561.

but the image is held as conceivable only in its being centered in a "genuine theology of the sexes."[15]

However, Przywara denies that such an account is yet concrete. That concretion arrives only when the image is considered in its soteriological scope, as the opposition between original sin and redemption, or between the first Adam and Eve and Christ and Mary as second Adam and second Eve. The *imago Dei* indicates both an "intrinsic participation in the nature of God" and a "supernatural impartation and participation," a giving again or new creation. Przywara also distances himself from Reformation accounts of the image, which identify the natural image as itself a supernatural impartation, such that original sin means loss of the image. Against both of these "extremes," he insists on a consistent analogical structure in which the unity of natural and supernatural, *imago Dei* and *consortium Dei*, is that of the "*consortium* in-and-beyond the *imago*." Thus, a hierarchical gradation of the image is visible within the analogical image as conceived through the relation between the sexes: from vegetal and animal male and female, to the human man and woman, to the deified and sacramental relation of man and woman.[16]

Sin and the fall are seen properly in light of this hierarchical, in-and-beyond structure. Adam and Eve's sin is grasping at equality with God; in this grasping, the *consortium Dei* becomes *consortium anti-Dei*. In consequence, the human is reduced to a slave of Satan, nature itself becomes an opponent to Adam, and the relation between man and woman becomes contradiction and oppression. This does not obliterate the image of God, but distorts and twists it: "even in the *consortium anti-Dei* the human being remains human "in nature" and so, as such, the *imago Dei.*"[17] However, in place of the analogy that would have defined the human (between the natural *imago Dei* and the supernatural *consortium*

[15] Ibid., 562-563.
[16] Ibid, 564-565.
[17] Ibid., 566.

Dei), now stands a contradiction between that natural condition originating from God, and the state of original sin opposed to God.

Similarly, Przywara describes redemption as not merely a restoration of the image or justification, but in terms of the act of incarnation, conceived as an exchange between two opposed conditions. This exchange or *commercium*, following Przywara's typical development of the theme, is understood genealogically through Irenaeus, Augustine, and Luther (who is invoked in apparent opposition to Reformation soteriologies), as reconciliation (*katallage*, following 2 Corinthians 5:17-21) in its economic sense, "an exchange of goods at a slave market."[18] Christ, who is in the form of God, takes the form of a slave; the human who had been a slave of Satan is restored as a member of Christ in the form of God. Thus, "the one Christ is not only 'completely God and completely man,' but 'completely God as having become sin and a curse, to the point of being delivered into the hands of Satan as one godforsaken and subject to the power of darkness.'" The fallen human is redeemed into Christ, translated out of opposition to God into the "*consortium gloriae crucis*," into being crucified with Christ. Christ as the image of the invisible God is none other than Christ crucified, and the contradiction within the fallen human (between the divine image and the *consortium anti-Dei*) is overcome. It is of enormous importance that Przywara here maintains the in-and-beyond structure of the image. The *imago Dei* is proper to human nature, and persists through sin, however great, but appears in the redeemed human under conformity to the image of the Crucified. The *consortium Dei* remains in-and-beyond the *imago Dei*.

Finally, Przywara returns to the relation between man and woman as restored into a new form. In the exchange-as-redemption, the contradiction seen in Adam and Eve gives way to the relation between Christ and Mary. Here, finally, the matter is declared concrete: not simply Christ, but Christ as Christ *and* Mary, the second Adam and the second Eve. This opposition between origin and end,

[18] Ibid., 566-567.

derived from the first Adam and last Adam language of 1 Corinthians 15:45, is genealogized in a line from Ephraim the Syrian to Augustine, to Bernard of Clairvaux, to once again, Luther. Przywara's insistence on including Eve and Mary in this formulation is consistent with his view of the image as centered in a theology of the sexes, which reaches its climax in a chiastic inversion of the relation between Adam and Eve: Eve formed from Adam (woman from man), and Christ formed from Mary (man from woman). Two Luther texts, a 1516 sermon on the Assumption of Mary, and the 1519 commentary on Psalm 19, are invoked in the essay's penultimate paragraph.[19] The latter is echoed by Przywara, as Luther describes not only Mary as the chamber/womb and Christ as bridegroom proceeding from her, but Christ's humanity as born from Mary alone, such that in one person are found God and pauper, righteous and sinner, blessed and damned, child of grace and of affliction, all emerging from the belly of the virgin. Thus, for Przywara, the analogy that informs the image of God is found in the relation between the divine mystery of the Crucified and the human mystery of Mary the lowly handmaid. So he concludes:

> Here we see the complete form of the *imago Dei*: the human being as the "image of God," inasmuch as he is the "*ad imaginem*," the likeness to the *one* "image of God in Christ in Mary," as to an "image of glory in deformity and lowliness." The *imago Dei*, in the full sense of this term, is the human being in the symbol of the "crucified" and the "mother of seven sorrows."[20]

b. Image, Likeness, Symbol, Mythos, Mysterium, Logos (1956)

This essay is largely philosophical, and only at points engaged with the biblical tradition of image and likeness. The terms that make up the title are considered as a sequence, forming an ascending polarity between image and *logos*, such that the essay opens with the question of the relation between a "philosophy of

[19] Ibid, 569., fn33. WA 5, 549 and WA 1, 78-79.
[20] Ibid., 569.

the pure image" and a "philosophy of the pure concept."[21] This relation is discussed as evident in the relation between Eastern and Western philosophies, respectively, but also between two "fundamental orientations" within Western philosophy: a philosophy of the pure image exemplified in Victorine Augustinianism and Romanticism, and a philosophy of the pure concept most apparent in the line from Descartes to Hegel. Przywara's point of entry is the relation of sensible and intelligible in these approaches, whether of the sensible as that through which one passes to the intelligible world of the Logos, or of the sensible as the site "wherein alone this intelligible world can be experienced."

Between these, the position of Thomas Aquinas is taken as mediating. The intelligible may be grasped through and in the sensible, but discursively and negatively rather than directly. Przywara's goal is not Thomas, however, but the stricture of Fourth Lateran, to which Thomas is subject: "to the degree that the "intelligible world of the Logos" is to be comprehended in its ultimate and divine ground, even the 'discursive, indirect, and negative' knowledge of it... is always attained first within a realm of 'similarity, however great,' which must still be crossed through by the 'ever greater dissimilarity.'"[22] This in-and-beyond is further described as a basically Dionysian structure in which simple negation is surpassed in unknowing: "the 'discursive, indirect, and negative' knowledge of the 'intelligible world of the Logos' 'through and in and within' the 'sensible world' thus becomes... the *hyper* proper to its status.... It becomes a knowledge that is 'hyper-discursive, hyper-indirect, hyper-negative.'"[23]

This knowledge arrives in a philosophy of the "analogy of analogy," the similarity of creaturely relation between sensible and intelligible within the ever greater dissimilarity of the creature as such and God as such. The sequence of

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[21] Ibid., 430-431. While understandable within the essay's historical and philosophical frame, it is revealing, in comparing Przywara to Luther, that *logos* correlates to a philosophy of the concept and the intelligible, rather than to word and speech and so implicitly to a unity of the sensible and intelligible.
[22] Ibid., 432.
[23] Ibid.

terms that constitutes the essay's title is taken as a "rhythmical expression" of this philosophy. From the direction of a "philosophy of the concept" (idealism), the terms ascend from image through likeness, symbol, *mythos*, *mysterium*, to *logos*. Likewise, from the direction of a "philosophy of the image" (Romanticism), the terms descend from pure *logos* toward image. A linguistic and historical investigation of each term shows it to exhibit the "suspended ambiguity" of the rhythms of ascent and descent.

The exploration of image illustrates the structure of the essay as a whole. Moving through the Greek *eikon*, the Latin *imago*, and the German *Bild*, it uncovers in each a tension between a real likeness or representation (making present) and a mere appearance. This indicates a tension between that which is "of the creator", giving shape and presence, and that which is "of the creature", merely reproducing according to a model. Hence, "...the 'image' is the site where something creaturely appears simultaneously as 'creator' and 'creature', which endues the 'image' with divinity, but only as an 'appearance,' behind which is concealed the purely 'artisanal work' of 'imitation.'"[24]

At every point the analysis moves in two directions, ascending toward *logos* and descending toward image, revealing an ordered hierarchy of participation such that likeness, symbol, *mythos*, *mysterium*, *logos* all enter into the discussion of image. The proclamation of the Gospel is itself described in this structure, as Christianity initially appears as an *evangelium* (and so *mythos*), then becomes in the Passion "a *mysterium* in the sense of an initiation", and finally, as in John's Gospel, a participation in the Logos himself. That ascending order can also be considered in descending form, as the "*logos* in *mysterium* and *mythos*," such that the one true Logos "is essentially 'Jesus Christ in the flesh' in the mystery of exchange."[25] As we shall see, Luther, though unmentioned, is nevertheless

[24] Ibid., 436.
[25] Ibid., 438.

incorporated through exchange as encapsulating the rhythm of descent, and so brought within a Dionysian, analogical framework.

c. Hiddenness and Scope in the Analogical Image

As one might expect, hiddenness and scope can be expressed in Przywara's account as polarities within a hierarchy of participation. The merely human and intra-creaturely relation of male and female expands the scope of the image to sexually differentiated living creatures, while the divine-human relation differentiates humans from other creatures. However, even the non-living cannot be excluded, as it participates in the human *imago Dei*. Similarly, the image of God spans the difference between an intrinsic natural participation in God and a supernatural impartation and participation, the *consortium* in-and-beyond the *imago*. While this supernatural relation can be reversed in sinful opposition to God (*consortium anti-Dei*), such opposition cannot undo natural participation in the image. Beyond these abstract formulations, the image reaches for concreteness in the relation between the descending, crucified Christ and the lowliness and suffering of Mary. The place of any individual within this scheme cannot be statically located as if by a point on a graph. Rather, the scope of the image conveys the dynamic range of human participation in God, displaying the same 'swinging', 'oscillating' movement as the *analogia entis* itself, suspended between God and nothing.

Similar to Luther's concept of hiddenness *sub contrario*, the human is an image of God in likeness to Christ and Mary, and so hidden in suffering and humility. However, the in-and-beyond structure of analogy, as implied by the difference between the image as natural participation and as supernatural impartation, carries an even more thoroughgoing and general sense of hiddenness. Even in its most concrete expression, the relation described by the *imago Dei* is not identity but similarity within an ever greater difference. The Dionysian logic of descending affirmation and ascending negation is manifest in the relation between human image and divine Logos. As with Luther, hiddenness is an

irreducible feature of the divine image, but here belongs eternally to the creator-creature relation rather than to a specified divine activity which comes to an eschatological end. Thus, the difference between Przywara and Luther can be provisionally expressed as that between analogical hiddenness as asymmetrically governing revelation such that Christ is *hyper*-image, and hiddenness in the sense of Luther's distinction between God hidden apart from and within his word (the image of God). This difference is further visible in Przywara's reception of Luther, as centered upon the concept of exchange.

3. Analogy, Exchange, and the Importance of Luther

Przywara cautions that the analogy of being and the theology of exchange are not derivable from one another, as one cannot recognize any concrete order between God and the creature merely on the basis of analogy.[26] Analogy in this sense is the purely formal expression of the relation between God and the human, which is materially and concretely expressed as exchange. Just so, analogy functions as a limit on exchange, preserving divine transcendence, and as a measure for all theological expression of it: human proximity to God is found in the similarity-within-dissimilarity of the bodily death and resurrection of Jesus. The image of God is restored and encapsulated in this act of redemption known as exchange, and so the same logic applies to both.

This double relationship between analogy and exchange mirrors that expressed in Przywara's 1940 article, "The Scope of Analogy as a Fundamental Catholic Form." There he explains that "the formula of analogy thus contains the three components of the one factical economy of salvation,"[27] which Przywara came to identify as exchange. In post-war writings, that exchange theology is frequently expressed in terms borrowed from Luther, who is credited with the final stage of its historical development. Thus Przywara's sense of the "concrete order between God and the creature," and so whatever may be said concretely of the

[26] Przywara, *Logos*, 129.
[27] AE, 364.

imago Dei, includes Luther in its orbit. Consequently, Przywara's reception of Luther is critical to understanding his theology of the image of God, and to understanding how Luther's account relates to an analogical account of the image.

a. Przywara's Luther Reception - Early Engagements and *Humanitas*

Prior to the second world war, Luther appears occasionally in Przywara's writing, but in a schematic fashion, hardly distinguishable from the tradition bearing his name or from Karl Barth, who was taken as Luther redux. The Gestapo's 1941 closure of *Stimmen der Zeit*,[28] the journal at which Przywara worked as lead editor, marks an important shift. Unsteady living situations and faltering health limited his output in the following years, but several details point to a growing engagement with Luther. Przywara delivered a series of sharply apocalyptic sermons in Munich and Vienna in late 1943 and 1944. One in particular, "Alte und Neue Reformation," deals in broad Reformation themes – Word alone, Christ alone, etc. – lifting up their necessity (in a reconsidered, Catholic form) for the modern church. Luther is not distinguished from the Reformation as a whole, but the eventual focal point of Przywara's Luther studies, the exchange between the sinful human and God in Christ, is presented as the heart of the Reformation's "Christ alone."[29]

A chance meeting towards the end of the war appears even more significant. In late 1944, the Evangelical High Consistory (*Evangelische Oberkirchenrat*) evacuated Berlin for Stolberg in the Harz Mountains. Around the same time, Cardinal Faulhaber, the Archbishop of Munich, had similarly sent Przywara to Stolberg for rest and recuperation. Stolberg Castle thus played host to both the Jesuit theologian and leading members of the local and national Protestant

[28] AE, 25.
[29] Przywara, *Vier Predigten über das Abendland*, 18–36.

judicatories in the first half of 1945, and so presented the opportunity for extended conversation as well as access to study Luther's writings.[30]

Those studies bear their most evident fruit in a twenty-five page essay in Przywara's *Humanitas* (1952). The essay is Przywara's primary published scholarly foray into Luther. In a lengthy endnote, Przywara offers thanks to various Protestant theologians and churchmen including members of Lutheran consistories present at Stolberg, provides a short bibliography of his publications dealing with Luther, and notes some of his own unpublished works. A portion of an unpublished article reviewing and offering methodological critique of pre-war Luther scholarship concludes the endnote,[31] illuminating Przywara's long term interest in Luther.

In the essay, Przywara laments that Luther never had an opponent in his lifetime who understood him, and judges that Philipp Melanchthon's theology did more to shape later Lutheranism than Luther's own.[32] As a result, Catholic responses, even the Council of Trent, have not addressed the true Luther - a problem Przywara means to address. His assessments of contemporary Luther scholarship offer a similar opinion. Both Catholic and Protestant scholars of the day (he discusses Heinrich Denifle, Hartmann Grisar, Franz X. Kiefl, and Josef Lortz on the Catholic side, and Ernst Troeltsch, Karl Holl, and Karl Barth on the Protestant) come up short of grasping Luther's theological center to varying degrees.[33]

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[30] Gertz, "Erich Przywara (1889–1972)," *Christliche Philosophie in katholischen Denken*, 2:575. Cf. O'Meara, *Erich Przywara, S.J.*, 101.
[31] Przywara, *Humanitas*, 873.
[32] Ibid., 376.
[33] Ibid., 874. Though Przywara mentions neither in connection with Luther research, his pre-war writings include engagement with Werner Elert and Paul Tillich, which would also have shaped his understanding of Luther. Regarding Elert, see reviews of both volumes of *Morphologie des Luthertums.* Regarding Tillich, see the articles "Protestantische und katholische Ur-Einstellung," "Kairos," "Tragischer Welt," and "Primal Christian Terms," the last in AE, 570-582. Also O'Meara, "Przywara and Tillich at Davos," 227–38.

The way to the "real Luther" is paved through a sequence of writings spanning Luther's career, which will unfold his central theological concern. The road map includes the 1514 Christmas sermon,[34] Romans commentary (1515–1516),[35] a sermon of 29 September 1518 (summarized in a letter to Georg Spalatin),[36] the *Operationes in Psalmos* (1519–1521),[37] *Freedom of a Christian* (1520),[38] *Bondage of the Will* (1525),[39] and the later Galatians lectures (1531/1535).[40] One should not take this list as remotely exhaustive of Przywara's reading in Luther; it seems to represent a sketch of essentials for study, with the implication that scholars had not to that point given each of these texts due weight.

It is exchange – the objective and subjective, bodily and spiritual interplay of Christ and the Christian, Christ and the Church – which Przywara identifies as the ground of Luther's doctrine of justification and the center of his theology. The theology of exchange is drawn from 2 Corinthians 5 and further developed by Irenaeus and Augustine, but falls largely dormant until its powerful revival by Luther.[41]

Przywara traces out the development of this theme in Luther's writings, beginning with the 1514 Christmas sermon, where its form is typically patristic: "As the Word of God has become flesh, so it is surely necessary that flesh also become Word . . . therefore, wisdom becomes foolish, that folly becomes wisdom, and so . . . He accepts all that is ours in order to teach us His."[42]

The thought has progressed further by the 1515–1516 Romans commentary: "God cannot become wise, righteous, true, brave, good, etc. in his words, unless we,

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[34] WA 1, 20–29.
[35] WA 56; LW 25.
[36] WA Br 1, 284–87.
[37] WA 5.
[38] WA 7, 12–73; LW 31, 327–77.
[39] WA 18, 551–787; LW 33.
[40] WA 40.I and WA 40.II, 1–184; LW 26 and LW 27.
[41] Przywara, *Humanitas*, 379.
[42] Ibid., 380. Citing WA 1, 28f.

believing in Him, and yielding to Him, confess ourselves to be unwise, unjust, untruthful, weak, evil."[43] A September 1518 letter advances the point using Philippians 2, with its exchange of the "form of God" for the "form of a slave": ". . . the first form makes something, or even more, everything, out of nothing – the second makes nothing out of everything, and something into not-something; the one ascends, the other descends."[44]

Przywara summarizes Luther's dialectic, which holds both Luther's value and his supposed downfall, through three characteristics, of which the first is its antithetical structure.[45] Christ is to be preached, "through conflict and contrast."[46] Second, the whole of salvation, and so the whole God in Christ is preached as hidden under his opposite, that is, under the suffering and death of the flesh, under sin.[47] God is not to be known in sovereign, all-working majesty, but in the concrete materiality of the manger and the cross, and so in the physicality of the preached word of promise, which includes the absolution, Baptism, and the Sacrament of the Altar. Here Przywara recognizes (and largely approves, viewing it as anti-Protestant) Luther's distinction between God preached and not preached, such that Christians must flee from the naked, absolute God to the clothed God, to God wrapped in the flesh of Christ and immersed in his promises. Third, this mystery hidden under its opposite is the mystery of exchange, of the marriage of God and human in Christ. Christ and the Church, and in it every Christian personally, are one body.[48] This bodily union of Christ is specifically with sinful humanity, with a sinful church, so that Christ becomes sin and curse. It is in his development of the Pauline "became sin for

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[43] Ibid. Citing WA 56, 218f.
[44] Ibid. Citing WA Br 1, 284f.
[45] Ibid., 386f.
[46] Ibid. Citing WA 18, 782; LW 33, 287.
[47] Ibid. Citing WA 56, 392; LW 25, 382f.
[48] Ibid., 387. The Luther citations, which do not include specific quotations, are WA 5, 493; WA 7, 49ff.; WA 25, 342, 375; WA 40.II, 556ff.; WA 56, 279ff.; WA 40.III, 646ff.; WA 7, 54. These correspond to the *Operationes in Psalmos* (1519–1521), *Freedom of a Christian* (1520), *Lectures on Isaiah* (1527–1529), *Lectures on Psalm 45* (1532), *Lectures on Romans* (1515–1516), *Lectures on Isaiah 9* (1543-1544), and *Freedom of a Christian* (again).

us" of 2 Corinthians 5 that Przywara sees Luther as advancing the theology of exchange to its limit:

> But since in the same person, who is the highest, greatest, and only sinner, there is also eternal and invincible righteousness, therefore, . . . all sin is defeated, killed and buried in Christ, and righteousness remains victorious and rules forever . . . He made such a happy exchange with us, took on himself our person of sin and gave us his innocent and victorious person . . . Therefore, there is no Sin, no death, no curse anywhere in the world, but only on Christ, who is the lamb of God, who has taken away the sins of the world.[49]

Having identified this distinctive form of exchange as Luther's theological center, Przywara locates Luther's Mariology within it. Mary is the exemplar of the *vita passiva*, passive life, understood in terms of a righteousness wholly passive to God, "in which we do or repay nothing, but only receive and suffer another working in us, namely God."[50] Attending to Luther's frequent use of childbirth language – womb, labor, baby, milk – Przywara highlights the connection between Mary and the believer: if we remain in the word, we "co-suffer with Christ, as the mother co-suffers when the child is delivered."[51]

This exchange in suffering, in which Mary is the form of the Christian, occurs in the concrete – in Christ, in the Church, in the word of promise, which for Luther is the "womb of God." It is not idealized, but must remain bodily, else the end result is a "spiritualized Mariology," Mary abstracted from the one whose body bore the material God. The spiritualization of Mary (and so of the Christian and the church) is a key element of Przywara's analysis of Albigensian Manichaeism

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[49] Ibid., 391. Citing WA 40.I, 438–45; LW 26, 281–85. Cited frequently in late works, e.g., *Logos*, 127f.
[50] Ibid., 392. Citing WA 40.I, 41.
[51] Ibid., 393, citing WA 25, 295. The English translation in LW 17 (roughly page 191) does not follow closely at this point. "*Si enim in puro verbo manserimus, habemus Christum compatientem, sicut mater compatitur, cum enititur foetum*."

in the section preceding the Luther essay, and implicitly connected with his objection to spiritualization of the *imago Dei*. The personal and bodily exchange thus serves to protect theology, even as it entails Luther's revised definition of the theological task. Theology, says Luther, is not simply *de Deo* but concerns the relation of the human being who sins and the God who justifies, and here Przywara agrees.[52]

b. Later Writings - Analogy in the Concrete

Luther's imprint is widely evident in works subsequent to *Humanitas*. While he sometimes appears by name in historical discussions, especially in connection with the exchange theme, a significant number of passages make use of concepts drawn from Luther without citation. Consideration of several of these will demonstrate the thoroughness of Przywara's integration of Luther.

Przywara's 1954 commentary on the Gospel of John, *Christentum gemäss Johannes*, is neither a technical exegetical work nor a systematic one. Its method, as stated in the foreword, is to highlight the analogy of faith, the material inner correspondence of the testimony of the Old and New Testaments, which is rendered transparent in that relation of creator and creation expressed formally as the analogy of being. Despite a very different mode of presentation, Przywara sees the work as in essential continuity with *Analogia Entis*.[53]

Luther is mentioned only once. Discussing John 1, Przywara quotes the young Luther as summing up the mystery of the incarnation: "Therefore the word became flesh, that flesh might become word."[54] There is nothing distinctive to Luther in this remark, and no obvious reason to have mentioned him. However,

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[52] Ibid., 385. Luther's remark, "*Subiectum Theologiae homo reus et perditus et deus iustificans vel salvator*," is in WA 40, II, 328; LW 12, 311. For a discussion of this definition, see Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 29–43.
[53] Przywara, *Christentum gemäss Johannes*, 7f.
[54] WA 1, 28.

Luther's words are followed by a discussion of exchange invoking the familiar verses of 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Galatians 3:10–13, and so aligning the Johannine "Word became flesh" with the Pauline "became sin" and "became a curse," which Przywara understands as Luther's special emphasis.[55] The presentation appears strategic. Unobjectionable Athanasian words from early Luther are leveraged to introduce a more radical interpretation of exchange, which is treated as straightforwardly biblical. Przywara has adapted Luther's theology without weighing down his own commentary with justification of that unusual choice.

Later, a discussion of exchange mentions Augustine, but again concentrates on Christ as becoming sin and curse in language more typical of Luther.[56] This interpretation of Christ and sin is repeated throughout the commentary. In Jesus' baptism, the Lord confesses himself as the sinner of the sins of the world. Indeed, in his basic office, Christ is the one who bears the world's sin, and so is the "only sinner." Przywara extends this into a discussion of the Trinity. The whole Trinity, the creator God of Genesis 1 and John 1, is "the God of exchange (*commercium*) with the world," in particular, with the world of sin and curse.[57]

The Lutheran contribution finds its way even into discussion of analogy itself. What is formally the analogy of being is materially *agapē*, wherein *agapē* is the mystery of cross and resurrection, the encounter of the human being in thrall to Satan with the "thrice-holy God who in Christ becomes sin and curse." This is common to Paul, Irenaeus, Augustine, and the liturgy - Luther is omitted in name, if not in content. Analogy is *agapē* as exchange.[58]

A later work, *Logos* (1964), reinforces the importance of Luther and sheds further light on the relationship between exchange and analogy. The fourth part

[55] Przywara, *Christentum gemäss Johannes*, 40f.
[56] Ibid., 44.
[57] Ibid., 56–59.
[58] Ibid., 239–40.

of *Logos*, titled "Commercium", treats exchange biblically and historically. Luther is not the focus, but is mentioned in succession after Paul, Irenaeus, and Augustine. Exchange is identified in that chapter as the central Christian reality,[59] the heart of Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and Christian ethics.[60] Przywara does not intend a deviation from his commitment to the analogy of being as the Catholic structure, but that exchange is the factual, concrete expression of analogy.[61]

Przywara thus entangles Luther, through the theology of exchange, in that which he understands as formally laid down by the Fourth Lateran Council. To understand exchange as analogical is to understand it in terms of this similarity within ever greater difference[62] – the divine-human relationship has the character of a suspension and swinging movement between poles, ascent within descent. Luther's importance to this picture is as a corrective to tendencies in Catholic thought which might undermine exchange's analogical character. His apocalyptic antitheses are therefore to be set opposite and in analogical relation to a picture of ordered rational harmony which, on its own, would lose the scandal of the cross; similarly, his stress on the concrete of Christian life opposes any spiritualizing tendency.

c. The Limits of Luther

Having been incorporated through the theology of exchange, Luther contributes his own distinctive reading of the relation between God and humanity to Przywara's project. However, despite considerable effort to locate Luther within an analogical framework, Przywara cannot simply swallow him whole. Even as he strives to include Luther within his expansive vision, Przywara works to

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[59] Przywara, *Logos*, 126.
[60] Ibid., 134.
[61] Ibid., 129f.
[62] As Betz notes, Przywara is inclined to read the Fourth Lateran's *maior dissimilitudo* in the direction of the Ignatian "ever greater," producing an *ever* greater difference rather than merely a greater one. AE, 73.

establish a limit to his adoption of the theologian he calls "highest mystic and highest heretic."[63]

Przywara's criticism of Luther in later works is notably different from that in earlier writings. The *Humanitas* essay largely absolves Luther of the fundamental Protestant errors, as Przywara sees them, of God abstracted as sovereign will and majesty, and of an unbalanced subjectivism.[64] These are instead laid at the feet of Calvin and Melanchthon, respectively, while Luther is elevated as an effective counter to both.[65] Similarly, earlier writings had often grouped Luther with Barth as instances of "theopanism," perceiving in the opposition and non-relation between God and creature a covert nullification and therefore absorption of the creature into God.[66] The *Humanitas* essay, however, differentiates Luther's understanding of the all-working power of God from that of Protestantism at large and particularly that of Calvin (and thereby, Barth), and the specific accusation of theopanism is absent.[67] Luther's thoroughgoing embrace of God's work through creaturely mediation blunts that charge.

Instead, Luther is an ironic fulfillment of the Manichaean thread running through the West from antiquity.[68] The distinctions between law and gospel, wrath and mercy, are not understood merely from the perspective of distinct works or words of God but as a fissure within God's being, an essential antithesis. In alignment with this interpretation, the Romans lectures (1515-1516)

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[63] Przywara and Sauer, *Gespräch zwischen den Kirchen*, 67. Cf. Gertz, *Glaubenswelt als Analogie*, 379.
[64] By contrast, in an essay prior to *Analogia Entis*, Przywara distinguishes somewhat between Luther and Lutheranism (the latter a Luther-Melanchthon synthesis), but suggests that Luther differed by way of a greater similarity to Calvin. "St. Augustine and the Modern World", 269n1.
[65] Przywara, *Humanitas*, 378ff.
[66] E.g., "The Barth-Thurneysen theology of the 'negation' [das Nicht] of the creaturely is at bottom simply the instantiation of Luther's primal vehemence, in which, in his radical experience of the night of sin, he, so to speak, forced God into his arms . . . Luther's God is ultimately the deification of his tempestuous longing." Przywara, *Ringen der Gegenwart*, 497, quoted in AE, 20n62. This view of Luther is precisely what Przywara does not maintain in later works.
[67] Przywara, *Humanitas*, 377. "...and the actual Luther, for whom everything is the 'actual work of God' (of course not in a formal *Alleinwirksamkeit*, as Holl thinks, rather in the revelation-mystery of *admirabile commercium*, the 'marvelous exchange')."
[68] Ibid., 399. "So Luther, in his deepest real form, is the fulfiller of Albigensian Manichaeism."

appear to support a salvation by negation, not as two distinct movements – the death of the old sinner and the birth of a new and righteous creature – but as if negation itself were salvific: "And universally, our affirmation of anything good whatsoever is hidden under its negation, so that faith may have its place in God, who is negative essence and goodness and wisdom and righteousness, and cannot be possessed or touched unless by the negation of all our affirmatives."[69] Thus, self-negation is the sign of God's love and election. Furthermore, this theology is inflated to a cosmic scope, a theology of the "cross through the whole world."[70] The universalized cross is an idealized and abstracted cross, and so a universal negation. In place of the dynamic polarity of analogy, Luther has a radicalized tension, a static identity of opposites, with the effect of a standoff and a lit fuse. It manifests not in the movement of similarity within ever greater difference, but in world-negation and rupture.

From here, the line is clear to Luther's unexpected heirs: from Boehme, to Schelling, to the revolutionaries Bakunin and Nietzsche (and on further to Przywara's sometime interlocutor, Tillich). Luther's negation ultimately denies every outward, concrete thing, most especially the bodily glory of Christ. Przywara, for all his appreciation of Luther, settles on this judgment: Luther is bifurcated, dualistic. On the one hand, the "naked cross" of Protestantism, denuded of the bodily glory of God and the works of love, and so wordless, as everything external comes to destruction. On the other, similarly wordless but pagan and mythic is the naked gallows of Yggdrasil, the world-tree of Germanic mythology, on which Odin hung himself – symbolizing both the world-cross referenced by Luther and the fiery end and ever-new beginning of Ragnarok.[71]

"Wordless" is perhaps the sharpest criticism Przywara could attach to Luther, as it indicates a failure to follow through on his own intentions. The bodily

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[69] Ibid., 388f. Citing WA 56, 392f. LW 25, 383.
[70] Ibid., 397f. Citing an April 1516 letter to Georg Leiffer. WA Br I, 37f.
[71] The association of Luther's apocalypticism with Germanic mythology is repeated, in somewhat less polemical form, in Przywara, *Mensch*, 275–76.

concreteness of promise that so elevates Luther above Protestantism collapses into sheer abstraction. That theology which most strongly wants to flee from God hidden *in se* to God in his word ends up removing the word (and so the world) entirely. Therefore, the earlier charge of theopanism has to some extent re-emerged in the claim of Manichaeism, but in altered form. Rather than identifying a basic opposition between God and the world, Przywara has pointed to a Lutheran antithesis within God. Luther's antithesis is anti-analogical, and so must be corrected by relocating him to one pole of a larger analogy.

However, Przywara's understanding of Luther is impeded by a historical error. In leaning on the 1515–1516 Romans commentary, he overlooks the work's discontinuities with Luther's mature theology.[72] The Gospel as a concrete divine promise which bestows what it says in the human act of proclamation is not yet present. The Romans commentary shows a somewhat different soteriology, that yet-Dionysian negation-as-salvation which Przwyara mentions but does not recognize as merely transitional in Luther's development.[73] For the later Luther, salvation comes as a word of promise, new creation rather than negation. Negation, death, and self-hatred remain in Luther's writing, but belong to a distinct word from that of promise and life. It is only the old unbelieving creature, not the new person in Christ, who is brought to death in the word of the cross, which can never be a self-surrender or self-negation. Luther also speaks of the cross as laid on human life in trials and sufferings, but just as there is no self-negation, neither is there an abstract or idealized cross, a "cross through the whole world" – only the concrete matter of being handed over by baptism into death, and that death working its way to completion in the particulars of worldly existence. The violent rupture which Przywara opposes to a true doctrine of analogy is not quite as he describes.

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[72] This is fairly typical of the Luther Renaissance, motivated by the rediscovery of the Romans lectures. The outlines of Luther's development through the 1510s did not come into clearer view until the 1960s.

[73] Zechmeister is correct that Przywara's incautious reading together of early and late Luther texts is a weakness in his analysis. *Gottes-Nacht*, 219.

What Przywara misidentifies is also in significant part a transitional step in Luther's complex reception of the Dionysian tradition. The difference between the meaning of negation at this relatively early stage and in Luther's mature thought will show itself in what amounts to both a radicalization and rejection of Dionysian apophaticism. Przywara is correct to recognize an instability between this stage in which some form of "ascent within/as descent" still holds, and the later Luther of the concrete, preached word. Ironically, while Przywara admires the latter, it is the former who stands closer and is thus more recognizable to his own understanding of analogy. Przywara is also correct that Luther is finally not an analogical thinker, but has misunderstood where negation, and so analogy, comes to its end in Luther. Identifying that end will specify the difference between the *imago Dei* as analogical and as preached.

III. Preached Image

While the previous chapter described the development and essential characteristics of Luther's account of the *imago Dei*, including something of the role of divine hiddenness in that account, its difference from an analogical account was merely implied. The comparison to analogy is not an arbitrary choice, but strongly suggested by Luther's own theological development through and beyond the tradition of Dionysian mysticism, which forms a key component of the modern concept of the analogy of being. The manner of that movement beyond, critical to Luther's mature theology, has important consequences for his understanding of language, of the concept of analogy, and for the strongly eschatological character of his work. The following sections describe those features and allow for a more precise statement of the difference between Luther and Przywara (and beyond Przywara, *any* possible analogical account) on the image of God.

1. Luther and Dionysius

Luther's relation to apophatic theology and the Dionysian corpus has received some recent attention, much of it revising an older judgment that Luther simply rejects Pseudo-Dionysius.[74] Not in question is that Luther was familiar with this tradition, and at some point saw considerable merit in it; neither is it much disputed that Luther's eventual stance constitutes a substantial critique of Dionysian mysticism. Further specifying the nature of negation and affirmation in Luther's mature theology will not only show his relation to Dionysius, but clarify the point of departure for his own teaching on hiddenness and proclamation in relation to analogy.

a. Encounters with the Tradition

Engagement with the Dionysian tradition comes through multiple pathways for Luther. In the first place, he had studied the Dionysian corpus extensively, enough to have committed significant sections to memory. This is visible in *Against Latomus*, written in 1521 during his protective confinement in the Wartburg castle, and aimed against the Leuven theologian Jacobus Masson (Latomus). Lacking a library during this period, Luther comments, "I have only the Bible with me," and then proceeds to correct Latomus from memory on terminology used in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, book VII.[75] The influence of Dionysian rhetorical style is sometimes apparent in Luther even when it has little theological bearing; throughout his career he employs terms and phrases borrowed from the tradition. The title of his *Answer to the Hyper-christian, Hyper-spiritual, Hyper-learned Book of Goat Emser at Leipzig - Including Some*

[74] Recent works include Paulson, "Luther's Antidote to Apophatic Theology." Rittgers, "Martin Luther." Malysz, "Luther and Dionysius." Alfsvåg, "Luther as a reader of Dionysius the Areopagite." For the older view, Vogelsang, "Luther und die Mystik."
[75] LW 32, 259. WA 8, 128.

Thoughts Regarding his Companion, the Fool Murner is amusingly Dionysian.[76] Luther, like anyone else, was most comfortable joking and insulting with what he knew well.

Beyond this direct engagement, Luther was also steeped in a tradition of Dionysius reception, familiar with at least some commentaries on Dionysius,[77] and well-read in various mystical theologies drawing on Dionysius. He had read and generally admired Bonaventure, but even more had engaged some of the Rhein mystics: Johannes Tauler and the anonymous author of the *Theologia Germanica*.[78] These mediations of Dionysius sought to supplement his thought by interpreting it christologically, most particularly by assimilating his concept of negation to the cross and the Christian life.[79] Luther received this tradition enthusiastically, and for a time it appeared dominant in his theology. It is important to recognize that Luther often distinguished between this form of mysticism and Dionysius himself, such that he could directly criticize Dionysius while remaining to a significant degree within the Dionysian tradition.

Finally, Luther became acquainted with a strand of early modern criticism which focused on the historical question of whether Dionysius was in actuality the Areopagite of Acts 17:34, and so a true apostolic father, or a late antique Christian Neoplatonist writing pseudonymously. This criticism was transmitted to Luther from the investigations of Lorenzo Valla, who demonstrated the impossibility of Dionysius' language in a 1st century setting. The vehicle for this transmission was Erasmus, who included Valla's arguments in a note on Acts 17:34 in his 1516 edition of the Greek New Testament[80], where it became known to Luther during the period of the composition of his Romans lectures (1515-

[76] Dionysius also appears in the book when Luther lists him among those engaging in a hermeneutical distinction between literal and spiritual meaning that Luther views as flawed. LW 39, 175-176. WA 7, 647-648.
[77] Alfsvåg, "Luther as a reader of Dionysius the Areopagite," 107.
[78] Rittgers, "Martin Luther", 34-40.
[79] This interpretation of Dionysius goes back to John of Scythopolis. Rorem, *The Dionysian Mystical Theology*, 103, 116-118.
[80] Ibid., 110f.

1516). Denuded of his status as a student of Paul, pseudo-Dionysius could be much more easily seen by Luther as a rather late Platonist,[81] allowing for a much easier dismissal of the structure described in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*,[82] but also leading to suspicion of the entire theology as inadequately Christian.

A considerable part of Luther's early theological development may be traced by way of his responses to these strands. Confusion regarding this development has in part resulted from a failure to distinguish, as Luther does, a "pure" Dionysian theology from the christological apophaticism he lauds in Tauler, etc., and likewise from the presence of harsh criticism of Dionysius alongside persistent elements of obviously Dionysian origin. Steven Paulson has recently described this development in three stages: First, an early response to the Dionysian theology, which is apparent in his *Dictata* on the Psalms (1513-1515). Second, a christological critique, in which negation becomes concrete and personal in the word of the cross, as is visible in the Romans lectures (1515-1516) and their attendant theology of humility. Third, a radicalization of Dionysian negation, such that both the human sinner and God are negated in the form of the law, and God can only be found outside the law (*Deus ist ex lex*)[83], not in apophatic silence but in cataphatic speech - the self-giving God in the promise that follows the law's negation.[84]

The chronology of these stages is rough, as one can observe slippage back and forth for a time. However, by the early 1520s the structure of the final form is secure, and remains normative for Luther's theology through the end of his career. Thus, his mature theology removes itself from Dionysian apophaticism, and so from analogy, by breaking the Platonic structure of ascent in a complete

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[81] More specifically, Dionysius' direct reliance on Proclus (412-485) has been amply demonstrated in the modern period. Ibid., 23-24.
[82] Karlfried Froehlich, "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century," 41-42.
[83] WA 16, 142.
[84] Paulson, "Luther's Antidote to Apophatic Theology." Strictly speaking, Paulson identifies the first step with the beginning of Luther's movement away from Dionysius, in the critique that the Dionysian mystics had not really felt the negation of the law in a personal way: "They wrote as they felt, but they felt nothing of the death that God himself was delivering to them." WA 5, 163.

negation and giving itself over entirely to God in his descending words. Przywara's intuitions of Luther are not far off the mark, but inhibited by an inadequate grasp of the stages of development, and an unfortunate blurring of the second and third forms.

b. Early Development

Luther's early Dionysian theology shows an ultimate refusal of speech, as in his comments on Psalm 60: "God does not address Himself to the ears as man does, but only to the heart. Therefore, since the voice of man cannot speak to the heart but only to the ears, it follows that the heart only *erupts* with the Word and does not *speak* it, for God alone speaks it, and He alone speaks to the heart."[85] Similarly, in reference to Psalm 65: "Second, in accordance with the ecstatic and negative theology, by means of which God is praised in a way beyond expression and by being silent because of the amazement and wonder induced by His majesty, so that now the worshiper feels that not only every word is less than His praise, but also that every thought is inferior to His praise."[86] Words and thoughts are inadequate, and the true praise of God, as with true theology, is "beyond expression." "Therefore a frequent word in Dionysius is *hyper*, for beyond every thought one must simply step into the fog..."[87]

For the early Luther the negative way, the way of ever greater difference, is "altogether perfect." Affirmative theology by contrast knows nothing: "For, as I have said, the affirmative theology is like milk to wine in relation to the negative theology. This cannot be treated in a disputation and with much speaking, but must be done in the supreme repose of the mind and in silence, as in a rapture and ecstasy. This is what makes a true theologian."[88] Yet, peculiarly, a contrary view is already expressed not much further on in the early Psalms lectures:

[85] LW 10, 294. WA 3, 348.
[86] LW 10, 313. WA 3, 372.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.

> For [in the first advent] it was not yet manifested to the eyes, but only to the ears, that Christ is God. Hence he does not say "do not be hidden" but "do not keep silence" that is, "bring it about that the proclamation of You as God is not silent but is preached publicly and as much as possible." Thus now our God comes manifestly not to the eyes but to the ears. Why? Because there follows: "Our God comes and does not keep silence" (Ps. 50:3). For He is not silent, but He speaks throughout the world in His preachers and manifests Himself to all for hearing. But then He will also manifest Himself for seeing, when every eye will see Him to whom it is now said: "O God, do not conceal Yourself, do not hide."[89]

Following the reference to Psalm 50 in this comment, Luther includes a marginal note: "then he will not only not be silent, but he will also not be hidden." Leaving aside the premature appearance of this theology, the contrast with Pseudo-Dionysius could not be starker. Rather than speech giving way to silence, Luther reads the Psalmist as declaring that silence gives way to divine speech - a divine speech that is public and conveyed through human preachers. The eschatological difference is not that of an endlessly increasing movement into and beyond silence (a hyper-silence), but of speech that is also accompanied by sight. Hiddenness is negated once and for all.

What accounts for this negation of negation in Luther, such that the very structure of ascent and descent comes to an end? The christological revision of Dionysius by itself did not entail such a radical step as that - at least, it had not for John of Scythopolis, Maximus, Bonaventure, or Tauler. The experiential stress of Luther's theology, in continuity with his reading of the Rhein mystics, requires that negation proceed beyond the abstract negation of predicates. It must become an actual negation of the person, even of life itself, as the human is subject to the cross. This aspect of Luther's thought is retained to the end, and expressed in his later remark that, "Living, no, dying and being damned makes a

[89] LW 11, 118-119. WA 3, 628.

theologian, not thinking, reading, or speculating."[90] The charge against "speculating" encompasses various forms of mysticism, but includes the Dionysian strain. In the Romans lectures Luther makes his critical response to Dionysius clear when he inveighs against "those who follow the mystical theology and struggle in inner darkness, omitting all pictures of Christ's suffering, wishing to hear and contemplate only the uncreated Word Himself..."[91]

Luther expects the uncreated Word only to be encountered by those who have first been purified through the incarnate Word, but the relation of the two movements remains obscure. It is finally in that relation - in the relation of silence and speech, apophatic and cataphatic theologies bound up here with the conception of the Word as uncreated and incarnate, that Luther's mature thinking will emerge. At this transitional stage, the essential matter is that Dionysian negation is personalized and concretized, identified with the cross and so with God hidden *sub contrario*: "For what is good for us is hidden, and that so deeply that it is hidden under its opposite... So also our life is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3), that is, in the negation of all things which can be felt, held, and comprehended by our reason."[92]

The theology of the Hebrews lectures (1517-1518) may be seen in certain respects as a further development of the Christological line taken in the Romans. On a few occasions[93] negative or mystical theology is invoked positively, with the apparent difference from the Romans consisting in a reconciliation of Luther's theology of Christian experience and his Christology with Dionysius. Thus, Luther can assert that "Dionysius calls the last type *alogos*, that is, illogical, namely, because it can be communicated or grasped neither by word nor by reason but only by experience."[94]

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[90] WA 5, 163.
[91] LW 25, 287. WA 56, 299.
[92] LW 25, 382-383. WA 56, 392-393.
[93] LW 29, 162-163; WA 57, 159. LW 29, 179; WA 57, 179. Alfsvåg, "Luther as a reader of Dionysius the Areopagite," 104-105.
[94] LW 29, 179. WA 57, 179.

Similarly, the *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518) expresses both a concrete, christological negation and an explicit movement toward Plato, in whom Luther finds negation in its most general and abstract form. So in thesis 20, "He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and rearward parts [*posteriora*] of God seen through suffering and the cross," and in the explanation to thesis 21, "...through the cross works are destroyed and the old Adam, who is especially edified by works, is crucified."[95] The negation of the cross means the destruction of human ambition, will, and works. This is part of Luther's assault on the theological use of Aristotle, an assault extended into philosophy in the final part of the disputation, as in thesis 36: "Aristotle wrongly finds fault with and derides the philosophy of Platonic ideas, which is better than his own."[96] What intrigues Luther about Plato is the participation of all things in the One, which is connected with the concept of negation: "The second part is clear from Plato in the Parmenides, where, in a most beautiful disputation, he first extracts the One and Idea, until he takes away all things from it and leaves it to be nothing. Then he clothes it again with everything, until nothing is left in which the One is not, and nothing is which is not established in the One."[97]

In this intermediate stage, Luther hopes that participation in the divine essence may come through negation itself. He has not shaken free of the implication that, since union with God is by negation of all outward things, it must ultimately be without external mediation - the incarnate word appears to act as a husk or vehicle, which is eventually discarded. Here, Przywara's accusation that Luther is "wordless" is correct, and this constitutes a devastating critique of the early Luther.

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[95] LW 31:40, 53. WA 1, 354, 362.
[96] WA 1, 355. Cf. LW 31:42. *Aristoteles male reprehendit ac ridet Platonicarum idearum meliorem sua philosophiam.* This is mistranslated in LW, obscuring the technical specificity of 'ideas' and omitting the word philosophy.
[97] WA 59, 426.

c. Dionysius Negated

By 1520 and the *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, this picture has altered substantially. Luther attacks Dionysius, not only openly speaking of his pseudonymity ("this Dionysius, whoever he may have been…"[98]) and dismissing his view of the sacraments in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* and speculations on angels in the *Celestial Hierarchy*, but attacking the *Mystical Theology* itself: "But in his Theology, which is rightly called Mystical, of which certain very ignorant theologians make so much, he is downright dangerous, for he is more of a Platonist than a Christian. So if I had my way, no believing soul would give the least attention to these books. So far, indeed, from learning Christ in them, you will lose even what you already know of him."[99] From this point on, one finds a structure of negation and affirmation in Luther, but a persistent rejection of Dionysius.

The evidence of this shift is found especially in the *Operationes in Psalmos* (1519-1521), where the theology of promise that had emerged in the indulgence controversy and Luther's engagement with Cajetan spills out forcefully in relation to speech and silence: ""For the object of faith and of hope is God the free promiser, or the word that promises itself and nothing else! But unless it is observed always and everywhere; hope must at once necessarily fall, just as the house falls which is built upon the sand when the winds and waters rush in. For upon this rock of promise and infallible word the church of Christ is built."[100] This word in its external mediation is itself the object of faith and hope, and identical with God who promises freely.

In consequence, ascent is reconsidered in opposition to Dionysius. Late in his career, Luther comments on God's appearance to Abraham in Genesis 17, rejecting the tradition of extraordinary divine appearances as inconsequential

[98] LW 36, 109. WA 6, 562.
[99] Ibid.
[100] WA 5, 175.

compared to the ordinary converse of God through earthly means: "I suppose, however, that some appearances, like those related about Dionysius and others, are true. Yet they are of no concern to me. It is not that I utterly despise them; it is because I know that they are nothing in comparison with Baptism, the Lord's Supper, yes, even in comparison with a godly conversation which I can have with any godly brother. For these appearances are available to all and most reliable, and they cannot deceive... These are our own appearances, and we justly value them most highly, for through them we know God and obtain eternal life."[101] The reference is likely to Letter Eight, which begins by speaking of Moses' vision of God, and concludes by relating the story of a heavenly vision granted to one Carpos of Crete.[102] Luther does not oppose vision to a further movement into the divine darkness, a hyper-vision. Rather, he privileges simple hearing, which is concrete fullness of presence, and so embraces the mediate over the immediate: "Actually our glory in the New Testament is greater. We not only have God drawing near to us; we also have Him dwelling in us bodily. But if His Person is not manifest in such a way that we see Him face to face, yet His Word and works are manifest."[103]

Further on in the Genesis lectures, Luther clarifies the consequences for the doctrine of God. Dionysius maintains a sharp distinction between the imparticipable divine essence and the qualities in which creatures participate. Rejecting this distinction, Luther holds that God works all things mediately, and that the "externals" which God has established are the instruments of the Spirit and "included in the Word":

> In the schools they recite the statement of Dionysius that God works through His essence but that we work through a quality that has flowed

[101] LW 3, 166-167. WA 42, 667.
[102] Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, 269-280.
[103] LW 3, 169. WA 1, 669.

> down.[104] But who will understand this? He, however, who properly adheres to the canon we have set up can judge the pope and the world in all their wisdom, namely, that God regularly does everything through the ministry of human beings. Therefore nobody will obtain salvation through so-called spiritual speculations, without external things. Attention must be paid to the Word, and Baptism must be sought. The Eucharist must be received, and absolution must be required. All these are indeed externals, but they are included in the Word. Hence the Holy Spirit works nothing without them.[105]

Luther enters a similar, if even more pointed judgment against the Dionysian theology in his first Antinomian Disputation, concluding that Dionysius, "taught that humans can converse and deal with the inscrutable, eternal majesty of God in this mortal, corrupt flesh without mediation."[106] This may strike a reader as inaccurate if the sense of "in this mortal, corrupt flesh" is not properly understood. Luther's accusation against Dionysius is double. First, that refusing concrete mediation, only immediate converse with God is open, a position he judges as fanatical. Second, that the very negation Dionysius applies, that which removes all external media, is incomplete, for it leaves intact the self in its journey of mystical ascent. The "mortal, corrupt flesh" in Luther's thinking is not merely the body, but the old self which sinfully seeks God without means.

The passage on the Dionysian theology in the *Operationes in Psalmos* concludes with Luther's famous declaration that "The cross alone is our theology." This is the true and complete negation, which destroys and condemns all:

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[104] Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, 869D, in *Complete Works*, 108-109. "It might be more accurate to say that we cannot know God in his nature, since this is unknowable and is beyond the reach of mind or of reason. But we know him from the arrangement of everything, because everything is ,in a sense, projected out from him, and this order possesses certain images and semblances of his divine paradigms.... Of him there is conception, reason, understanding, touch, perception, opinion, imagination, name, and many other things. On the other hand he cannot be understood, words cannot contain him, and no name can lay hold of him."

[105] LW 3, 274-275. WA 43, 71-72.

[106] LW 73, 92. WA 39.I, 389–390.

> Entering into darkness and gloom, I see nothing; I live by faith, hope and charity alone, and I am weak (that is, I suffer), for when I am weak, then I am stronger. The mystical theologians call this going into darkness to ascend above being and non-being. But I do not know whether they understand themselves, if they attribute it to the elicited actions, and not rather believe that the sufferings of death and hell are signified by the cross. The CROSS alone is our theology.[107]

The accusation is of a secret positivity in the mystical theology - despite stripping away everything outward, the journey of ascent itself remains, a journey which Luther identifies with a conformity or obedience to the law in its highest form. On the contrary, the cross - God's active negation of the sinner - damns and throws into hell. The purpose of the law is not as a vehicle of ascent but in this work of negation, a point made as early as thesis 23 of the *Heidelberg Disputation*: "The law brings the wrath of God, kills, reviles, accuses, judges, and condemns everything that is not in Christ."[108]

However, even "everything that is not in Christ" would finally prove an inadequate statement of the law's negation. The teaching on exchange so admired by Przywara comes to its full expression in the Galatians lectures, where Luther lays out his understanding of Galatians 3:13 - "Therefore Christ not only was crucified and died, but by divine love sin was laid upon Him. When sin was laid upon Him, the Law came and said: "Let every sinner die! And therefore, Christ, if You want to reply that You are guilty and that You bear the punishment, you must bear the sin and the curse as well." Therefore Paul correctly applies to Christ this general Law from Moses: "Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree." Christ hung on a tree; therefore Christ is a curse of God."[109] The cross' negation applies especially to Christ himself, and so under the law, even God is negated.

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[107] WA 5, 176.
[108] LW 31, 41. WA 1, 354.
[109] LW 26, 279. WA 40.I, 436.

Having crossed out both God and human, no structure remains within which anyone may ascend to God. Thus, the point made in the first of the Heidelberg theses: "The law of God, the most salutary doctrine of life, cannot advance man on his way to righteousness, but rather hinders him."[110] The killing (negating) power of the law applies "to every law, even the holiest law of God." Law is thus exhausted of all possibility, and the structure of Dionysian negation is broken. Luther denies any movement beyond (*hyper*) into the divine darkness, as the place of negative ascending encounter with God outside of sensible means. What emerges instead is the worldly, mediated, descending speech of God apart from the law, which comes by a promise received in the darkness of faith.

While Luther's journey through Dionysius does constitute a degree of positive learning and development, and certainly more than a mere "exercise in contrasts,"[111] his radicalization of negation produces a theology at odds with the apophatic tradition, even in its various Christological refinements.[112] Przywara's judgment that Luther has escaped the grasp of Plato is proven correct.[113] Piotr Malysz helpfully observes the Dionysian influence in Luther, but to some degree misidentifies the continuation of an exit-return schema.[114] Knut Alfsvåg errs more significantly in asserting an unbroken Platonic structure to Luther, stretching back to the use of the *Parmenides* in the *Heidelberg Disputation*.[115] Rather, the negation of the cross cuts off any possibility of straightforward "return." Instead of a return to the source (ascent), God is known in a continued descent into things, which are in turn not offered directly back to God in himself but pushed outward in communication with other creatures, so that the divine encounter is always mediate and descending. What remains is not a Platonic framework at all, and certainly not the Proclean imparticipability of divine

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[110] LW 31, 39. WA 1, 353.
[111] Bernard McGinn, "Vere tu es Deus absconditus," 100.
[112] Paul Rorem correctly traces some of Luther's development, but does not address the break from Dionysius through negation of the law. Rorem, *The Dionysian Mystical Theology*, 101-119.
[113] Przywara, Humanitas, 365.
[114] Malysz, "Luther and Dionysius."
[115] Alfsvåg, "Luther as a reader of Dionysius the Areopagite," and *What No Mind Has Conceived*, 177-260.

essence adopted by Dionysius, but a radically cataphatic word - a promise, which is the giving of God's own self.

Marius Mjaaland approaches the final turn into the cataphatic in Luther, but is obstructed by a flawed understanding of the distinction between God preached and not-preached. On one level, Mjaaland's error results from a failure to grasp Luther's Latin. He translates Luther's phrase in *Bondage of the Will* as a distinction between God predicated and not-predicated, rather than preached and not-preached.[116] While *praedicare* is etymologically cognate with "to predicate", its usual sense in a late medieval ecclesial context is preaching. In losing the primary sense of human speech, Mjaaland reconceives Luther's distinction as having to do with a text (the Bible) and the relation between signifier and signified.[117] Presenting the distinction as if it concerned God hidden outside and within scripture (though Luther repeatedly identifies the dynamic within scripture) leads to a conclusion regarding the ambiguity of textual interpretation. "Every time the name of God is mentioned, the negative theology of Dionysius recurs, as a destabilization of the -distinctions drawn within the text."[118] Hiddenness is not overcome; instead a difference between God hidden outside and hidden within scripture precedes and is the condition of possibility of all speech about God, persisting as an instability within such speech. Not escaping Dionysius, Mjaaland's Luther ends up in closer proximity to a succession of modern thinkers, culminating in Derrida:

> The significance of Derrida's grammatology for a rereading of the deus absconditus in Luther lies in his emphasis on writing as difference rather than the identity of the same. The absolute origin in the deus is thus already preceded by the difference between abscondity and appearance, an unheard-of difference prior to all references to the word, the logos, etc.

[116] Mjaaland, *The Hidden God*, 69-70.
[117] Ibid., 90.
[118] Ibid., 98.

> And this difference is presupposed by scripture, as the "arche-scriptural" difference.[119]

Luther's argument is not about texts, but that inquiry and striving end in the real (not semantic) negation of the cross, and then the true God gives himself completely to faith in ordinary human words. These two words cannot be collapsed into a single, duplicitous hiddenness.

2. Language after Analogy

The structure of descending affirmation and ascending negation is central to the analogy of being, and to that extent analogy's inapplicability to Luther has been demonstrated. However, Luther's understanding of language must still be set forth positively. While promise has been used as a governing concept, key texts on language do not employ that term, and so their relation to promise must be probed. Further, it remains to be shown whether Luther's notion of a verbal promise which speaks God without negation is not merely a concession to a univocal concept of being. Thus, Luther's relation to the traditional alternatives of equivocity, univocity, and analogy must be stated explicitly. The role of eschatology is decisive; Luther's view of language finds its coherence in its eschatological outlook, wherein it is most clearly distinguished from Przywara's theology, and so from an analogical interpretation of the *imago Dei*.

Luther does not give a single, unified account of language. In various places he comments on it from different vantage points and employs somewhat diverse vocabulary. For the purposes of this study, several texts will be coordinated in describing Luther's view. Each is well-known, but discussions of language in these texts do not always bring them into direct contact with one another and with the rest of Luther's theology in the manner attempted here. Our question pertains to the nature of language from a theological perspective. The much-

[119] Ibid., 134.

debated matters of Luther's logic and semantics are important in their own right, but to a certain extent tangential to the present discussion. While this analysis may be read in light of that conversation, and even offer certain cautions, the philosophical register of that debate - including the approach to what Luther intended by calling theology a *nova lingua* - limits its theological perspective somewhat. The basic assumption that Luther draws heavily upon the late medieval logic and semantics of the likes of Ockham and Pierre D'Ailly is nevertheless here unchallenged.

a. Human Words as Divine Words - the Confession Concerning Christ's Supper (1528)

The first text to be considered, from the *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*,[120] addresses Huldrych Zwingli's understanding of the *verba* in the Lord's Supper, and offers a basic distinction between kinds of divine words and their function in human speech. Luther notes the terms by which Zwingli has classified the words of the Supper, principally command-word (*heissende wort*) and action-word (*tätliche wort)*, though he ignores a third term of promise-word (*verheissende wort)*. That Luther does not employ the term 'promise' in this section may be less a matter of theology than rhetoric - he avoids using a word which Zwingli has employed quite differently.[121] In any case, Luther is indifferent to Zwingli's distinctions, his concern pointing in another direction: "Let Zwingli regard the words in the Supper as he will, be they command-words or permission-words, action-words or written words; it doesn't matter to me. But I ask this one question: Are these same action-words of Christ false or true words? If they are lying words, let Christ himself be responsible for them; they do not concern us. But if they are true words, then we confidently reply: Even

[120] For the whole passage, LW 37:180-187. WA 26, 282-287.
[121] Luther skirts promise with Zwingli, but the term appears in his response to Oecolampadius: "For the new testament is promise, indeed, much more: the bestowal of grace and the forgiveness of sin, i.e. the true gospel." LW 37, 325. WA 26, 468.

the fanatical spirit must acknowledge that Christ gave his body in the Supper."[122] However the word is classified, it is either false or true, and in such a case as the *verba* of the Supper, truth depends entirely on whether Christ here gives his body or not.

At this point, Luther makes a comparison to the words of creation: "For they are action-words which Christ spoke at the first administration, and he did not lie, when he said, "Take, eat, this is my body," just as the sun and moon came to be when he said, Genesis 1[:14], "Let there be a sun and a moon," and it was no lying word." The nature of these words is that their truth depends not on their reference, but on their power, "not merely a word of imitation (*Nachwort*, an afterword or epilogue), but a word of power (*Machtwort*) which accomplishes what it expresses."[123]

While Luther does not use the word 'promise,' he connects the Sacrament to the words of creation, indicating a similar mode of operation. The word accomplishes what it expresses, such that there is no separation between signifier and signified.[124] This is an important conclusion for at least two reasons. First, it establishes that falsehood, and so negation, differs from its ordinary sense with respect to this divine creative word. "This is my body" is taken to be true on the same grounds that "Let there be a sun and a moon" is true: only if the word gives (and so has power to give), the thing it says. Such a word would be false if it could point but not create or do. What Luther takes as axiomatic - that God does not lie - means precisely that God's words are necessarily true in this sense. Truth is bound to God the creator. Therefore, there is no negation in the sacramental word, which is unconditional presence.

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[122] LW 37, 181. WA 26, 282.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Cf. Bayer, who identifies this as Luther's Reformation breakthrough expressed hermeneutically. While the notion that words could be effective under certain circumstances was a scholastic commonplace, the identity of *signum* and *res* within an unconditional promise was not. Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 52f.

Second, human words may, in some circumstances, be spoken with just this certainty attached to them. Luther affirms that human speech does not ordinarily have such power, and has no notion of the syllables themselves as magical: "For example, in Matthew 21[:21] stands an action-word (*thettel wort*): the disciples were to say, "Be taken up and cast into the sea." If anyone simply said these words, of course nothing would come of it and it would remain simply a declarative (*thettel wort*)." What differentiates the words from ordinary declaratives is their inclusion in a divine command: "But because Christ embraces it in an imperative (*heissel wort*), saying, "If you shall say to this mountain in faith, 'Be taken up,' etc.," then truly it is no longer a declarative (*thettel wort*), but what it declares comes to be, as long as it is spoken in accordance with his command."[125]

The relation of this command to the human repetition of the words should not be construed as if the former were purely an extrinsic power alongside rather than in the words, as in certain scholastic theories of efficacious words.[126] The words themselves are changed by their inclusion in a divine command, and are spoken precisely on this basis: "Now if the action-words (*thettel-wort*) stand in a context of imperatives (*heissel wort*), they are no longer simple declaratives (*thettel wort*) but imperatives (*heissel wort*) also, for everything that the words declare does take place, by the power of the divine imperative (*heissel wort*) through which they are spoken."[127] One should not imagine a divine power added alongside otherwise empty human words, but a divine word within which a human repetition takes place. This intermingling of divine and human words is implied in the remarkable fact that Luther refers to both the *verba* of the Supper and the "Let there be a sun and a moon" of Genesis 1 as words of *Christ*. The words Christ speaks within his earthly ministry are no different from the words

[125] LW 37, 183. WA 26, 284.
[126] Contra Moldenhauer, in reference to Gabriel Biel and a *causa sine qua non*. Moldenhauer, "Analyzing the *Verba Christi*," 60.
[127] LW 37, 183. WA 26, 284.

which first establish creation; those words which other humans speak by his direction are included in, and so are, his own words.[128]

b. New Words - Late Disputations on Theological Language

As a practical matter, human words taken up and spoken as Christ's own appear as a small subset of theological speech. The case of speech *about* God rather than *for* God, and whatever relation holds between them, remains to be considered. The more general case of theological language is addressed in Luther's later disputations, particularly the January 1539 *Disputation on the Sentence: The Word was Made Flesh*[129] and the February 1540 *Disputation on the Divinity and Humanity of Christ*, as well in the *Disputation on Man* (1536).

The Word was Made Flesh is framed in opposition to the stance of the Sorbonne theologians that "the same is true in philosophy and theology."[130] Whereas a syllogism of the form, "Every human is a creature. Christ is a human. Therefore Christ is a creature," appears correct in philosophy, in theology its premises lead to a false conclusion.[131] Luther heads off the objection that this syllogism equivocates on the word human, which cannot be so philosophically or theologically. Rather, the entire sense of human is different in theology. "Oecolampadius says beautifully that human is taken differently here than in the Porphyrian tree."[132] That is, its sense is not exhausted in that combination of genus and specific difference which names the human within scholastic logic: rational animal. Luther further offers that Oecolampadius should have stated in what the difference consists, which is the communication of attributes (*communicatio idiomatum*). "But we say that a human is God, and we witness to

[128] David Steinmetz misinterprets *heissel wort* as an ordinary human word and *thettel wort* as an efficacious divine word (*verbum efficax*). As is apparent from Luther's use, *heissel wort* means instead a divine imperative and *thettel wort* an ordinary declarative. In particular, Luther's use of *thettel wort* is nearly the opposite of Steinmetz's interpretation. *Luther in Context*, 115-116.
[129] WA 39.II, 1-33. LW 38, 239-277.
[130] Thesis 4. WA 39.II, 3. LW 38, 239.
[131] Ibid., 10-11. LW 38, 246.
[132] Ibid., 12. LW 38, 247.

this by the word of God without a syllogism, apart from philosophy; philosophy has nothing to do with our grammar." In the true interchange of God and human, syllogistic reasoning is refused.

In thesis 40, Luther introduces a term at the center of the modern debate over his view of language. It would be better, he says, to leave philosophy to its own sphere and learn to speak "new languages" in the realm of faith beyond every sphere.[133] This caution is extended in the next thesis: "Otherwise we will put new wine into old wineskins and ruin both, as the Sorbonne did." This phrasing appears again in argument twelve of the disputation, as "the philosophical voice in theology becomes entirely new, so that in philosophy 'human' is a subsisting person, but in theology is a certain divinity in Christ."

This language of newness is repeated the following year in the theses of the *Disputation on the Divinity and Humanity of Christ*, wherein Luther attacks Caspar Schwenkfeld's teaching that Christ in his glorified humanity is not a creature. At a surface level these remarks seem to oppose Luther's position on the syllogism cited from the 1539 disputation. However, in each case he means to show the strangeness of what is required of an orthodox expression of Christ's two natures, such that in one circumstance it may be perfectly correct to say, "Christ is a creature," and in another heretical to utter the same sentence. Thus Luther refers to this correct usage as new:

20. Nonetheless it is certain that in Christ all words receive a new signification, though the thing signified is the same.
21. For "creature" in the old usage of language and in other subjects signifies a thing separated from divinity by infinite degrees.
22. In the new use of language it signifies a thing inseparably joined with divinity in the same person in an ineffable way.

[133] Ibid., 5. LW 38, 242.

23. Thus it must be that the words man, humanity, suffered, etc. and everything that is said of Christ, are new words.
24. Not that it signifies a new or different thing, but that it signifies newly and differently, unless you want to call this too a new thing.[134]

"New" indicates that which is in Christ. This does not mean that the Trinity or other classical matters of theology do not fall under the same heading, but that newness specifically belongs to the interchange between the justifying God and the sinful human: Christ himself, and all things comprehended in him. In that sense, theology - as specified by Luther's definition, rather than either scholastic or modern disciplinary boundaries - is a matter of new words. In his response to argument seven from the disputation, this difference between new and old language is described in terms of grammar and the Spirit:

> The Holy Spirit has his own grammar. Grammar is useful everywhere, but when the subject is greater than can be comprehended by the rules of grammar and philosophy, it must be left behind. In grammar, analogy works very well: Christ is created. Therefore Christ is a creature. But in theology, nothing is more useless. Wherefore our eloquence must be restrained, and we must remain content with the patterns prescribed by the Holy Spirit... And the Fathers are to be forgiven, because they spoke thus because of surpassing joy, wondering that the Creator was a creature. It is not permissible to use such words among the weak, because they are easily offended, but among the learned and those firmly rooted in this article, it does not matter how you speak, and I am not harmed if you say: Christ is thirst, humanity, captivity, creature.[135]

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[134] WA 39.II, 94. English translation altered slightly from Christopher B. Brown for Project Wittenberg, taken from http://www.leaderu.com/philosophy/luther-humanitychrist.html 10/7/2021.
[135] Ibid., 104-105.

The list of frameworks called into question grows long: grammar, philosophy, dialectic[136], analogy. Restrained eloquence indicates rhetoric as well, so that the whole Trivium is challenged in light of the new language of theology. These things cannot be left behind permanently, else human language itself would depart and theology would be mute. Rather, they are changed in a fashion that cannot be inferred from ordinary usage. The new language must be heard and received as new and renewing, with utmost attention to the manner in which it gives itself.

"Patterns prescribed by the Holy Spirit" refers to the language of scripture as this giving, but also indicates the link between the divine word of promise in scripture and the broader language of theology in relation to it. This is apparent in the reference to the joy of the church fathers, whose language was reliant upon, but clearly not limited to that of scripture. Luther points to faith as decisive; faith rooted in "this article," the interplay of creature and creator in Christ himself. The weak are not necessarily the less knowledgeable, but the centrality of the chief article of their salvation is not as sure. Consequently, some usage which can benefit the faithful could be a stumbling block to them. The language of scripture and of the direct, divine promises is not a straitjacket for theological expression, but theology must take heed of the way in which it addresses faith, which is the mode of existence of the new creature with ears to hear the new language. This language, addressed to those firmly rooted, may be bold because it proceeds from a point of certainty rather than ambiguity, which is the presence and eschatological certainty of Christ himself. Language which conveys him is new as he is new.

Among other commentators, Dennis Bielfeldt and Graham White have attempted to describe the new language in terms of Luther's use of medieval semantic theories, whether of a purely Ockhamist or nominalist bent (White) or to some

[136] Thesis 21 of the *Disputation on the Sentence: The Word was made Flesh*. "So it is not indeed something contrary to, but is outside, within, above, below, before, and beyond all logical (*dialecticam*) truth." WA 39.II, 4. LW 38, 241.

degree also drawing on older realist frameworks (Bielfeldt).[137] Our concern is more explicitly theological, and should not depend on one or the other specification of these philosophical tools. A set of cautions are in order, however. The degree to which "new" has the sense of an eschatological reality can be obscured within a conversation on semantics. Bielfeldt is correct when he refers to the new language as "radically new," but does not explore this in the direction of eschatology, and so newness could too easily be misunderstood as mere difference.[138] Second, a discussion about truth-conditions and supposition theory focused on the disputations may operate without attention to what Luther has to say about the truth of divine words in the *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*. There, as we noted, the determinative factor is the almighty creative power of Christ's word, and so implicitly, Christ himself as "the truth."[139] This is a properly theological rather than philosophical conception of truth. Finally, appeal to special epistemic access to divine truth through the new language[140] is inadequate to Luther's understanding of divine words as conveying and effecting *things*, not merely an epistemology; to the sense of the believer as a new creature rather than one with repaired or enhanced faculties; and to the hiddenness of those things to the Christian in this life, insofar as the old creature persists.

The matter of new language may be fruitfully compared with Luther's approach in the *Disputation on Man*. There we observe both Luther's use of traditional philosophical definitions and his theological rejection of them. The human is identified not as "rational animal" but as "justified by faith," a definition which rests on the advent of the justifying word as demarcating the division between old and new. The new language of theology depends on this eschatological vantage point and its attendant division of times.

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[137] Bielfeldt, "Luther on Language," and "Luther, Metaphor, and Theological Language." White, *Luther as Nominalist*. Also Cross, *Communicatio Idiomatum*, 53f., affirming White.
[138] Bielfeldt, "Luther on Language," 206.
[139] John 14:6
[140] White, *Luther as Nominalist*, 343. Cf. Bielfeldt, "Luther on Language," 219.

c. Preaching beyond Analogy, Univocity, and Equivocity

The conversation about "new words" shows that Luther's position on the image of God cannot be understood as univocal predication. However, because his distinction is not simply between language pertaining to God and language pertaining to creatures, neither is it equivocal. If theology is, as Luther asserts, "outside, within, above, below, before, and beyond all logical truth,"[141] then the relation between philosophy and theology could even be described as theology in-and-beyond philosophy. Despite his misgivings about Dionysian negation, might this be merely a modified form of analogy, or does it represent an alternative?

Returning to Przywara on the *imago Dei*, we observe again the similarity to and difference from Luther. Przywara asserts both his Dionysian heritage and the Christological corrective he has applied: "As Christ is essentially the descending God, so too the ascent of our 'participation in God' occurs solely through participation in God's descent. The glory of God (the core of deification) is found within the scandal of the cross (the core of redemption)."[142] If Christ's descent is the shape of the Christian life, then of the *imago Dei* as well. Przywara avoids any immediate, wordless exchange with the divine - a wordlessness which names the God of Dionysius rather than of Luther.[143]

However, no matter how great its emphasis on the Christological concrete, the image of God conceived analogically remains a picture of ever greater difference. As such, Przywara's words from a 1926 lecture must hold with respect to human likeness to God: "He is the infinite light that becomes ever more distant the closer we come to him. Every finding is the beginning of a new searching... No morning of mystical marriage is a definitive embrace of His fullness; no mystical

[141] WA 39.II, 4. LW 38, 241.
[142] AE, 368.
[143] "... the good cause of all is both eloquent and taciturn, indeed wordless." Pseudo-Dionysius, Mystical Theology, 3. Complete Works, 136.

night of despair a detachment from his presence... this indissoluble tension of proximity and distance to Him is but the innermost revelation of His own primal mystery, by which He is in us and beyond us..."[144]

There is without doubt an eschatology within this analogy ("every finding is the beginning of a new searching"), but it takes shape within, rather than as conditioning and imposing a horizon on the structure as a whole. To speak of an end - or rather to preach the end, to enact it verbally as the cross applied to the hearer - is to sever the careful suspension of analogy, cutting it in two. That point of division which separates times (old and new) arrives to the hearer in time as a personal apocalypse, and so specifies a definitive "when" and "to whom." Luther admits no "morning of mystical marriage" in the sense of an unmediated union with God, but he insists upon a definitive gift of the divine fullness in the concrete of proclamation. Such gift, in its temporal location and finality, yields for the *imago Dei* an unmistakably eschatological character which applies to the language of the Gospel as a whole.[145] Univocity and analogy name relations which must be subordinated to the eschatological distinction. Similarity and difference are not obviated, movement into the divine life is not denied, but these too must become new words, and so cannot constitute a universal framework. God is ultimately to be found in speech rather than in silence, a conclusion Przywara cannot share.[146]

This contrast between eschatology given shape in the proclamation of the church and analogy as "original structure and universal rhythm" poses a problem relating to the scope of the divine image. Can the human as image and likeness of God ever be said to *be* with any specificity? Or, when is Genesis 1:26-

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[144] Przywara, Schriften vol. 2, 281. Quoted in AE, 60.
[145] On the eschatological character of New Testament language for Luther, Ringleben, "Theological Language in Martin Luther."
[146] Consider the conclusion to the 1932 text of *Analogia Entis*: "Ontically as being and noetically as thought, it is "principally" the mystery of the primordial music of this rhythm - as with the fugues in Bach's "Art of the Fugue," which, interweaving one another, pass beyond themselves into "great silence." The "resonant analogy" is fulfilled in this "silent analogy."" AE, 314.

28 straightforwardly true? Przywara cannot quite say that it happened for the human creature, that it was so, but even more, neither can he say that there will be a time when it is so. Even considering Genesis 1 as eschatologically freighted, with the *imago Dei* pointing forward beyond itself to the ultimate *consortium Dei*, consummation seems impossible in an analogical account of likeness. Its scope is spread to infinity, approaching the concrete as a mathematical curve approaches its asymptote. The individual human is ever becoming the image, so in a significant sense never *is* the image.

Just as the scope of the analogical image is diffuse, its hiddenness is thoroughgoing. Ever greater difference implies hiddenness everywhere, even a paradoxically greater hiddenness as the image is revealed. The absence of an eschatological unveiling undermines the supposed movement toward the concrete of Christian experience, and limits the viability of exchange to express analogy. The answer to the *who?* and *where?* of the divine image is that both must be left to some degree indeterminate except in the Christ-Mary relation itself.

While an objection may be offered that Przywara's analogy leans too hard into negation, it is difficult to see how a much less negative approach would not be vulnerable to criticisms already raised. Regarding the hiddenness and scope of the *imago Dei*, concrete resolution could certainly be purchased by way of a shift toward a hidden univocity, which is the strategy of the spiritual interpretation of the image. Przywara was correct in rejecting that avenue as inadequate to the God of scripture. Ultimately, Przywara's use of Luther has generated an inconsistency: either exchange must remain at a certain abstraction from the Christian, or the *analogia entis* itself is threatened.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter has located Luther's theology of the *imago Dei* outside the bounds of the modern debate over the analogy of being.[147] Luther's theological discovery, not merely applicable to the image of God but identical with it, is a structure of mediation more concrete than analogy, and utterly cataphatic: the Spirit's delivery of the preached (human, liturgical, material) word of promise. In this sense the divine image really is a true *imago Trinitatis* - not as a picture of the Trinity in the human soul, but as an event of Trinitarian speaking that is the whole life of the human. On account of this Trinitarian speech, it is of the essence of language to bring about new things. There simply must be "new words," or there is no creation at all, and no language.

This creative aspect of language in Luther has, since the last decades of the 20th century, often been described in comparison with modern linguistic philosophy and its conceptions of speech as performative.[148] Such comparisons can be helpful, but care should be taken not to obscure language's essentially theological character by their use. Philosophical theories of language do not discuss creation, nor do they countenance eschatology. The categorization of a speech act as performative rather than constative shows a tendency to set these on equal footing, or even to privilege the latter as a more basic state of affairs; words describe, and sometimes, under special circumstances, they also do things. At least with divine speech, this cannot be the case. Words are instruments of creation, because the Word creates. No explanation of how this might be is given or required. The connection between words and things is assumed, apparent in Genesis 1 and beyond. What requires explanation is the peculiar disjunction between the language of human sinners and divine speech.

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[147] In particular, outside the debate between the heirs of Przywara and Barth, as well as outside that account of modernity which lays blame at the feet of Duns Scotus for a univocal understanding of being.

[148] This is particularly the case since Oswald Bayer's recognition that what he had previously described in *Promissio* bore some comparison with the linguistic philosophies of J.L. Austin and Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Speech as it is known to us manifests a gap between words and things; it is envervated speech, a lie. The connection between language and humanity - as observed in the apophatic and cataphatic dimensions of the *imago Dei* - is illustrated in the conjunction of fallen humanity with empty language, culminating in Babel, and in the promise which is the restoration of each (illustrated in Pentecost). The biblical mystery is not how to do things with words, but how it came to be that they do so little, and how they will do everything again.

From this perspective, the teaching on the analogy of being represents a comprehensive attempt to negotiate just this connection of the life of the human with language, and the strange disconnection in which each finds itself. If from Luther's perspective the attempt fails, this is in part because analogical metaphysics assumes too much of that emptying of words into its basic constitution, taking it as innate to the act of creation rather than as the unfathomable consequence of sin. This assumption, in various guises, haunts modern theology, and is manifest in recent accounts of the divine image. The final chapter therefore takes up Johann Georg Hamann, following in Luther's train on language and creation, in order to address the implicit opposition and silence between God and the human.

Chapter 5
Speaking God and Human: The Divine Image as Address

I. Introduction

Protestant theology has largely accepted Luther's objection to the image of God as a dimmed but identifiable divine outpost in the human, but little else of his approach. The distinction between God preached and not-preached, which for Luther guarantees God's intimacy with creatures, is ignored or rejected. Instead, fearing a collapse of divinity into the creaturely sphere, theology has often wrapped whatever it receives from Luther in a radicalized form of the classical distinction between creature and creator. Within this distinction, opposition between God and humans is rendered safe by imposing distance in the form of an ontological gap or chasm. This produces theologies without concrete communication or mediation, in which the divine address to the creature falls silent and the divine image is impossible to locate in humans.

An alternative presents itself in embracing rather than denying communication. Creator and creature are not collapsed, but properly distinguished, when mediation is taken as thoroughgoing. Creatures are because God addresses them, and God addresses them through and in other creatures. Within such an account, no ontological chasm is posited, and the human image of God may be communicated clearly.

The first part of this chapter centers upon the divine image in recent Protestant theology, tracing out a common[1] refusal of the human image of God. To the extent that hiddenness and scope are resolved within these accounts, they are resolved negatively with respect to humans, in a series of gestures intended to

[1] That is, frequent but not universal. For example, Marc Cortez's account of the image as humanity received in Christ assumes communication. However, Cortez does not focus on the manner of this communication or on the image as hidden, and so offers limited help in understanding those structural issues.

limit communication and preserve a maximal distinction between creature and creator. A modern alternative to this impulse is considered in Johann Georg Hamann, who follows in Luther's train by identifying creation with the communication of attributes, and so conceives the human as *imago Dei* in light of the expressly verbal, christological unity of God and creation.

II. Mind the Gap - Original Negation

Theologians often argue that to whatever extent humans may be called images of God, this differs in some important respect from the sense in which Christ is called the image. This argument is motivated by a desire to preserve the unique relationship between Christ and the Father, that is, to protect divine transcendence - a motive equally evidenced in various christological formulations. In each case, it is the distinction between created and uncreated, or infinite and finite, which generates the caution. The connection between Christology and the *imago Dei* is unavoidable, as in their close association of God and human, both provoke a metaphysical tradition which treats the distinction between infinite and finite as basic. While an account of the image does not wholly determine Christology, or vice versa, the Bible's naming Jesus as the image of God necessitates their mutual shaping and expression of a common sensibility as to the God-world relation.

This sensibility is apparent in terms describing the distinction between God and creatures through a metaphor of spatial distance. It implies an infinite qualitative difference, intended to exclude any middle term between the opposed pair. What is striking about such formulations is the degree to which their caution struggles with common biblical language. Interpreters of Genesis 1 bear a burden of explaining why the single letter of a Hebrew prepositional prefix, intriguing in its polysemy, *must* be read as a space between the human as such and Christ the image (i.e., "according to" rather than "as"). Here we recall that the Priestly theology of Genesis 1 distinguishes between God and creatures without a space, indeed, understanding humanity's proper office as the mediation of divine

presence within creation's sanctuary. In accounts of the *imago Dei* which presume an ontological gap, interpretation of the Bible rests to a great extent on that prior theological assessment of the God-world relation, which the biblical image of God is thus not permitted to challenge.

The following section evaluates the approaches of Kathryn Tanner, David Kelsey, and Rowan Williams as contemporary Protestant[2] theologians who have made significant recent contributions to the conversation on the divine image, or in Williams' case, to a christological appraisal of the God-world relationship. For each there is an implication of distance, expressed variously at the levels of creation, anthropology, or Christology, which indicates an essential negation between creator and creature. This negation stifles communication, so that the divine image cannot be straightforwardly spoken to and of ordinary humans. The differences among those accounts, while significant, are not as revealing as the underlying similarity, which points to a characteristically modern refusal of divine speech. It is that refusal which Hamann addresses at its root, and so opens up the possibility of an alternative modern account of the image.

1. Kathryn Tanner

Tanner's account in *Christ the Key*[3] falls among those which take 'image of God' to refer to Christ, and only secondarily to humans in relation to him, specifying that the image is a divine rather than human predicate. Arguing that human nature is not well understood in isolation from Christ, Tanner dismisses spiritual and relational interpretations. These do not escape the temptation to consider human nature in itself, as even a relational view remains merely the inference of some relational capacity analogous to Trinitarian relations.[4] Instead, Tanner's

[2] An unusual way to refer to Williams, but here apt, given his account's reliance on Calvin.
[3] Supplemented by two essays sharing material with it, "Grace without Nature," and "Creation and Salvation in the Image of an Incomprehensible God."
[4] CK, 1-4. Her criticism of the spiritual interpretation errs in supposing it to be a conception of humans as imaging God "generally," without Trinitarian specification. Spiritual interpretations depend upon a particular understanding of the Logos, even in their origin in the non-Trinitarian

impulse is toward "a much more radical deflection from preoccupation with the human nature itself," a reading which she finds realized in several early interpretations:

> Whatever its merits as biblical exegesis, its theological import holds great promise. On this way of reading those verses, the second person of the trinity is what human beings are created to image. Indeed, that divine person, rather than human nature, is the very image the Genesis verses are discussing. Humans are not simply said to be the image in Genesis 1:27 but to be made "in" or "after" or "according to" it, because the image primarily being referred to here is a divine one and not a human one at all. The kind of relationship that human beings have to that divine image is not specified by the passages; at best it would seem to involve being a secondary image of this other image.[5]

While this view is said to be drawn from Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, and Gregory of Nyssa, its sources are of less significance for us than Tanner's particular use. The qualification "whatever its merits as biblical exegesis" comports with our caution that such readings are more theologically than exegetically motivated. Tanner does not say, but implies, that in early interpretation identification of Christ as the divine image was necessarily paired with refusal of human nature as the same. As observed, for Nazianzen and Irenaeus this suggestion is false, as both routinely speak of the human image of God on a christological basis.[6] Even Origen does not separate the divine image from the human so dramatically. Each of these figures appears in Tanner's argument without acknowledgement of their accounts' variance from hers. The hard division between either a properly divine image or a diminished, human

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theology of Philo. When this view appears in Christian theology, it is linked with both Christology and the Trinity.

[5] Ibid., 4f.

[6] Significant cautions could be raised regarding Tanner's interpretation of Athanasius, Cyril, and Gregory of Nyssa as well. These are not argued here as those figures were not previously addressed.

one displays an impulse alien to many of her sources. Human and divine sit in mutual exclusion, evincing the fundamental gap at the heart of creation.

Refusal to identify humans as such with the divine image requires Tanner to attribute the image to humans obliquely, through a bifurcation into weak and strong imaging. Weak imaging is natural participation in God common to all creatures. This says little about the biblical *imago Dei*, but leads to consideration of human nature, and so of strong imaging. Human nature analogically echoes the divine as incomprehensible and unbounded. While other creatures have determinate natures, the human is in this sense not a nature at all, lacking determinacy and instead open to transformation by outside influences.[7] This plasticity renders the human capable of receiving by grace what it is not by nature, and so imaging God.

Tanner thus asserts that the image of God, which is "not human at all," is donated to the human by union with Christ. Such donation is purportedly a communication of properties: "...in order to give us the entire fullness of what God enjoys, God must give us God's very own life and not simply some created version of it. God cannot give us everything that God has to give by merely transforming human life itself into some created approximation of divinity. God must attach us, in all our frailty and finitute, to God."[8]

While this attachment is called participation, it is metaphysically distinct from that characteristically Platonic participation termed weak imaging. Within a classical participatory framework, a thing receives what it is by sharing in its ultimate source, as all living things have being and life from God, who is being and life itself. Here, however, the point is not what a thing is, but what it isn't and yet receives by grace.

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[7] CK, 1. "I show that a Christ-centered treatment of our creation in the image of God turns attention initially away from the human altogether; and when attention returns to the human what is of theological interest about it is its lack of given definition, malleability through outside influences, unbounded character, and general openness to radical transformation."
[8] Ibid., viii.

The difference between weak and strong imaging can be maintained in the abstract, as between nature and grace, respectively. Whatever concrete difference is intended within human life is far more ambiguous. Tanner resorts to terms such as "excellence" - a human apart from this bestowal of the divine life may live, but does not live excellently.[9] Similarly, she stipulates that while reason is enhanced by grace, humans are rational with or without it.[10] This implies a rather conventional interpretation of grace as completing nature. Despite denying a condition of pure nature[11], Tanner has embraced it in all but name.[12]

Tanner's assertion of an indeterminate nature is articulated as an absence, a non-nature in comparison with the determinacy of other creatures. She argues for a humanity that is only human when it receives and shares in what it is not: God. Its "nature" is to receive grace, but because grace is alien to nature, human nature is defective. The mutual exclusion of divine and human renders nature an unstable category, as it both "naturally" requires and excludes grace.

This instability is also apparent in descriptions of Christ as the *imago Dei*, and colors any human imaging of God. The second person of the Trinity is not called an image by participation. Having divine and human natures, Christ is image of God by nature, and so not by grace. However, with respect to his humanity,

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[9] Ibid., 132.

[10] "...although we do not know well without the gift of the truth which is God (and in that sense we require God for the completion of our rational natures), we are rational with or without it." Tanner, "Grace without Nature," 375.

[11] CK, 106-110.

[12] This is unmistakable as a modified account of pure nature, in the sense of an unaltered humanity with grace layered atop it: "God is just not the sort of thing that can accord with a creature's nature; grace is alien or foreign to us just because we have a created nature and are not ourselves divine. Even when we enjoy the gift of God's own life, it never becomes natural to us in the sense of becoming our own property; it remains alien to us in its very divinity. We are elevated beyond our human natures when we are saved; and the powers we enjoy—eternal life, for example—are properly divine powers that no creature ever enjoys in and of itself. Human nature and the benefits of the divine life it now enjoys remain quite distinct." Tanner, "Grace Without Nature," 373.

Jesus is a divine image only in the weak sense, and so "a dim analogue of divinity."[13] While the divine image itself is not diminished in union with humanity, as donated to the human it is merely an impression or stamping, and so "something less than what it is in itself." The communication of properties even in Christ is strictly limited.

Though she speaks of hypostatic union, by Tanner's account human and divine are not only distinguishable in Christ, but separable. The union is called "perfect," such that "perfect human imaging of God is achieved by way of perfect unity with what is perfectly and properly the image of God, the second person of the trinity." However, in this unity Jesus and the second person of the Trinity appear as distinct: "In short, through unity with what is not human - the second person of the trinity - the human being, Jesus, is the perfect image of God."[14] The conclusion that Jesus and the Logos are separate subjects cannot be avoided: "Despite the difference in nature that remains between humanity and the second person, the perfect hypostatic unity of the two of them in Christ makes him the perfect human image of the second person of the trinity in much the same way the perfect unity of substance between first and second persons of the trinity makes the second the perfect image of the first." Christ images the Son in the same way that the Son images the Father. If the Father and the Son are distinct persons, then so are Christ and the Son. The gap between divine and human reproduces itself as a division within the person of Christ, and compromises whatever can be meant by hypostatic union.

As true for Christ, so much more for us. Ordinary humans image God in a strong sense when they draw near to the divine image to the point of unity - "not only physically, but in every way possible for them - ideally with purity of attention, full commitment, and intense love." This unity, far from indicating identity, is instead subject to degrees of realization. Christ is the unrealizable limit for the

[13] CK, 17.
[14] Ibid., 13.

relationship: "In sum, there is only one perfect or express image of God - the second person of the trinity - and that perfect image becomes a creature's own by way of a close relationship with it, the closer the better, a closeness consummated in Christ."[15] Strong participation from the human perspective is a mirage. The human is said to be united to Christ to varying degrees and formed according to the image, and yet never really shares in it at all. In fact, "insofar as the end product is a human state," all that is ever available is participation in the weak sense. The absolute exclusion between God and creatures presents an insurmountable obstacle to a truly human image of God:

> The absence of an ontological continuum spanning the difference between God and creatures, which weakened the character of the imaging made possible through participation in God in virtue of creation, holds here too. And therefore humans cannot become the divine image, a perfect or proper image, by approximating divine qualities on the basis of the presence of the divine image to them. Simply because they remain creatures, humans are never sufficiently reformable to be made over into a good version of the divine image, its adequate reproduction in and through what they are as human beings.[16]

Whatever good, adequate, or sufficient might mean, being human is in itself a deficiency, albeit an ambiguous one. The absolute ontological distinction between divine and creaturely can only be thought as a lack in the creature, to be overcome by union with the divine nature through Christ. However, the human creature in its very deficiency and indeterminacy is said to be like God in a way that other creatures are not. Tanner's conception of the human is Sartrean in its self-formation according to the free will - nature is just that which the human chooses, "the identity they come to exhibit in their acts."[17] "Grace" is expressed in the human drawing near and attaching itself to the divine nonhuman, so that

[15] Ibid., 14.
[16] Ibid., 18.
[17] Tanner, "Creation and Salvation in the Image of an Incomprehensible God," 68.

deficient humanity is to an extent overcome and the divine life enjoyed as much as possible within creaturely limits.

Tanner's account as a whole loses touch with its patristic models, which assume much stronger communication between God and humans. Her premise, upon which rests the inclination to displace the image from humanity to Christ, is the chasm between divine and created. This separation colors the entire project, identifying not sin but createdness itself as the problem to be solved.[18] The scope of the human *imago Dei* is to a degree negotiated through the distinction between strong and weak imaging, but at last obviated - God images God, and none but God could ever truly do so. The incomprehensible non-nature of the human is an echo of the hiddenness of the inhuman *imago Dei*, and provides the ground for whatever proximity to the divine image that humans achieve. Unwavering commitment to a hyperbolically Protestant construal of the God-world relationship has rendered this picture of the divine image not only incomprehensible but pointless.

2. David Kelsey

Kelsey's major contribution on the *imago Dei* appears in a set of codas to his magnum opus, *Eccentric Existence*. His project is methodologically complex, fusing postliberal concerns for biblical narrative and communal practice with a Trinitarian structure. While Kelsey identifies the divine image christologically, the theology underpinning this conclusion is closely related to his methodology, and must be addressed through it.

He outlines three types of traditional anthropological questions: 1) What are we? 2) How ought we be? 3) Who am I?[19] Three distinct strands of biblical narrative correspond to these questions, concerning the three ways that God relates to all

[18] CK, 58f.
[19] EE, 1f.

that is not God: by creating them, by drawing them to eschatological consummation, and by reconciling them when alienated from God. Further, these three modes are non-exclusively appropriated to the Trinity, such that creation is associated with the Father, reconciliation with the Son, and consummation with the Spirit.

The ways God relates to what is not God are irreducible to one another, such that this triple relation cannot be reconfigured as binary or singular, else it would become unbalanced.[20] Thus, the Trinitarian structure corrects Catholic theologies of nature and grace, as well as Lutheran theologies of law and gospel. Irreducibility is not, however, lack of internal relation. Just as the Trinitarian persons are irreducible to one another yet identified by asymmetrical relations, so are the relations *ad extra* distinct and asymmetrically related.

While this provides a framework for theological anthropology, that anthropology cannot have a single narrative focus, such as the *imago Dei*.[21] Instead, all three parts of anthropology are comprehended in Christ, who is the divine image concretely and personally, and human existence exhibits this wholeness by imaging the image of God.[22] The structure of anthropology is thus likened to a triple helix.[23] Rather than converging on a point, the helix remains open-ended. Humans image the image of God in three ways, framed as answers to the "What are we?" question: by "living on borrowed breath" as creatures,[24] by "living on borrowed time" as drawn toward consummation,[25] and by "living by another's death" as reconciled to God in the resurrection of Christ.[26] These ways are

[20] Ibid., 475. "Canonical stories about God relating to all else,"..."exhibit not two, but three diffferent plots and so fall into three, not two, basic types of stories."
[21] Ibid., 896. Kelsey sees the traditional role of the imago Dei as providing a kind of principle of continuity in systematic theology, underlying the narrative sequence of creation-fall-redemption- eschatological glory.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid., 897f.
[24] Ibid., 1010ff.
[25] Ibid., 1016ff.
[26] Ibid., 1023ff.

further described, in elaboration of the “How ought we be?” and “Who am I?” questions, unfolding in a picture of humans as finite mysteries imaging the image of the triune infinite mystery.[27]

For all his methodological transparency, there is a layer of barely disclosed theological pre-judgment to Kelsey’s approach. The focus on narrative description does not preclude metaphysical or theological judgments, but it does not foreground them, either. In some cases these judgments must be sifted from the rules by which a text is said to belong to one narrative strand and not to another, and from how these are permitted to bear on one another. In fact, Kelsey’s framework hinges on the pre-exegetical judgments by which the three strands of his triple helix are maintained as distinct but related.

The division of anthropological questions and ways in which God relates reveals a consistent pattern of separation. Kelsey is indebted to a criticism leveled by Westermann regarding the fittingness of ‘salvation history’ as the overarching theme of the Old Testament. Westermann argues that blessing constitutes a separate way in which God deals with his people, distinct from salvation - continuous rather than episodic, and presupposed by any narrative of liberation, insofar as a created reality must exist to be liberated.[28] Emending Westermann, Kelsey distinguishes three narrative strands rather than two. This division poses problems - what of texts that mix strands, as Westermann holds Genesis 1 to do when, through the Sabbath, it nods toward eschatology? Similarly, what to do when a text’s canonical location affects its narrative sense, as when Genesis 1-11 is considered within the salvation historical narrative of Genesis 12-50 and the Pentateuch? Kelsey observes these features to distort the creation texts in Genesis, so that they become difficult to use for that purpose. Instead, he looks to certain Wisdom texts - especially Proverbs 3:19-20 and 8:22-31 - as the primary basis for creation. His impulse is to begin from a pure exemplar of a narrative

[27] Ibid., 1050f.
[28] Ibid., 165f. See also 934f. in reference to Genesis 1.

type, and to extrapolate from that strand. Or, expressed theologically, to begin from God's relating in three ways, and only then to haltingly gesture toward unity.

As a result, many biblical texts are ruled out as irrelevant to one another. If the subject is creation in the image of God, Genesis 1:26-28 is all but unusable. When Kelsey examines the exegetical positions of Barth, von Rad, Phyllis Bird, Middleton, and Westermann,[29] he concludes that their opinions on the meaning of image of God "largely cancel out one another."[30] However, this cancellation hardly matters, because the position of Genesis 1:26-28 within a larger salvation narrative means it has little to do with creation. Having eliminated the *imago Dei* in relation to creation in the Old Testament, Kelsey turns to the New.

Sifting various image-adjacent texts, Kelsey settles on just three that are of real import to his project. Only Colossians 1:15-20, Hebrews 1:3, and 2 Corinthians 4:4 straightforwardly identify the image of God as Christ. Even here, Kelsey battles his chosen exegetes, especially the Lutherans Eduard Lohse and Craig Koester,[31] insisting upon rigid division of texts into narrative strands. For example, regarding Colossians 1:20, "and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross," Kelsey refuses Lohse's view that the cosmological statements in v.15-17 ought to be read in light of the soteriological statement in v.20. Rather, these two parts of the hymn must be kept distinct: the former relating to Christ's cosmological role, the latter to his soteriological significance. While they refer to the same Christ, these belong to irreducibly different strands of scripture and entirely separate ways of God's relating to the world.[32] This would be a plausible argument if only the author of Colossians had spent more time reading David Kelsey.

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[29] Ibid., 922-936.
[30] Ibid., 936.
[31] Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*. Koester, *Hebrews*.
[32] EE, 964-966.

Unlike Tanner, for whom the image of God is exclusively divine, Kelsey sifts divine and human elements within individual texts. In consequence, Christ's role as agent of creation is separated from his incarnation. Jesus' human identity is given in concrete narrative, unlike the abstract, non-narrative way he is said to image God as the agent of creation. This division permits assertions of the unity of Christ[33] while refusing communication of attributes across narrative boundaries. While the man Jesus is our savior, through whom "God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things," and Christ is the one "in whom all things in heaven and on earth were created," the "blood of his cross" has no bearing on creation, and only indirect bearing on eschatology. What might otherwise be framed metaphysically - the unity of the person of the Word and the man Jesus - is hindered by a narrative stricture.

Regarding the relationship between Christ and Christians, this separation limits the applicability of the image to anthropology. No union is posited which might breach the firewall. While Anthropology cannot be understood from within itself (*eccentric* existence), and Jesus is paradigmatic for humanity,[34] that status is narrative and grammatical in a specific way. The relation is a narrative mirroring - humans image the image of God. If imaging were transitive, this phrasing would be unnecessary. No communication takes place.

Kelsey does not name a chasm in the God-world relationship, but he introduces enough fissures that the effect is similar. Every place one might anticipate mediation between personal and cosmic, soteriology and creation, original and eschatological, or the image-theology of the ancient Near East and the *eikon*-theology of the New Testament, it is absent or contested. Specific, asymmetrical relationships are instead posited; for example, both reconciliation and eschatological consummation presuppose creation, but in this relation all further

[33] Ibid., 896.
[34] EE, 1009.

similarity is denied. Unasked is why creation must have an entirely distinct logic from redemption and consummation.

Kelsey offers at least one further clue as to his assumptions. In discussing God's relating to create, he invokes Tanner's suggestion[35] that misunderstandings of divine immanence and transcendence may be overcome by radicalizing both, offering two rules for this procedure. The first, to "avoid talk of God the Creator as either identical with creation or simply contrasted to creation," is non-controversial. The second rule concerns mediation:

> Avoid all suggestions of limitation in scope or manner of God's creativity. Speak of God's creativity as immediate and universally extensive. This does not rule out, of course, that God may also relate to creatures in mediated ways. It only rules out the claim that God must relate in mediated ways to certain levels or types of reality.[36]

The final sentence refers to a hierarchy of being in which God relates directly only to levels nearest him, and engages others through mediators. However, a blanket assessment of creation as unmediated rules out more than that undesirable picture - specifically, that the divine relation to all creatures is mediated, and creation itself is divine mediation. That is, of course, the traditional Christian doctrine of creation through the Word, as canonically expressed in Genesis 1 and John 1 - God mediates God.

Kelsey's tendency toward the unmediated is suggested by his fragmented account of Christ's agency. The risk of such a lack of mediation is not that nothing now stands between God and creatures (as if mediation were separation), but precisely that *nothing* stands between God and creatures - a substantive nothing or non-interaction, or else that difference collapses into

[35] Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology*, 37-48.
[36] EE, 175.

God's unmediated presence. Insistence on the triple helix structure prevents any resolution of the divine image at all. It isn't hidden so much as projected into an ideal space beyond concrete assertion, so that what the Bible says straightforwardly - not only with respect to the human *imago Dei*, but regarding the unity of Christ - may only be gestured at. What begins in narrative ends in sheer abstraction, as Christ the mediator drops out of sight.

3. Rowan Williams

Williams' recent work, *Christ the Heart of Creation*, does not attempt a systematic account of the *imago Dei*, nor discuss it except in passing. However, its thesis regarding the relevance of Christology to the relation between creator and creation has clear consequences for the image. Non-competition between infinite and finite agencies implies a Christology in which Jesus' human and divine natures are asymmetrically united. Asymmetrical Christology maximizes distinction between the divine and human natures, preserving each in its integrity, so that integral humanity is preserved both for Jesus and for humans in the Word. This result significantly problematizes a human image of God.

The book describes Chalcedonian Christology as fully realized in Thomas Aquinas, lost in the later Middle Ages and in Luther's reform, and recovered in Calvin. Williams is aware of the historical emergence of a perceived gap between God and creatures, naming nominalism as the culprit: "A perfectly intelligible concern to safeguard divine freedom... led to a dramatic gulf being opened between finite and infinite in a way quite different from the way this distinction is understood by earlier writers, even by Scotus."[37] This undesirable situation is the context against which Luther overreacts, turning the rupture into a fusion, such that "the idea that a finite reality could be (without losing its integrity) the medium for infinite agency is seriously weakened, and the effect is... an undermining of the theological importance of finite and material reality as

[37] CHC, 137.

such."[38]

Luther is inadequately Chalcedonian, compromising the integrity of both God and human by a union just short of monophysitism - no single mixed essence is produced in the incarnation, but both divinity and humanity as natures are altered in the union.[39] Calvin appears as the proper heir to Thomas and Chalcedon. Unfortunately, the discussion of Luther is brief and poorly sourced,[40] simplifying the picture into a binary of either confusion of natures or distinction approaching separation. The former dismissed, the latter must prevail. Though brief, Williams' critique of Luther helps clarify his choices, particularly where those choices do not appear self-consistent.[41]

Williams asserts that Luther, "wholeheartedly denies the separability of humanity and divinity in the person of the incarnate, so that it becomes impossible to think in Scotist (let alone Ockhamist) terms of a human subject of action whose capacity is straightforwardly finite."[42] Of course, inseparability is merely Chalcedonian. The real fault is found in Luther's conclusion that Christ's humanity is united to the divine nature such that "it can be wherever God wants to be," seizing on the ubiquity of Christ's body and its supposed consequences as evidence.

This criticism is flawed in multiple respects, but its chief error is a misattribution to Luther of the structure of later Christologies.[43] Luther did not innovate a

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[38] Ibid., 141.
[39] Ibid., 140.
[40] Ibid., 138-141. Citing only two writings of Luther: a section of *On the Councils and the Church* (LW 41, 93-109), and the *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper* (LW 37, 161-372). Also Arnold, "Luther on Christ's Person and Work," and the dated Siggins, *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ*.
[41] For a more thorough treatment raising similar concerns from a patristic perspective, Beeley, "Christological Non-Competition and the Return to Chalcedon."
[42] Ibid., 138.
[43] A second objection is that Luther's analysis of modes of bodily presence - a scholastic commonplace, shared with Ockham as well as Thomas, risks reducing divine presence to a variant of physical presence, "filling a container." Luther qualifies the third or repletive mode of presence, which belongs to God alone, as measureless, incomprehensible, and explicitly non-competitive with bodily modes of presence, "where [created things] cannot measure or

theory of the communication of properties of the divine nature to the human nature, as seems to have originated in Lutheranism with Johannes Brenz.[44] As demonstrated most recently by Richard Cross, Luther employs the theory of suppositional carrying, in which the *suppositum*, the person of the Word, bears the human nature on the analogy of a substance bearing an accident. Luther adds to this a form of piggy-backing in which the properties borne by the human nature are also borne directly by the *suppositum*, but he does not produce a theory of communication between the natures as such.[45] Instead, Luther speaks of the person as the one center of activity. His references to Jesus in the form "God is man," refer to the person, not to the human nature in itself. Even when Luther speaks of a divine property employed "according to his human nature," the acting subject is the *suppositum*. Speaking of Luther as if he held that "both divinity and humanity *as natures* were in some sense altered through the union, in such a way that Christ's human nature is genuinely endowed with new *natural* properties,"[46] is misleading. Luther speaks of the one Christ who bears the properties of his natures in intimate union. The focus is not on what a nature receives, but on the person who is the natures.

It is odd that a theology which compromises finite agency[47] would retain its sense of thoroughgoing creaturely mediation and emphasis on the concrete. Luther was not unaware of these issues, addressing them in his christological disputations. Philosophically, there is no proportion between finite and infinite, creature and creator. "But we not only make a proportion, but a union of finite

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circumscribe him but where they are present to him so that he measures and circumscribes them." LW 37, 223. WA 26, 336. Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories of the Eucharist*, 239.

[44] Cross, *Communicatio Idiomatum*, 95ff.

[45] Ibid., 39-57. Luy, *Dominus Mortis*, rules out the particular case of the divine nature (rather than the person) receiving the properties of the human nature - the so-called *genus tapeinoticum*. Far from an obvious development from Luther, this was not a position held by any significant Lutherans until after the Enlightenment.

[46] CHC, 140.

[47] Ibid., 141. " Luther's critics in the sixteenth century were concerned that his Christology (and his Eucharistic theology) compromised both the divine and the human in Christ in such a way that the infinite was reduced and the finite dissolved."

and infinite."[48] The union Luther speaks of is not a general collapse. Luther's difference from the *analogia entis* is not that negation has been exaggerated or the difference between creator and creation should be eased. Williams' embrace of Przywara's account of analogy (even acknowledging the debt to Luther[49]) is surely intended to uphold just what Aaron Riches asserts[50] from similar presuppositions: "...only the confession of the "one Lord Jesus Christ" maximally preserves the integrity and difference of *verus homo* before *verus Deus*. Outside of the divine *unio* of Christ, beginning from an abstract idea of what his humanity might be apart from that *unio*, Christian theology fails before it even begins."[51] Luther's account roots humanity in Christ and so in the union proclaimed in this one Lord, aiming to uphold the same principle.

Williams' reception of Calvin, however, veers away from union such that he cannot sustain a human *imago Dei*, and countenances a displacement of humanity from Christ.[52] At times this is subtle, as in declaring the need for a mediator by which both humans and angels might be adoptively united with God. The image of God is therefore not a statement about humanity, but a common dignity bestowed on human and angel alike.[53] The implication is that, had Adam never fallen, humans would participate in the Son's eternal life "as the angels do." Rational beings have a permanent connection to God in Christ, named by *imago Dei*, but humans specifically do not. The humanity of the Son is a response to sin, neither implied nor extant from the beginning - thus, the so-called *extra Calvinisticum*, by which the person of the Word is not exhaustively Jesus.

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[48] *Disputation on the Divinity and Humanity of Christ*, WA 39.II, 112.
[49] CHC, 234-235. fn21.
[50] Riches structures his Christology within the analogical *maior dissimilitudo* and so a non-competitive relation of divinity and humanity in Christ. Williams wrote the foreword. Riches, *Ecce Homo*, 6-9.
[51] Ibid., 7-8.
[52] The following is not direct commentary on Calvin, but on Williams' presentation, and so its accuracy does not depend on the correctness of that interpretation.
[53] CHC, 142. Calvin, *Institutes*, II.12.1 and II.12.6.

This appears in an unusual argument about eschatology. Christ's incarnate rule extends through the last judgment, but not to the eternal kingship in which the redeemed "will relate to God in a way that no longer requires the mediation or Headship of Christ *as incarnate*."[54] While Williams finds Calvin's thinking on this disjunction between Jesus and the Word somewhat puzzling, he does not repudiate it, instead attempting to soften its eccentricity. The incarnation is for repairing the damage caused by sin, and to that extent requires Christ's humanity. However, the mediatorial office of redeemer, and so the Word's identity with Jesus, is limited by the divine nature's status as cosmological mediator. "Christ the Heart of Creation" is, with respect to original and eschatological rule, non-human, distinguishable from Jesus.

Williams opposes the language of an ontological gap between God and creation,[55] but does not maintain the same opposition when a functional gap appears. His embrace of the *extra* ("the cornerstone of a full-blooded Trinitarian theology, just as... of an adequate theology of the atonement"[56]) rides on a false alternative: either just this account or a "principle internal to creation that secures its elevation to divine status," or "universalized force in the world, separated from its identity-giving specificity in Jesus of Nazareth." There is no reason to assume that, apart from the *extra* - the gap between Christ's eternal being and everything human - one must deal with an abstract principle rather than with the same Jesus, true God and true human, from beginning to end.

The trouble is that Williams knows what humanity is from the start, apart from the hypostatic union, having concluded that it is simply unlike God.[57] The

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[54] Ibid., 149. Calvin, *Institutes*, II.14.3 and II.15.5.

[55] Affirming Przywara, "the whole language of gap or distance between finite and infinite is a radically misplaced way of talking. What we look for is rather a point of 'gathering', mediation, interpretation, in which the diversity of the finite resolves into some kind of coherence." Ibid., 224.

[56] Ibid., 155.

[57] Beeley argues similarly: "For despite occasional claims to the contrary, Williams' metaphysical account of how things exist apart from the incarnation predetermines his understanding of the God-human relationship in Christ." "Christological Non-Competition and the Return to Chalcedon," 12. Even more forceful is Beeley's claim that, "The divisive thrust of Williams'

supposedly non-competitive relation of infinite and finite comes forth as an exclusion, a denial of human mediation,[58] and just so of the cosmological centrality of the human. In the abstract, these propositions appear firm; but in the concrete center of Christian confession, they come untrue. To interpret the *imago Dei* as a statement about how rational natures are impressed and freed by divine activity, but not a specifically human likeness, is to interpret it apart from Christ.

4. Failure to Communicate

"What we've got here is failure to communicate. Some men you just can't reach." So pronounces the Captain in 1967's *Cool Hand Luke*, justifying his brutalization of the title character, who offended by daring to speak to the Captain of Road Prison 36 as one man to another. It is, of course, impossible to remove negation and separation from any metaphysical account short of an absolutely naive (and so senseless) monism. The question is not whether gaps must emerge, but where, and to what purpose. The preceding three theologians, following an ancient pattern amplified to a startling degree in modernity[59], endeavor to protect divine infinity and created finitude from one another by certain hedges against divine-human communication. It is taken for granted that "divinity and humanity never stand side by side."[60]

The most basic spur to Christian thinking is that, within the Biblical narratives, divinity and humanity stand side by side fairly often. They converse, wrestle, debate, embrace, weep for one another, joke, curse, suckle, comfort, and wound. Few Christian theologians would deny these interactions outright, but they are

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metaphysics becomes clearest when we notice that the main threat to the integrity of creation is not sin, decay, the powers of darkness, or the corrupt systems of the world. In Williams' account, the world of finite causes must be protected from God." Ibid., 14.

[58] Ibid., 149.

[59] I might offer that the better part of what is characteristically modern is the search for alternative settlements to the terrifying prospect of communication between God and humans, that is, of a God who speaks freely. Theological modernity is a counsel of silence.

[60] CHC, 163.

interpreted to minimize their significance. The appearance of God and human side by side, offensive to both reason and experience in human sinners, opens up a chasm of its own: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” Theologians attempt to render this dangerous encounter safe by explaining it as unreal or non-threatening (“non-competitive”), rather than by the biblical and liturgical mode of a seraph with a burning coal and a word of absolution. The posited gap between creator and creation, which ought to have prevented any terrifying appearances as in the year that King Uzziah died, is just that mode of explanation. It declares that what you have seen and heard is not quite communication, not the manifestation of God in and to flesh, but only the yes and no (especially no) of representation, never the thing itself.

The logic of representation opposes communication, and fundamentally alters the doctrines it touches. When the *imago Dei* is not a communicated reality, a gift, it invariably comes forth as an ideal, a demand to be lived into, obeyed, or conformed to (even if ‘by grace’). The divine image only signals how humans, having not been given such a thing, may (and must) instead in a creaturely way mirror the Son. In classically Lutheran terms, the image becomes a law or demand, not a promise. The qualifier is added - as one must, to avoid a Promethean seizure of divinity by the human creature - that this law is not actually achievable, yielding merely a shadow of the divine image. So the gap between creature and creator is the law itself, and there can be for sinners no closure of that infinite gap. On the other hand, if the Son who is creature and creator both is himself the image of God, and gives himself freely to sinful humans, then the image may be given, not through the law, but apart from the law - as a promise.

To speak of the divine image as a promise, and so of the divine-human interchange through and in the Word, is also to recognize the sharp difference

between God as preached and not-preached.[61] What preserves the *imago Dei* from being swallowed up in the chasm between God and human is a refusal of legal explanation that would attempt to remove - by means of the breach between infinite and finite - the difference between God in his Word and God apart from it. It is with this refusal in mind that we turn to the poetic theology of Hamann, in whose writing the concrete mediation of the divine-human Word reaches its modern apex.

III. Johann Georg Hamann

While recent decades have seen the beginnings of a new appreciation for his work,[62] Hamann's connection to Luther has, especially in Anglophone reception, been somewhat muffled.[63] Yet in several respects Hamann stands as close to Luther as anyone in the three centuries after Luther's death. Beyond the constant play in words from Luther's Bible, hymns, and catechisms, major themes are clear developments from Luther: the condescension of God in the sensuality and roughness of the Bible, reason as embodied instrument inextricable from language[64], and the Christian's life located in earthly exchanges rather than mystical ascent.

This similarity is especially apparent in vicinity to the *imago Dei*. The hiddenness of both God and human apart from speech, the *communicatio idiomatum* as determining the God-human relationship, and the nature of

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[61] Paulson, *Luther's Outlaw God*, Volume 2, 46. "Because proclamation always takes place in the chasm of reality by one touched by the law (and so feeling evil), the temptation is to close the chasm between God's hiding and promising with a legal explanation."

[62] The most important voice in this recovery is that of Oswald Bayer, though English translation of Bayer has lagged behind other important voices, especially John Betz, *After Enlightenment*, and "Hamann's London Writings," and John Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, and "Knowledge: The Theological Critique of Philosophy in Hamann and Jacobi," in *Radical Orthodoxy*.

[63] Milbank is particularly expressive of this tendency, citing his "tremendous," "subterranean" influence while minimizing the grounding of Hamann's main themes in Luther. *Radical Orthodoxy*, 23.

[64] "The wealth of all human knowledge rests on the exchange of words; and it was a theologian of penetrating wit [i.e., Luther] who pronounced theology - the oldest sister of the higher sciences - to be a grammar of the language of Holy Writ." WPL, 22.

creation as mediating divine address all resonate closely with Luther's approach. Use of the image of God motif in key texts reinforces these connections and presents Hamann's thinking as a creative extension of Luther into new historical circumstances. He thus offers an alternative modern pathway to resolution of the image of God, not through the pious refusal of communication or its obviation in favor of the purely speculative, but through its embrace in the concrete, historical, and bodily Christ. Within this framework, the questions of hiddenness and scope can be taken to their verbal conclusion. A sequence of writings is presented here, followed by consideration of the whole sweep of Hamann's interpretation of the image of God.

1. Socratic Memorabilia (1759)

Hamann's first publication after his return to Christianity[65] opens with an address to an idol: "To the Public, or Nobody, the Well-Known." His target is not nobody, of course, but the two[66] who had hoped to win him again for the Enlightenment: J.C. Berens, the Riga merchant in whose family's employ Hamann had experienced his disastrous (yet spiritually felicitous) 1757-58 sojourn in London, and Immanuel Kant, whose long friendship with Hamann was then in its infancy. Hamann's purpose is to move them away from allegiance to this "blind and deaf" idol, whose characteristics come to describe its worshippers. In an allusion to Psalm 115:4-8, he invokes eyes which do not see and ears which do not hear, implying the Biblical conclusion: "Those who make them are like them; so are all who trust in them."

The human as *imago Dei* is suggested by its negative: "Neither are you human, yet you must be a human image which superstition has made a god."[67] This non-human, the idol of the public to which Kant and Berens sacrifice their individuality, is widely recognized but lifeless, lacking both concept and feeling.

[65] On the context and occasion of this writing, Betz, *After Enlightenment*, 63-68.
[66] A double dedication: "To nobody and to two." WPL, 3.
[67] Ibid., 4.

Hamann's mission is liberation, not merely defense of conversion. To release the two back into humanity, the false image to which they are subject must be destroyed, burst asunder by a verbal "gift" of Hamann's text. This is likened to the lumps fed to the beast in the story of Bel and the Dragon,[68] and in a characteristic bit of humor, to a strong purgative.[69]

The human as bound up in cult and image is a basic presupposition for Hamann, rooted in Luther's explanation of the first commandment: "A 'god' is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart. As I have often said, it is the trust and faith of the heart alone that make both God and an idol."[70] Luther's definition is particularly useful when confronted with a conceptual rather than a physical idol. The inhuman "image" which Hamann attacks differs from the human *imago Dei,* as from the pagan idols of antiquity, in that it is ideal rather than sensual. This abstraction is the source of its emptiness - it is a nothing, while a real image is connected with the senses. Here already Hamann shows resistance to spiritualization of the *imago Dei*.

2. Aesthetica in Nuce (1762)

The same theme reappears in one of Hamann's richest texts, *Aesthetica in Nuce*, with the declaration that "the senses and passions speak and understand nothing but images. All the wealth of human knowledge and happiness consists in images." His understanding of images, neither limited to nor excluding the human image of God, exceeds the strictly visual. He speaks with reference to

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[68] Daniel 14:27 in the LXX and translations following it, or Bel and the Dragon 1:27 in Protestant Bibles containing the apocrypha.
[69] WPL, 6. Hamann's joking reference is to the emperor Vespasian in Francis Bacon's "Of Death," in which the Latin quotation "*Uti puto, deus fio!*" (I think I am becoming a god) is joined to his death from diarrhea (both parts originating from Suetonius' *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 8.23-24. Suetonius' form of the quotation is the slightly different " *Vae! Puto deus fio*.").
[70] *Large Catechism*, BoC, 386.

Francis Bacon, "my Euthyphro," that, "Poetry is the mother-tongue of the human race, as the garden is older than the ploughed field; painting, than writing; song, than declamation; parables, than logical deduction; barter, than commerce."[71] Value belongs to the concrete and embellished; similarly, true reason is sensual. Abstraction has no claim to priority, whether historical, logical, or aesthetic.

Creation itself is manifestation and revelation, in and through the divine word: "The first manifestation and the first enjoyment of nature are united in the words: "Let there be light!" Here begins the perception of the presence of things." Hamann includes a footnote to the Greek of Ephesians 5:13, "for everything that makes manifest is light."[72] In this Lutheran stress upon the word as connected with things over ideas, he opposes division between the orders of being and knowing, and likewise any sense that truth is other than as given in things. The divine word is trustworthy, and so created reality can be enjoyed as given rather than refused in expectation of an absent or hidden God and unknowable creature. This attitude toward hiddenness might appear at first to contradict Luther's emphasis, but in the most important respect it agrees entirely with Luther, that in his word God is not obscure but openly declared and present.

The human image of God is confirmation of this most basic relationship: "At last GOD crowned the sensory revelation of his majesty with the masterpiece of man. He created man in God's image; – in the image of God created he him." The divine majesty is not held in abeyance or majestic in its reserve, but given to the senses. Hamann speaks here as Genesis 1 does, seemingly without awareness of sin. Whatever obstacle the Fall presents, the essential nature of creation as communicating God has been established. This can go violently wrong on account of human sin, but cannot be replaced with a scheme in which God's being is incommunicable. "The will of the Author," God's express speech,

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[71] WPL, 63.

[72] WPL, 64. This phrase occurs in the first part of 5:14 in many English Bibles. Translations vary on how to read *phaneroumenon*, whether as middle or passive. The phrasing above assumes middle, following the KJV and 1545 Luther Bibel.

“unravels the most convoluted knots of human nature and its destiny,” and so the human is known together with God precisely in God’s creative address.

To some degree this is apprehended, though imperfectly, even apart from scripture. “Blind heathens acknowledged the invisibility which man has in common with GOD. The veiled figure of the body, the countenance of the head, and the extremities of the arms are the visible schema in which we move along; yet in truth they are nothing but a finger pointing to the hidden man within us.”[73] This is a puzzling phrase if read to detract from the sensuality just emphasized. However, that it is “blind” heathens (those to whom manifestation - light - has not come) who perceive a common invisibility to God and human suggests less than full truth. The “hidden man” within is not merely the soul in abstraction from the body, but a reference to who is revealed in the human, and so implicitly christological. This is ironically argued through a quote from the *Astronomica* of Manilius, a work of pagan, apparently Stoic, conviction: *Exemplumque DEI quisque est in imagine parva*.[74] Each one is an example of GOD in a small image. Typically, Hamann uses a brief quotation to point to a larger correspondence - he provides the footnote, inviting his reader to find the context: “Why wonder that men can comprehend heaven, when heaven exists in their very beings and each one is an example of God in a small image? Are we to believe that man is born of aught but heaven?” Manilius as well looks to the power of speech as distinctive to the human (lines 901-903), and proceeds to speak of the divine as impressing and revealing itself to our sight: “God grudges not the earth the sight of heaven but reveals his face and form by ceaseless revolution, offering, nay impressing, himself upon us to the end that he can be truly known, can teach his nature to those who have eyes to see, and can compel them to mark his laws.”[75] Hamann insists on a revealed God, not a Dionysian darkness.

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[73] Ibid.
[74] Manilius, *Astronomica*, IV.895.
[75] Ibid., IV.915-919 (Goold, 295).

After a detour into clothing (the veiling of the body) and animal skins, Hamann returns to revelation. "Speak, that I may see you! – This wish was fulfilled by creation, which is a speech to creatures through creatures; for day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge. Its watchword traverses every clime to the end of the world, and its voice can be heard in every dialect."[76] He distinguishes creator from creation by including the creature in the divine work of creation, not as a co-operator, but as both recipient and medium, stipulating that the creator's relation to creatures is direct address rather than indirect emanation. Here again is an implicit Christology, wherein is suggested the presence as speech of one who as creature is the creator.[77] In that speech, the speaker is seen, and so becomes an image. The theology expressed is but a subtle refinement of that articulated in a notable passage in Luther's Genesis lectures:

> Here attention must also be called to this, that the words "Let there be light" are the words of God, not of Moses; this means that they are realities. For God calls into existence the things which do not exist (Rom. 4:17). He does not speak grammatical words; He speaks true and existent realities. Accordingly, that which among us has the sound of a word is a reality with God. Thus sun, moon, heaven, earth, Peter, Paul, I, you, etc.—we are all words of God, in fact only one single syllable or letter by comparison with the entire creation. We, too, speak, but only according to the rules of language; that is, we assign names to objects which have already been created. But the divine rule of language is different, namely: when He says: "Sun, shine," the sun is there at once and shines. Thus the words of God are realities, not bare words.
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> Here men have differentiated between the uncreated Word and the created word. The created word is brought into being by the uncreated

[76] WPL, 65.
[77] Betz, following Bayer, recognizes this plainly and attributes the thought to Luther, specifically to the 1540 *Disputation on the Divinity and Humanity of Christ* - "*Ibi creator et creatura unus et idem est.*" Therefore creator and creature are one and the same. Betz, *After Enlightenment*, 126. Bayer, *Schöpfung als Anrede*, 18. WA 39.II, 105f.

> Word. *What else is the entire creation than the Word of God uttered by God, or extended to the outside?* [Emphasis added]. But the uncreated Word is a divine thought, an inner command which abides in God, the same as God and yet a distinct Person. Thus God reveals Himself to us as the Speaker who has with Him the uncreated Word, through whom He created the world and all things with the greatest ease, namely, by speaking. Accordingly, there is no more effort for God in His creation than there is for us in the mention of it. With thoughts of this kind the good fathers Augustine and Hilary also delighted themselves.[78]

It is ironic that Luther's words find their closest echo in Hamann's extreme idiosyncrasy rather than in the institutional theology of Lutheran orthodoxy. Hamann refines and clarifies Luther's point by intuiting that the centrality of christological mediation implies not only that creation is divine speech to creatures, but that it is also *through* creatures, for the uncreated Word becomes a creature.

Nevertheless, this speech heard everywhere is not perceived as speech. Christ cannot be simply read off of the book of nature: "The fault may lie where it will (outside or in us): all we have left in nature for our use are jumbled verses and *disjecti membra poetae*."[79] Jumbled verses refers to an exercise known as *Turbatverse*, used to teach Latin poetic composition by asking students to rearrange words to produce a proper metrical line. The Latin is a quotation from Horace's *Satire*, "the limbs of the dismembered poet."[80] The figure of the poet in Hamann's text is a human image for the act of creation, and so for the creator, here cut into parts (or, say, crucified). How then to receive the divine speech, if the poet himself has been slain? "To gather these [the limbs and jumbled verses] together is the scholar's modest part; to interpret them, the philosopher's; to

[78] LW 1, 21-22. WA 42, 17.
[79] WPL, 65.
[80] Horace, *Satires*, 1.4.62. Betz notes that Horace's reference is partly to Orpheus torn to pieces by the Maenads, "who therefore metonymically stands in the present context for the jumbled and fragmentary verse of creation." *After Enlightenment*, 126.

imitate them - or bolder still - bring them into right order, the poet's."[81] Observation and interpretation of nature are still possible, but its true character is marred by sin, and cannot be restored short of an act of new creation.

To understand nature properly, scripture is required: "Moses' torch illuminates even the intellectual world, which also has its heaven and its earth. Hence Bacon compares the sciences with the waters above and below the vault of our vaporous globe."[82] The image of God is invoked as an example of the unity of God's words and deeds, observed through a comparison of humanity's creation in Genesis 1 and 2: "Hear the counsel: "Let us make men in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion!" – Behold the deed: And the LORD GOD formed man of the dust of the ground – Compare counsel and deed: worship the mighty speaker with the Psalmist; worship the supposed gardener with her who bore the news to the disciples; worship the free potter with the Apostle to Hellenistic philosophers and the Talmudic scribes!"[83] Hamann footnotes the references to the Psalmist, the gardener, and the potter with citations of Psalm 33:9 ("For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm."), John 20:15-17 (the risen Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene, who mistook him for the gardener), and Romans 9:21 ("Has the potter no right over the clay...?"). What is the purpose of these citations, beyond a general (and premature, as this passage occurs still early in the text) movement into doxology? The unity of counsel and deed is also the unity of the divine works of creation and redemption, which thus opposes any effort to comprehend nature (whether aesthetically, philosophically, or scientifically) apart from Christ.

The importance of the human to this unity is voiced in an extraordinarily obscure passage: "The hieroglyphic Adam is the history of the entire race in the symbolic wheel: – the character of Eve is the original of Nature's beauty and of systematic economy, which is not written with methodical sanctity on the plate

[81] WPL, 65-66.
[82] Ibid., 67.
[83] Ibid., 67-68.

worn on the forehead, but is wrought beneath the earth and lies hidden – in the bowels, in the very reins of things."[84] "Hieroglyphic" Adam indicates his nature as both written (a word) and holy (*hieros*). His story is the story of humanity *per se*. Eve is likewise both person and symbol, who as the original of beauty and economy is made for an exchange of love and delight - so Hamann suggests in the next paragraph in quoting Adam's exclamation, "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh!" She too is holy, her holiness compared to that described in Exodus 28:36-38 - "You shall make a rosette of pure gold, and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet, "Holy to the Lord." You shall fasten it on the turban with a blue cord; it shall be on the front of the turban. It shall be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall take on himself any guilt incurred in the holy offering that the Israelites consecrate as their sacred donations; it shall always be on his forehead, in order that they may find favor before the Lord." Eve differs from Aaron not in that she lacks his priesthood, but that her holiness is no garment, instead hidden in her entire form. This stress upon the holiness of both Adam and Eve characterizes all humanity for Hamann. The connection between the image of God and the headdress of the high priest properly draws out the priestly aspect of the human as divine image.

God speaks the language of holiness through created things, which include both nature and scripture.[85] Their unity is the "unity of the Author," who again is identified christologically: "The poet at the beginning of days is the same as the thief at the end of days–."[86] Poet is glossed by a citation of 2 Corinthians 4:6, "For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," a passage connected by proximity and theme to the assertion of the glory of Christ as the image of God in 2 Corinthians 4:4. The poet reveals the glory of Christ, which is the divine image. Thief, similarly, is identified as the one spoken in Revelation 16:15, "Behold, I come as a thief."

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[84] Ibid., 68.
[85] Ibid., 74.
[86] Ibid., 78.

Hamann returns in this context to idolatry and its transforming power over humanity and nature as a whole. “All the colors of this most beautiful world grow pale once you extinguish its light, the firstborn of creation,” a simultaneous allusion to Genesis 1 and to Christ in John 1 and Colossians 1:15. “If your belly is your god, then even the hairs on your head are under its guardianship. Every creature will alternately become your sacrifice and your idol. – Subject against its will – but in hope, it groans beneath your yoke or at your vain conduct; it does its best to escape your tyranny, and longs even in the most passionate embrace for that freedom with which the beasts paid Adam homage, when GOD brought them unto man to see what he would call them; for whatsoever man would call them, that was the name thereof.”[87] In the human’s misplaced faith, created things oscillate violently between being cruelly instrumentalized and worshiped. Adam’s priesthood was freedom not only for Adam, but for all creatures, and that freedom was nowhere more visible than in Adam’s exercise of the divine ministry of speech, in which he named the animals. This is dominion as the priesthood of the Word, and so implies the current condition of humanity as a false and wordless worship, in which the human is imprisoned as tyrant (Luther’s *imago diaboli*).

That the specifically human image is determinative for all creatures is explicit:

> This analogy of man to the Creator endows all creatures with their substance and their stamp, on which depends fidelity and faith in all nature. The more vividly this idea of the image of the invisible GOD dwells in our heart, the more able we are to see and taste his lovingkindness in creatures, observe it and grasp it with our hands. Every impression of nature in man is not only a memorial but also a warrant of fundamental truth: Who is the LORD. Every reaction of man unto created things is an

[87] Ibid.

> epistle and seal that we partake of the divine nature, and that we are his offspring.[88]

2 Peter 1:4 ("partakers of the divine nature") and Romans 8:29 ("conformed to the image of his Son") are cited in support of the final sentence. While Hamann does not directly address the proclamation of the divine image, he speaks to the underlying reality within which it functions. The image of God is to be heard and believed. Such hearing is transformative of the relation between the human and all creatures. Since the impressions of creatures upon humans are God's speech, they testify to the intimacy of the creator's relation to those whom he addresses.

3. The Last Will and Testament of the Knight of the Rose-Cross (1772)

One of Hamann's several responses to his disciple Johann Gottfried von Herder's prize-winning submission to the Berlin Academy, the *Treatise on the Origins of Language*, similarly employs the *imago Dei*. The background for these interventions was Hamann's distaste for his friend's approach, which owed no little to Hamann's own thinking.[89] Like Hamann, Herder argued for the unity of language and reason, and for their connection with the senses and passions. However, Hamann bridled at the naturalistic stance of the essay, seeing it as inadequate to the christological, human-divine nature of language.

Thus, Hamann's statement of his position in the *Last Will and Testament* begins with the unity of God and human. "If God is supposed to be the origin of all effects in great things and small, or in heaven and in earth, then every numbered hair on our head is as divine as the behemoth, that chief of the ways of God. The spirit of the Mosaic law extends from there to the most disgusting discharge of the human corpse. Consequently, everything is divine, and the question of the

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[88] Ibid., 78-79.
[89] On this and other components of Hamann's response, Betz, *After Enlightenment*, 141-164. For Herder's essay, *J. G. Herder: Philosophical Writings*, 65-164.

origin of evil amounts in the end to word-play and scholastic prattle."[90] His position is not pantheistic as it first appears, but once again christological. "Everything divine, however, is also human, because man can neither act nor suffer but by the analogy of his nature, however simple or complex a machine it is said to be. This *communicatio* of divine and human *idiomatum* is a fundamental law and master-key of all our knowledge and of the whole visible economy." The "analogy of his nature" echoes a phrase from Herder, but here suggests not only divine accommodation to humanity, but the likeness of the *imago Dei* considered in light of the communication of attributes. Natural law is likewise Herder's idiom, and should not obscure that Hamann means the relation of divinity and humanity through a person, not a general principle.

That person is unnamed but implied. The title page quotes from the Latin of 2 Corinthians 4:13, "I believed, and so I spoke," but omits the conclusion of the thought: "– we also believe, and so we speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence." Adam and Eve are described in their innocence as given a "political destiny," to "people the earth and rule by the word of their mouth."[91] For Adam, the first monarch, "Every phenomenon of nature was a word, – the sign, symbol, and pledge of a new, secret, inexpressible but all the more fervent union, fellowship, and communion of divine energies and ideas. All that man heard at the beginning, saw with his eyes, looked upon, and his hands handled was a living word; for God was the word. With this word in his mouth and in his heart the origin of language was as natural, as close and easy, as a child's game. For human nature is from the beginning until the end of days as like unto the kingdom of heaven as leaven, with whose smallness every woman can make ferment three measures of meal." Hamann's clear implication is that there never was language, nor human nature, apart from Christ. Human nature is as hidden as the kingdom, now proclaimed, but least of all open to secular investigation.

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[90] WPL, 99.
[91] Ibid., 107.

4. Metacritique on the Purism of Reason (1784)

Hamann intentionally refrained from publishing this response to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* until his own death, having placed it in Herder's hands for that purpose.[92] The text does not speak of the image of God, but in its attack on the notion of supposedly pure reason the *Metacritique* focuses on the embodied, historical nature of language, for an inherently theological topic.

Thus, Kant's division between sense and understanding is called a "violent, unjustified, willful divorce of that which nature has joined together,"[93] echoing Jesus' words on marriage from Matthew 19:6 - "What God has joined together, let no one separate." This same union is referred to again as, "the hypostatic union of the sensible and intelligible natures, the joint communication of the idiom of their powers, the synthetic mysteries of the forms a priori and a posteriori corresponding and contradicting themselves, together with the transubstantiation of subjective conditions and the subsumptions into objective predicates and attributes through the copula of an authoritative or expletive word..."[94]

The density of Hamann's christological reference is striking, and in an aping of Kant, more reliant on technical vocabulary than his usual biblical, classical, and natural illustration. Hypostatic union, communication of idioms, mysteries, and transubstantiation carry the metaphor from Christology proper into the related matter of sacramental presence. "Authoritative word" is Luther's *machtwort*, from the *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*,[95] suggesting the same sacramental reference, reinforced through the comparison of Kant and Luther's opposed treatments of the copula "is".[96] This response to Kant cannot be

[92] Betz, *After Enlightenment*, 233.
[93] WPL, 212.
[94] Ibid., 213-214.
[95] LW 37, 181. WA 26:282-283.
[96] LW 37, 307ff. WA 26, 448ff.

explained away as merely indicating importance, as if the only way to convey the weight of the question of language were in religious terms. Hamann means to associate Kant's separation of reason from language with a division threatening to Christian orthodoxy. Language is divine and human, words are sacramental, and Hamann's *Metacritique* of Kant is Luther's *Confession* against Zwingli.

Hamann reinforces that his philosophical argument against Kant is also sacramental argument: "Words, therefore, have an aesthetic and logical faculty. As visible and audible objects they belong with their elements to the sensibility and intuition; however, by the spirit of their institution and meaning, they belong to the understanding and concepts."[97] The term elements recalls both the letters of words and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper; institution, the words of Christ by which those elements become his own body and blood. So Hamann concludes his argument: "And what the transcendental philosophy metagrabolizes I have, for the sake of weak readers, transferred in a figure to the sacrament of language, the letter of its elements, the spirit of its institution, and I leave it to each one to unclench the closed fist into an open palm."[98] There is simply no division between the bodily Christ and the word, and on their union, as on the operations of letter and Spirit, depends all human reception and communication.

IV. Conclusion - Image as Bodily and Verbal Communication

Hamann's *London Writings*, the private record of his return to Christianity, opens with astonishment that God is an author, speaking and revealing himself in threefold condescension, strongly reminiscent of Luther's account[99] of God's threefold self-giving: "The inspiration of [the Bible] is as great an act of self-effacement and condescension as the creation of the world by the Father and the

[97] WPL, 217.
[98] Ibid., 217-218.
[99] LW 37, 366. WA 26, 505f. From the *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*, and so known to Hamann.

incarnation of the Son."[100] This divine communication is not merely a metaphysical principle or dehistoricized Christology, but temporal and personal. In a formulation anticipating his later, "to creatures, through creatures," Hamann expresses that, "God desired to reveal himself to *people*; he has revealed himself through *people.*"[101] That he never sought to rise above concrete communication into the silence of system and concept was frustrating to Hegel,[102] but just this is his value to modern thought, which is enthralled by escapism.

Perhaps Hamann's most provocative commentary on the divine image appears in his 1775 *Essay of a Sibyl on Marriage*, a brief address to a "blissful bridal pair."[103] Counseling against shame in this "masterpiece" of God's work, he summons them to sexual love and reproduction, comparing their work to God's own: "Let us make human beings, an image, which is like us." That human is called "a GOD of the earth, through its commission to be creator, self-maintainer and ever-multiplier of its race." Shame in such similarity to God is a "secret blemish of our nature, and at the same time a mute reproach of its majestic, only wise, and highly praised Creator." Sexuality belongs to that personal union in difference at the heart of creation. Bayer notes that elsewhere Hamann attacks as an unfortunate abstraction from male and female a habit of speech typical of both the Enlightenment and the present writing, reference to "the human" as such, without differentiation.[104] This too is an attempt to rise above the concrete and bodily, into the myth of an original androgyny. Difference is basic, and all creativity rests upon it. As he mischievously puts it to Herder, "The *pudenda* strike me as the only bond between creation and Creator."[105] What sounds

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[100] Hamann, *London Writings*, 1.
[101] Ibid., 7.
[102] E.g., "For his part, Hamann did not take the trouble that, if one may put it so, God took, albeit in a higher sense, that is, with open palm to unfold the clenched core of truth which he is (ancient philosophers said of God that he is a round sphere) in reality toward a system of nature, of the state, of justice and morality, of world history…" *Hegel on Hamann*, 39.
[103] Tr. Gwen Griffith Dickson, *Hamann's Relational Metacriticism*, 507.
[104] Bayer, *A Contemporary in Dissent*, 188. Hamann, "Schürze von Feigenblättern", in *Sämtliche Werke* III, 213.
[105] Hamann, *Briefwechsel* IV, 113. Cited in Betz, *After Enlightenment*, 180.

absurd or offensive is, in light of the relation between words and bodies, part of the original concrete of human exchange. In this light, Barth's interpretation of the image as relationality recovers slightly, not as a primary exegesis of Genesis 1:26-27, but as a description of the bodily capacity for real communication, which is a clear implication of the divine image.

The obverse of the bodily image is expressed in an early remark on Deuteronomy 4:12.[106] "You saw no likeness to anything except his voice; you saw his voice. Speech itself becomes almighty when God uses it for himself. You saw no other likeness, says God, than this repeated Word by which I have revealed myself, the Word of my Spirit, and the Word that was in the beginning and is God himself. What mysterious revelations! They are a likeness for us, a voice of God! How will the revelation be when we see him face to face?"[107] Speech itself is the form and likeness of God.

This linguistic form is not at all competitive with God's bodily humanity, but convertible with it. The same Spirit gives both speech and life to the body, and the same Word is eternal God and historical man. Hamann belongs even more clearly than Luther to the number of those who read Christ's humanity as prototype of rather than insertion into bodily human history:

> The God-Man, the Word revealed in flesh, God's Son, who, from eternity, had chosen the mystery of His incarnation and redemption in human form, is the Creator. Even though he was only born in the fullness of time, he regarded himself as our brother with our flesh and blood and created in our name, fashioning the whole of nature in the shape and after the likeness and image of the human nature that he would assume out of the love with which he created Adam in the image of God.[108]

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[106] "Then the Lord spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice."
[107] Hamann, *London Writings*, 65.
[108] From, "Deuteronomy 30:11-14 together with Romans 10:4-10" in *London Writings*, 339.

In Christ, the "whole of nature" is human, that is, made for communion with humans. Sin does not merely sever humans from God or other creatures, but from themselves, and so opposes nature. God is no longer gladly received and answered in created things, but rejected there, as God is also refused bodily in the Son, and in the Word of the Spirit. In the terrible silence that follows, there are no creatures, only sacrifices and idols, a diabolical cult under which neither God nor human is seen or heard. This is the hiddenness of the divine image and the hiding of God, which is overcome only when the Creator speaks to a creature, through a creature, an event known liturgically as absolution.

Such speech is a material interchange of divine and human, an "exchange of words" between God and sinner[109], an actual *communicatio idiomatum*. Its raw physicality and temporality preclude any escape into abstraction. The absence of mediation in so much modern theology cannot be overcome by a mere tale of participation. Participation without the particularity of medium, its occurrence to humans in time and space, remains a thin, fictive covering or resemblance, and so a merely notional union with God obscuring a real and unholy divide. True participation is an irreversible happening in which the concrete difference of words is final and certain.[110] The Bible, preaching, the sacraments, the liturgy - these are specified places in which God gives himself to remake humans in his image, one to another. The scope of that image is thus coextensive with Christian preaching, at once utterly universal and as particular as one's own baptism into Christ.

Human nature, and so the divine image, is to communicate God. The real essence of the creature is God mediating God, and the name for the word who is mediation itself, the communication of attributes, is Jesus. In this great high priest are Adam and Eve the priests and mediators of God to creatures great and

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[109] WPL, 22.

[110] Cf. Milbank on Hamann: "At the same time, God speaks the entire human text in the eternal Word and interprets it in the Holy Spirit. However, this plenitude of speech does not cancel out all written or oral difference, it is rather the infinite real difference, since 'infinity' posits a plenitude that does not lapse into a tyrannizing totality." *The Word Made Strange*, 78.

small, and each to the other. The covenants of God with Behemoth and Leviathan may in this age lie beyond the ken of Job[111], but not of Christ in whom Job is hid. The whole human is a divine communication, as Paul says, a love letter, Spirit written in flesh.[112]

[111] "Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook, or press down its tongue with a cord? Can you put a rope in its nose, or pierce its jaw with a hook? Will it make many supplications to you? Will it speak soft words to you? Will it make a covenant with you to be taken as your servant forever?" Job 41:1-4.
[112] 2 Corinthians 3:2-3

Resolution: Ethics, Eschatology, Anthropocentrism

I conclude by examining the human as the preached image of God from three perspectives, attempting to answer some nagging questions and unfolding consequences. Having spoken of a preached image, it is appropriate to ask after the use to which such preaching may be turned in the present (ethics), the relation of its futurity to that present (eschatology), and to reconsider the centrality of the human in relation to other creatures (anthropocentrism). Together, these perspectives help to lay out a vision for what a preached *imago Dei* has to offer in the life of the church and the wider world.

I. Ethics - Human without Diagnosis

Nearly everyone purports to know what a human is, and despite this, definitions and models - scientific, philosophical, religious - multiply by the day. The range of public controversies which at some level concern the purpose and boundaries of human life comprises everything from labor and immigration policy, to discrimination along the axes of race, sex, or disability, the status of the unborn and the mentally incapacitated, animal and ecological rights, and beyond.

Such questions are as disputed within the church as without, with hardly more clarity. In these circumstances, the image of God may be invoked in an attempt to bring that clarity, at least among those who share an affinity for the tradition of Genesis 1. Yet such efforts are rarely successful, throwing just one more vision of what a human is and does onto the pile. They may even become self-undermining, as every definition harbors the potential to be turned against some whom it judges inadequately human.

Gregory of Nyssa's early blow against slavery - "How many obols did you reckon the equivalent of the likeness of God?"[1] - illustrates both the effective use and

[1] *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on Ecclesiastes*, 74.

ethical danger of the image. Gregory does not fixate on a definition, but declares and reminds his hearers of the slave's dignity before God. Nevertheless, his understanding of the human implies a standard for assessing humanity: "You have forgotten the limits of your authority, and that your rule is confined to control of things without reason."[2] If a human unfit for slavery on account of their reason, an individual deemed deficient in reason is an appropriate, even natural, slave. In just this way Christians were historically able to subvert the aim of Gregory's homily and similar efforts to defend human dignity. Similarly, a decade ago I attended a lecture by a devout Catholic legal scholar who lamented years of difficulty in finding a priest willing to provide communion instruction for her developmentally impaired son. She was keenly aware of the perverse role played by the spiritual interpretation of the *imago Dei*.

Other common interpretations of the divine image easily fall prey to the same pattern. Relational interpretations offer their protection insofar as persons participate in the prescribed form of relationships. Fixation on the male-female relation, often by design, excludes those whose status does not match the recommended view of male and female. Functional interpretations (including description as an active imaging[3] or performance[4]) locate the human through characteristic activity. The image of God belongs to those who do likewise, just as the Babylonian monarch was the image of Marduk when he rode out to smite chaos, and excludes those who fail to perform. Should conformity to Christ instead be adopted as a standard, such legal Christology (What Would Jesus Do?) would fare no better than other heuristics for determining humanity. These problems are not eased as much as deferred by refusing ordinary humans as images of God. In that case, humanity will instead be measured from various common assumptions.

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[2] Ibid., 73.
[3] McFadyen, "Imaging God."
[4] O'Donnell, "Performing the imago Dei."

No simple universal is available as an answer; to say that the divine image is "everyone" is just to return to the problem of who counts. At one extreme this might be resolved by denying human uniqueness altogether. While Michael Burdett is correct that advances in the biological and information sciences do not so far undermine the image of God, as each model of the divine image preserves some form of uniqueness,[5] humanity becomes progressively harder to identify as empirical distinctions between humans and other creatures become increasingly technical. The human may be uniquely image of God, but its outlines are indefinite.

The final theological thesis of Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation* distinguishes between typically human and divine love, as between a diagnostic and a truly creative power: "The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through that which is pleasing to it."[6] Love may be understood according to Luther's later theology as the Word's creation rather than finding, the communication of the one who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.[7]

The image of God as a preached promise is not a definition by which one might find and identify a human image of God. It creates, and so obviates the Goldilockean fussiness of definitions which attempt to draw the circle neither too loosely nor too tightly. Preaching has no need to locate human dignity or uniqueness. Just as the church is called to forgive rather than merely identify sinners, so it must announce human life in full rather than settling for its delimitation, doubly so when humanity is distorted or obscured. Within this realm of proclamation, inclusion ceases to be a theoretical problem and becomes practical. Christians need not wonder whether some definition of the human excludes some hypothetical person; instead, they may open their mouths and do

[5] Burdett, "The Image of God and Human Uniqueness."
[6] LW 31, 41. WA 1, 354.
[7] Romans 4:17

what God has given them to do, resolving the question with certainty for real persons.

Approaching the human as a preached rather than empirical reality encourages a certain patience and realism, toward both others and oneself. The power of sin that is seen, even the *imago Satanae* that is witnessed, are not the human who will be. True humanity is an article of faith. The spoken image of God contends for the human against external evidence. However, in hearing this word believers are gifted with eyes of faith to behold a humanity which is not apparent to all. Christian work and witness on behalf of the most vulnerable depends on this.

Because it is hidden to sight but announced to faith, communication of the divine image can take on surprising shapes. In *Dignity*, Chris Arnade recounts his own transformation in the attempt to document, by word and image, the humanity of some of the poorest and most stigmatized Americans - the homeless, drug addicts, and sex workers. He describes his first encounter with Takeesha, in the Hunts Point neighborhood of the South Bronx, and her startling confession:

> She was working, wearing thigh-high faux-leather red boots, leopard-print tights, waving at whatever car or truck passed by. I had seen her before, and she had always smiled at me or waved, but I had never stopped to talk to her. This time she looked over at me, and with a big smile she yelled, “Hey, take my picture!” When I asked why, she said, “Because I am a sexy, beautiful prostitute.”
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> We talked, and over the next half hour she told me her life story. She told me how her mother’s pimp put her on the streets at twelve. How she had her first child at thirteen. How she was addicted to heroin. I ended by asking her the question I asked everyone I photographed: How do you

> want to be described? She replied without a pause, "As who I am. A prostitute, a mother of six, and a child of God."[8]

In this encounter, as in many others, the change belongs entirely to Arnade. He does not so much see through to Takeesha's humanity as she attests it to him, a Wall Street bond trader with a PhD in theoretical physics. His fashionably progressive opinions and polite atheism are confronted with their own insularity, not through accusation or argument, but by the self-disclosure of a living human, and of God speaking in that human.

The preached image of God is humanity passed one to another. No one is able to find it by looking inward but must always turn outward to hear (a truly eccentric existence). It is impossible to grasp in solitude - humans rely on one another as vehicles for their humanity. Receiving Christ in this preaching, believers receive themselves and one another together. The word, image of God, becomes and transforms a human body; but even more, for one another's sake, this body is transfigured into a new word, a place of communication. As the preached image necessarily turns and opens humans toward each other, it gives the basis of their care and common action toward the world.

II. Eschatology - Difference without Sin

As a preached promise, the divine image is something yet to come. This futurity cannot be escaped - a person grasps the image in faith, but cannot thereby look at their present or history for evidence, because the self that is open to investigation is the "man of dust,"[9] Luther's "old Adam." The humanity of *that* one remains ambiguous, until it passes away entirely. By contrast, the image is clear where it is given and taken hold of anew, as a promise. This divine declaration awaits no further development or realization by its recipient, as if it

[8] Arnade, *Dignity*, 7.
[9] 1 Corinthians 15:48

were a spark to be fanned to flame, but only God's revelation. The promised image is the whole, new creature into which we are transformed, and so the last and true human, Jesus Christ.

Wolfhart Pannenberg is outstanding in his attention to the eschatological character of humanity, but his approach to the image of God reveals a significant pitfall for Christian anthropology, raising the problem of particularity and difference in eschatological life, and so affords an opportunity to clarify. Pannenberg's contention is that the weight of the New Testament witness cannot be carried by an account in which restoration of the image in Christ is merely return to Adam's glory, and he faults Reformation and post-Reformation Protestant theologies in particular for this error. To some degree he shields Luther from the charge, but argues against any picture of an original perfection.[10] Christ is the true image, and other humans merely created according to his likeness, in order to grow toward him.

Pannenberg thus places himself within a genealogy of developmental views of the divine image, which he traces from Irenaeus through Pico della Mirandola and J.G. Herder.[11] The association of Irenaeus with this trajectory is doubtful. What characterizes both Pico and Herder, and to a great degree Pannenberg, is a notion of human development as open, free of particular determination. Just as for Pico the human's unique gifting was an absence of animals' determinate gifts, and for Herder the human was distinguished by an absence of instinct, so Pannenberg emphasizes an indefinite, open evolution, guided toward participation in Christ. Irenaeus' talk of Adam's infancy, while certainly developmental, does not rest on the same indeterminacy.

This developmental eschatological view agrees with the perspective of a preached promise insofar as it stresses end over origin. A return to the

[10] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* v.2, 214.
[11] Ibid., 217.

beginning is biblically unwarranted, and opposes proclamation by trying to meet God behind and before the world in which his word arrives to us. Such an essentially nostalgic *imago Dei* is of no use in the present. Insistence on an indeterminate future openness, however, reflects an unbaptized view of human temporality, not having perceived the New Testament's reconfiguration of time. Opposition between the image as human destiny and as original blessedness[12] is false; not because beginning and end are identical, but because sinners live in a world grown old in a way that our first parents originally did not. Compared to the present state of humanity, Adam's blessedness is yet to come, because it resides in Christ who is our determinate future.

Pannenberg's style of developmental anthropology assumes that we have advanced past Adam, rather than further into the devastation of his fall. Denial of a determinate future undercuts any notion of the future as promise and gift. Instead, an indeterminate eschatological image veers toward a task of self-realization, spoken of as vocation and liberation: "If the image of God in man is only realised in Christ, then it cannot have already been present in Adam, unless as a disposition: it must then be understood as the divine vocation of man in the act of his creation. This point of view has [...] liberated theological anthropology from its attachment to the doctrine of original state and enabled to acquire an evolutionary image of man."[13]

Pannenberg's attempt to preserve the proleptic character of the divine image through the language of indeterminacy cuts against his admirable Christological emphasis. This form of eschatology opposes the finite and determinate to the infinite and open, regarding the latter as freedom. The opposition is a metaphysical presupposition, which like its conception of the future is projected upon rather than received from Christ: "We are the theme of a history in which

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[12] Pannenberg speaks of original perfection rather than blessedness, but this is inapt. The Augustinian tradition presents Adam as sinless, not perfect, insofar as translation to a yet higher life still awaits him. Ibid., 218.

[13] Pannenberg, *Gottebenbildlichkeit als Bestimmung*, 22. Tr. in Bengard, "Imago Dei: God's Grace and Distance," 43.

we become what we already are. At present the goal is indistinct. It is not even present to us as a goal but only in an indefinite trust that opens up the horizon of world experience and intersubjectivity, and also in a relentless thrust toward overcoming the finite."[14] If the content of the human image of God is Jesus, then how can it be "indistinct" and "indefinite"? Even more, how can the one whose life is given whole in flesh be grasped by a "relentless thrust toward overcoming the finite"? Trust must be definite, else it has no object. Infinity is given in finitude, and remains there with us, in its reckless diversity and differentiation.

The divine image as preached entails its particularity and difference, precisely as eschatological. The ancient tendency to conflate ontological difference with evil is opposed throughout the Bible, from its first pages to its last. Genesis speaks the image of God as male and female from the start, alongside a host of other differences, reveling in these as *very good*. Sin is not difference - sin *opposes* real difference, especially that difference between creator and creature, God and human which is paradoxically confirmed in their intimacy by naming humans "image of God." Rejection of difference as sin, or forcing it into obscurity by speaking of an indeterminate, is itself sin.

The real unity declared in Christ is not erasure of the diversity of created gifts. God's own speech is polyphonic. While this is often inferred from the doctrine of the Trinity, it is much more visible in the particularity of the risen Jesus, and in the transfiguration in which Moses and Elijah are seen distinct and recognizable. The one new man - this odd Jewish man - is the source of all difference. This is the eternal oddity of the Incarnation. Only this particular man is capable of sustaining difference - difference without sin, without evil, and without opposition. When the law comes to an end in him, then so does that inexorable linkage between sin and difference. I am his, and found him, and instead of erasing my individuality he is its wellspring. What is proclaimed in Christ is the collapse of the polarity of universal and particular as a polarity. They cease to be

[14] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* v.2, 228.

opposites. The scope of the image of God is Christ's own, personal, and universal particularity.

It is in this light only that we can receive the original declaration of the image of God, with its strange oscillation between singular and plural, individual and species, both declaring and not reducing to the gendered pair of male and female:

> So God created humankind in his image,
> in the image of God he created him;
> male and female he created them.

III. Anthropocentrism - Priesthood and the Worship of All Creatures

Relatively few theologians are willing to strictly join the divine image with human nature. Some, following Philo and Origen, find the image in the rational, and so in a category both broader than the human and exclusive to its higher part. Others designate Christ as the divine image, including ordinary humans only in a secondary and diminished way. More recently, ecological critiques have led to consideration of the image of God as either shared beyond the human - potentially dispersed into creation as a whole[15] - or as unique to Christ so as to provide the human with no advantage over other creatures.[16] The concern behind this hesitancy is that concentration on the human image threatens usurpation of the glory that is God's alone, or diminishes the value of other creatures and improperly lifts the human to a position of domination. The proper place of the human must be a mean of sorts - neither too important nor too lowly, off-center enough so as not to cause embarrassment.

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[15] Horan, "Deconstructing Anthropocentric Privilege," 560–570.

[16] E.g., David Clough: "It is the unique event of divinity taking up creatureliness that results in the unique imaging of God. In this one creature is God truly revealed. This makes it clear that we can no longer speak without qualification of human beings as images of God." Clough, *On Animals*, v.1, 101.

However, the centrality of humans is spoken by God and sprayed across the pages of scripture from its first chapter to its last; it is the centrality of Christ himself. The Father is glorified in the Son, and the Son in his disciples[17] - the glory of God is a living human being. Likewise, the dominion given to male and female images of God is no attack on creation, but its crowning. What is human can no more diminish other creatures than it can diminish God; it is the capstone of creation, the priesthood which receives all things from God and offers them up again, one to another, in endless thanksgiving. In this respect, any truly theocentric Christian theology is unabashedly anthropocentric.

Even so, concerns should be taken seriously insofar as they observe fallen humanity and warn against misuse of the image. For all its beauty and intrigue, the dizzying panoply of human worship - which extends into every sphere of life, not only those named as religious - amounts to little more than debased self-worship and a constant assault upon God's self-giving in other creatures. At the same time, such worship is a denial of the promise of true humanity, refusing life as given, unasked and unearned.

The sanctuary of creation is a realm of profound liturgical confusion. Humans are priests, and will fulfill that vocation either in opposition to God or in true worship. This is perhaps the central anthropological insight of the Old Testament. Just as God once spoke to Moses that Israel should be a priestly kingdom and a holy nation, so Jeremiah excoriated his people for forgetting their priesthood:

> Even the stork in the heavens
> knows its times;
> and the turtledove, swallow, and crane
> observe the time of their coming;
> but my people do not know

[17] John 14:13; 17:10. Cf. 15:8.

> the ordinance of the Lord.[18]

"Times" indicates not plain chronological sequence, but the rhythms of life as hearing and response to the Word. The priests have lost the liturgy. This is the condition even of those who still have words from God, which ought to have made them holy among the nations. All of life is worship, and so all of life is awry; what was to be as natural as the response of the birds to the seasons is for us a matter of terrible ignorance, controversy, and sheer blasphemous invention. The highest worship of every human cult, in every clime and across all eras is the sacrifice of what is of most value - the human form.[19] All idolatry ends in slaughter. Small wonder that Christians, having learned something of the nightmare of history, would seek glory apart from the human. However, this is not God's way. Christ is neither angel nor anemone (and certainly not android), but the human victim.

Lynn White was correct to identify Christianity as the most anthropocentric of religions,[20] but mistook as its effect that which true anthropocentrism overcomes. Ecology is a human practice, and just so cannot really aspire to displace the human. Both Luther and Hamann note the violence by which the children of Adam enforce their fiendish simulacrum of dominion, but in turn imagine the natural and effortless dominion which was to have been and yet will be. Creation longs for human restoration, and suffers until it is accomplished. Their insight is not original, but the common heritage of the Christian faith as spoken by the apostle to the nations:

> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by

[18] Jeremiah 8:7
[19] This is obviously too broad to document, if anyone had the stomach for it. It is enough to note that human sacrifice developed independently on every inhabited continent and across myriad cultural and religious systems. While not necessarily frequent, it remains as the rarely approached religious maximum.
[20] White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis."

> the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.[21]

Paul's expectation is that the shape of salvation for all things is human. This idea has its precedent in the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, which speaks of a messianic shoot from the stump of Jesse, and while describing the coming ruler and his reign, suddenly shifts to creation:

> The wolf shall live with the lamb,
> the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
> the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
> and a little child shall lead them.
> The cow and the bear shall graze,
> their young shall lie down together;
> and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
> The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
> and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.
> They will not hurt or destroy
> on all my holy mountain;
> for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
> as the waters cover the sea.[22]

This picture is plainly impossible to those who view death as inalienable to nature. Critiques of anthropocentrism similarly assume that nature is already in view, obscured only by a certain remediable selfishness. Proclamation of the human image of God affords a different perspective, that apart from the revelation of the living human Christ, nature is yet unseen. Not only human nature, but all nature depends on him, such that there is no nature without

[21] Romans 8:19-21.
[22] Isaiah 11:6-9.

Christ. Nature only is in and through Jesus, and so in this way is nature itself human.

This is the profound fallacy of the post-human and the trans-human, substitute theologies which affect that the more-than-human is possible or desirable, and so presuppose a higher nature into which human efforts may ascend. Jürgen Moltmann exemplifies the Christian tendency to see nature apart from Christ, proposing that, "before we interpret this being as *imago Dei*, we shall see him as *imago mundi*."[23] The phrase *imago mundi* suggests an unfortunate dualism, implying that the divine life is only layered atop a creaturely, human life, rather than identical with it. Rather, there can be no priority of the human as *imago mundi* any more than a child could be first an animal and then a creature. Humans may arrive late on the sixth day, but they arrive as images of God who then enters into his rest, and the world receives them in this way as its own completion.

The Bible, in its anthropocentrism, is not primarily concerned with giving voice to the worship of plants, animals, and yet more alien things - they do this well enough on their own - but it is not silent about them. The ancient conception of the heavenly bodies as living creatures populates the night sky with beings capable of praise. God asks Job about the creation of the earth, "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."[24] The land itself rejoices with its human occupants when God saves them:

> For you shall go out in joy,
> and be led back in peace;
> the mountains and the hills before you
> shall burst into song,
> and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.[25]

[23] Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 186.
[24] Job 38:7
[25] Isaiah 55:12

John of Patmos agrees with the psalmist: "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, "To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"[26] or, more succinctly, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord."[27] The exchange of words between God and creatures encompasses the nonhuman. Far from undermining the priesthood of humans, this upholds their liturgical purpose, which is called dominion - to be themselves mediators of the exchange.[28] Idolatry is the destruction of this purpose, replacing God's image, which no human can make, with things God has given to and placed under humans, further reduced to a manufactured facsimile:

> Since you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire, take care and watch yourselves closely, so that you do not act corruptly by making an idol for yourselves, in the form of any figure—the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth. And when you look up to the heavens and see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, do not be led astray and bow down to them and serve them, things that the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples everywhere under heaven. But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron-smelter, out of Egypt, to become a people of his very own possession, as you are now.[29]

Egypt stands in as the iron-smelter, the crucible from which God's self-made

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[26] Revelation 5:13
[27] Psalm 150:6
[28] Joshua Moritz helpfully approaches the significance of the *imago Dei* with respect to animals and priesthood, but focuses on intercession for and restorative action on behalf of nonhuman creatures. He correctly identifies the link between the election of humans and the divine image, but sees that election largely in terms of historical process. Moritz, "Animals and the Image of God in the Bible and Beyond," and "Evolution, the End of Human Uniqueness, and the Election of the Imago Dei."
[29] Deuteronomy 4:15-20

image emerges. It is in the salvation of Israel from Egypt that Israel is raised up into a divine image; it is in the passion of Jesus, in his death and resurrection, that humans are images of God. Baptism is the Christian *mīs pi*. Because all things are gathered up in Jesus, received and offered through the human priesthood established in him, there is no cause to consider nature or matter in a nonhuman way. Such would be a return to the stone of the idol from the living flesh of the body. The human is a living union of dust and Spirit, a divine image precisely in its created animality.

We do not rightly perceive our world or ourselves because we cannot fathom that God has chosen us for this. The image of God is a gift of terrifying power and astonishing trust; it means that the creator has withheld nothing at all: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."[30] Creation is held secure in human hands, even as it appears to topple into disaster. From now until the last day the charge remains to speak the image in which we are spoken, the life of the risen Christ.

[30] Luke 12:32

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