

The Whole Counsel of God
Study 7

**IN THE IMAGE OF GOD:
THE FIRST TRUTH IN THE DOCTRINE OF MAN**

(G. T. Tabert)

***“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness:
and let them rule....”
(Genesis 1.26)***

In Gen 1.26-17 we have the first truth which scripture gives about man. It would not be accurate to say that we have the first vision of man. In Genesis 1 we are not made to see man. Man is not presented in his visible being. We only hear God speaking and declaring his purpose in creating man. Then in Gen 1.27 we are told of God’s act: that he created man according to his declared purpose. In the second account of creation, we are given a view of man. Here the narrative begins with God forming the body of man out of the dust of the ground. This is the visible side, and this view presents to our mind man in his physical features.

The order in which man is presented to our minds in Genesis 1 and 2 is important for the biblical doctrine of man. The truth about man does not begin with the formation of his physical being in this world. It begins with the creator’s purpose which was formed within God before he undertook to create man. The first truth about us is not what we are in our concrete existence on earth but what we are in God’s purpose for us. We must begin with listening and not with seeing.

Genesis 1.26 places man into a two-way relationship. God’s first utterance is “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” This defines man in relation to God. Then God decrees, “Let them rule...” and places man over all animals. This relates man to creation. Man is seen here in his relationships and for how he is to function. In this study we will take up the first relationship: that of God to man. In focusing on this relationship, we are running the risk of divorcing man’s relationship with God from his relationship with the world. We must guard against this. One spiritually fatal tendency in mankind’s religious thought is to isolate man’s spiritual side in which he relates to God from his physical relationship with the world. Such spiritualities are false and deadly. The whole Bible shows that man must actualize his relationship with God by the way he relates to the world around him.

While we must keep the two relationships in which God placed man together, it is of critical importance to distinguish them and keep them in order. Within man’s relationship with God, God imparts his image and likeness to man, and this is solely based on God’s purpose. This first truth is stated in God’s opening words, “Let us (God’s purpose) make man (God’s doing) in our image, according to our likeness (God imparting to man what comes out of God).” Within God’s relationship with man, in which God determines what is to be, man is set up to exercise his will and carry it through in ruling over creation. Our study of the first theme will show how God set up his relationship with man, and our next study will explore how man is to live out his role as the image and likeness of God.

A. MAN DISTINGUISHED BY GOD’S ACT OF CREATION

Before we sink into Gen 1.26, we must step back and see the creation of man within God’s total work. Stepping back ensures that we secure a total view of man in God’s purposes.

1. Man's significance within the order of creation

In our study of the doctrine of creation, we have already laid out the structure of the creation account. The work of creation is structured so that all moves up toward the creation of man as the last and the highest of all creations.

The movement toward man in Genesis 1 shows that the creation of man was the goal of the creative work. All creation finds its purpose in man. This is sealed by the way God evaluates his works. In each day of creation, God reflects on the work that he did and evaluates it. The creations before man are seen to be good, but his evaluation of the creation of man is very different. In reflecting on the creation of man, God does not see that man was good. Rather, we read, "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen 1.31). The creation of man impacted the assessment of the whole creation. With the creation of man all became very good.

Man is the crowning creation. All was created for him, and in him all attains its highest good. This is true to our experience. We can look at all things created and see that apart from us they are good. But, when we see how they are made for us, we see that they have a purpose beyond what they are by themselves. Man brings out the profound potential for good in what God has created. Take the minerals of the ground, plants and animals; man's use of them brings out wonders that are only latent in them and remain hidden when left to themselves. Without man, there is potential in the things created that is never brought out or realized. In a real way, in the creation of man all created things reach their full value and are seen in their supreme goodness.

We are dealing with the one creation that is God's true delight through which God realizes supreme goodness. This creation draws in all other creatures. In man the purpose and potential for all is realized. The very height on which man is placed and the fact that he brings the whole universe to its highest level should thrill us with our subject. What a great subject!

The fact that God saw that with the creation of man all was very good signals the end of the divine work of creation. In man set up as the image of God to rule, the work of creation in which God performed all by himself is finished. Nothing needed to be added to this work, and as a result God rested from his work. The further work to rule the creation is assigned to man as the image of God. God is not excluded from this, for man can only rule as God's image. But, now God's ongoing role in creation is through his relationship with man. This insight points to the significance of our subject. As we examine what it means for man to be created in the image and according to the likeness of God, we are studying the way God has set up the relationship in which he works and carries out his work within history. Just as God reached the completion of creation and his rest through the creation of man in the image of God, so all of God's work through history only reaches its completion in the full realization of what it means for man to be the image of God.

In Gen 1.26 God is stretching that line between him and his creature on which all of his revelation and work of redemption is hung.

2. Set apart by the creative word

Genesis 2.1 gives a summary of the six days of creation presented in chapter 1: 1) the heavens and the earth and 2) all their hosts. The six days of creation divide into two sections answering to these two sides of the world. In the first three days, the heavens and the earth are created, and in the last three days all their hosts, i.e., all that fills them, are made. The account of the work of each of the last three days is given in a set pattern. First we are given the creator's word (Gen 1.14, 20, 24), and then we are told of the creator's action in creating (vv 16, 21, 25). The account of the creation of man follows this pattern, but there are significant differences that set man apart from the rest of creation.

In each of the last three days of creation, God performs a double work of creation. On the fourth day he made the sun to rule the day and the moon to rule the night. On the fifth day he created the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, and on the sixth day he created animals and man. The double creations of the fourth

and fifth days are decreed in one word, but when it comes to the work of the sixth day, the divine words of creation are separated. There is a separate word for the creation of animals (v 24) and man (v 26).

The creation of the sun and moon on the fourth day answers to the creation of light and the division of day and night on the first day. The creation of fish and birds on the fifth day answers to the division of sea and the expanse of heaven brought about on the second day. The creation of land animals and man answers to the appearance of dry land on the third day. So, animals and mankind do not fill two separate spheres. They both fill the earth as dry land. In the realm of their existence, animals and mankind are united. They both live on and off of the ground, and this is seen in that man shares with animals a bodily nature that is dependent on and suited to the same physical environment.

The human eye can only see man in his physical environment, and if we based our understanding of man on our observations we would have to conclude that man is in a class with animals, although he is a higher form of animal life. This has been the dominant view of pagans and is the evolutionary view. We should take note that Genesis one presents the side of man's existence which classes him with animals, but it also shows that this side does not determine what man is. The other side is with God. It is invisible and is only revealed to us by God's word. So, we must listen to the creator's word, and here we see how man is different by creation.

The creator's word for the creation of the lights in the expanse of heaven and of the three classes of animals is a creative decree. God said, "Let there be...", "Let the waters team..." and "Let the earth bring forth..." When the creator undertakes to create man, he does not give a decree. Rather, God turns to himself and speaks in the language of divine counsel, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..."

3. God turns within to make man

The first thing that strikes us in Gen 1.26 is God's use of first person plural, "Let *us* make man in *our* image." What does this mean? One thought that we must rule out from the outset is that God is speaking to the angels who make up the heavenly court. In the Bible, the heavenly court of angels functions in the government of the world but not in the creation of the world. God's unique glory and position as God is first of all established in that he alone is the creator. Nowhere in the Bible is it suggested that angels had a role in the creation of the world. They are not co-creators with God. If they were, they would be gods of the world along with God. The Bible makes very clear that God alone is God.

When we read Gen 1.26 and 27 together, we see that God carried out his expressed intention, "Let us make man in *our* image" (v 26), by making man in *his* own image (v 27). The plural pronoun, *our*, in v 26, is answered with the singular, *his*, in v 27. The "our image" is simply God's image. There is no room for angels in Gen 1.27. We must be clear on this.

Excluding angels from God's counsel to create man precludes the idea that man was created in the image of angels. Angels are spirits, but man only has a spirit. We are not to think that man like an angel is a spirit, with the key difference being that in his case the spirit has a body.

Why does God refer to *himself* in the plural? The use of the plural is not grammatically problematic since the only title for God in Genesis 1 is the plural noun *elohim*. But, the common practice in the OT is to use the singular pronoun with the divine title, *elohim*. So the fact that God says, "Let us...", is not a matter of Hebrew grammar. We can exclude another explanation. In our European heritage, monarchs used the royal we. There is no trace of this in the OT, and this means that the idea of the royal we is foreign to scripture.

To solve our riddle, we must turn to parallels within scripture, and we do find them close at hand in Gen 3.22 and Gen 11.7. These passages show significant parallels with Gen 1.26. Just as in Gen 1.26, God is deliberating with himself. God's deliberations over the building of Babel throws light on God's use of this mode of speech. The LORD's counsel, "Come, let us..." answers to the human race's counsel, "Come, let us..." (vv 3 and 4). The race was still one at this time, and people were consulting among themselves for their course of action rather than obeying God who commanded mankind to fill the earth (Gen 9.1). In

direct contrast, we have God consulting himself to carry out his own purpose. This idea of God determining to carry out his own purpose against man's purpose and achievement is found in the deliberation of Gen 3.22.

In the three passages we are considering, the plural pronoun for God is strictly limited to his deliberations. When it comes to God acting, the narrative speaks in the third person, *he*. This underscores our observation that God's use of the plural for himself highlights the divine act of self-consultation.

There is another observation we can make. When God deliberates and refers to himself in the plural, he is stepping back and turning inward to decide on his course of action. When God retreats into himself, he is contemplating man's capacity to be like God. In Gen 3.22, he contemplates the fact that man became like God knowing good and evil. In Gen 11.7 he considers what people are doing in reaching to heaven and making themselves a name (v 4) and takes note of mankind's potential to carry through the human purpose in an unlimited way (v 6). Man in his collective strength shows that he is reaching for the power that belongs to God. In Gen 1.26, God also is contemplating man in his likeness to God, but this time it is not sinful usurping but the divine exaltation of the creature.

When God turns inward in his deliberations in Gen 3.22 and 11.7, he is drawing on what it means for him to be God against the purpose and attainment of man. We can apply this to our understanding of Gen 1.26. God is drawing on that which is within him in contrast to what can be found within the physical nature of the world.

Genesis 1 to 3 shows that there is a potential danger in man being created in the image of God. The fact that man was made in the image and likeness of God gives him the potential to cross the line that divides him as the creature and the creator. God's way of speaking in Gen 1.26 shows that man's likeness to God is not inherent in his creaturely being. God did not decree the earth to bring forth man in his image. The nature of the creature, or the will of the creature, contributed nothing to the fact that man is the image of God. Man was made in the image of God by God's own will and out of what God is in himself. Any idea of man evolving from below by the laws inherent in nature is excluded. Nothing in nature can raise itself up to likeness to God. Not even the powerful decree of creation can command the earth to bring forth the image of God.

What we are considering has profound implications for the rest of the Bible. Man has been endowed with God's likeness, but even with this he cannot of his own will and power make himself God-like. Any likeness to God must be given by God, and this is sealed in Christ. We only become the sons of God to be imitators of God through the work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The purpose that makes us what we are must be the divine purpose from within the divine being. It cannot be rooted in the potential of nature or come out of the will of the creature.

B. DEFINING THE KEY TERMS

After we read of God consulting himself, man is introduced with three significant terms: *adam*, image and likeness.

1. Adam

The Hebrew word *adam* is commonly used for man or mankind in the OT. From a mere reading of Genesis 1, we might think that this word is simply taken from the Hebrew language at the time the creation account was written down. Genesis 5.1-2, however, shows that this is not the case. We read that God "named them *Adam* in the day when they were created."

When Gen 1.26 reports that God said, "Let us make man..." it is not putting a Hebrew term into God's mouth. Rather, it is saying that when God said, "Let us make *adam*," he gave man his name. So we ask,

what is in a name? In the scriptures, a name that is given to a person or thing is not a mere label by which to refer to him or it. A name defines and discloses what a person (or thing) is.

Genesis 2.7 points to the meaning of this designation for man. It says that the LORD God formed man out of the dust from *the adamah*, i.e., the ground. To grasp the force of this statement, we must anticipate our next study. God did not make man by creating a spirit and then clothing it with a body made from dust. God formed man as a body from the ground and breathed into him the breath of life. Man is the combination of dust from the ground and spirit from God, but he is not a spirit. God said to Adam, “For you are dust” (Gen 3.19). In the OT man is flesh in contrast to God and angels who are spirit.

In Gen 2.7 we first see man as being made of the dust from the ground, that which he is from below, and this points to his lowly nature, and then we see God breathing in spirit. The same order is seen in the way God introduces man in his counsel in Gen 1.26. He is introduced as *adam*, the earthy being, and then exalted as made in the image and the likeness of God. Paul underscored this earthy identity of Adam in 1Cor 15.47. He said that the first man is from the earth, earthy. The word Paul used comes from the Greek word, *chous* (which refers to loose or heaped up dirt), and this word is used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew word for dust in Gen 2.7. We might translate with greater force as follows: “The first man is from the dust, dusty.” This is not a very flattering designation.

We can get a keener sense of the force of the name God gave man when we see it in contrast to the name our linguistic ancestors gave themselves and bequeathed upon us. Our word, *man*, goes back to an ancient Indo-European root that referred to thinking (our word *mind* comes from the same root). So, man was seen as a thinker. In this view, man is defined by his mental powers that place him over physical things. God, who set him over creation, gave man a name that pointed to his lowly origin in the soil. We must keep this in mind as we turn to the image and the likeness of God by which man is raised above the rest of creation. We must keep all exalted thoughts about man grounded.

2. Image and likeness

The key terms for the creation of man in Gen 1.26 are *image* and *likeness*. It is by these words that man is raised above the animals and all creation below him. These are the important doctrinal terms.

Our words *image* and *likeness* convey a general impression to us, but if we wish to ascertain in what way man is the image and likeness of God we must have a more exact definition of the terms. Here we have to do some extra work. We have the God-breathed scriptures, but they were not given with a God-breathed dictionary. We have to define the biblical words from within scripture, and this means doing word study. Scholars have wrestled with the meanings of the biblical terms, image and likeness. Because these words have become so heavily weighted, the scholarly studies of these terms have gone off in all the theological directions. This turns us back to the text of scripture to examine for ourselves how the words are used. Word studies can be difficult and even tedious, but they are necessary and rewarding. They make us acquainted with “the nuts and bolts” of revelation. We can change the metaphor. They give us the building blocks for doctrine. Accuracy is important if we are to proceed in constructing our doctrinal understanding with certainty.

a. Image

The Hebrew word translated with our word *image* is *selem*. This word has a weighty meaning when used for the creation of man in Gen 1.26, 27 and 9.6, and when used for Adam giving birth in his image in Gen 5.3. Aside for these passages, the word *selem* does not have a profound meaning. It is simply used for a visual representation or depiction of something.

The word is used a few times for idols. We should notice that this word is not used in the OT within the biblical commandments or teaching against idolatry. It is simply used to refer to the physical, tangible statues representing the gods which people make (Num 33.52; 2Kings 11.18; 2Chr 23.17; Ezk 7.20; Am 5.26). In Ezekiel we read of male images which depict men that the immoral woman (Israel) falls in love

with. In Ezk 16.17 the male images are simply statues of males, and in Ezk 23.14 the word *selem* is used for pictures of men (like pictures of lovers) drawn on a wall.

In 1Sam 6.5,11 we read of images that were not idols. The Philistines made golden copies or replicas of the mice and tumours that afflicted them. In these passages which we have been considering, the word image (*selem*) simply refers to a visual depiction that people make of gods, men or things to represent them.

The word *selem* is used twice in the Psalms for a form that appears. Psalm 39.6 says, “Surely every man walks about as a *selem*.” The psalmist is contemplating the illusory show that man is, causing an uproar and amassing riches. He appears to be something that will last, i.e., he amasses riches that ensure future existence, but he only passes away. The idea of visual representation is here. The form that is seen represents man in his claims to be secure and lasting, but it is only an appearance. In Psalm 73.20 the wicked in their prosperity are presented as an image which one sees in a dream that passes away when one awakes. Again, the image represents and depicts man in his prosperity, but it is only an appearance.

The word, *selem*, is used for a visual representation. An image can represent gods, people or things. The representation is visual. A name can also represent a person, but it is not an image. The image is not heard; it is seen. Now we can apply what we have found to Gen 1.26. When God made man in his image, he made man as a representation of God within the visible creation.

b. Likeness

An image (*selem*) is concrete. It is always something that is there, a visual representation. The word likeness (*demut*) is more abstract. It refers to the pattern or design of a thing. We see this in 2Kings 16.10 where the likeness of the altar is the pattern or design which is presented in a description of the altar. We have the image and likeness together in Ezk 23.14-15. We have already considered the images in v 14. These were the pictures of Chaldeans drawn on the wall. Verse 15 describes the specific dress, the belts, the turbans, and the appearance of officers, and these features are “the likeness of Babylonians in Chaldea.” The word likeness here refers to a correspondence of features. We see this in Ps 58.5. The wicked have venom “according to the likeness” of the venom of serpents. Their venom is not in the image of the venom of serpents, for then it would represent the serpent’s venom. But, it is according to the likeness of the serpent’s venom for it compares to this venom. The word likeness can refer to a comparison in what is heard (Ish 13.4) or seen (Ezk 1.13).

The biblical idea of likeness is used in the case against idolatry. Isaiah 40.18 asks, “To whom then will you liken (the verb form of the word in question) God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him?” Then Isaiah goes on to point out how an idol is prepared so that it will not totter (vv 19-20). He is not pointing to the shape of the idol but to the fact that it has to be made so that it will not totter. The contrast is with the power of God (vv 21-31). God is the creator of all, who rules all, and he is the everlasting God who does not become tired and gives strength to the weary. The point that Isaiah is making is important for our study. The point of comparison in a likeness of God is not in spatial features but in the dynamic characteristics.

Psalm 94.8-11 points to the likeness between man and God. It is not that God has a physical ear or eye, but that he who planted the ear hears and he who formed the eye sees (v 9). The idols are seen to be unlike God in the fact that while they have the physical form of the organs of sense and speech, they lack the faculties of sight, hearing smell, feel, mobility and speech (Ps 115.4-8; 135.16-17).

Animals have ears and hear, but they do not hear as man does. Man hears not just sounds but meanings communicated. Man does not just see shapes and colours but sees concepts with his mind. Man does not just make sounds. He communicates concepts. Man’s intelligent faculties compare with God’s faculties. This correspondence is foundational to all biblical revelation. God reveals himself to us in terms of our faculties. But, this does not mean that God becomes like us. Rather, it means that our faculties are like God’s, and this is rooted in the fact that God made man in his likeness.

c. Man in the image and according to the likeness of God

We have defined the key terms: *adam*, image and likeness. Now we must look at what understanding of man these terms present. We will begin by noticing that these terms anchor man in two directions. As *adam*, man is of the earth, a physical creature that stands alongside the animals. In the image and according to the likeness of God, man is tied to God.

Our examination of the biblical use of the word for image showed that the image is the concrete and visual representation. Without the physical substance of the statue or the visual outline and colour of the picture, there would be no image. Even in the dream, the image is what is actually seen. The image is not an abstract concept. It is concrete. When we apply this to the creation of man, we see that man is not the image of God in some invisible and spiritual part of his being. He is the image in his very nature as having a body in the world.

We saw that the likeness of God is more abstract. Here it is not man representing God but corresponding to God. Man was made with faculties that correspond to God's faculties. But, we must not think that this likeness exists apart from the image. When the scriptures say that God made man in his image, according to his likeness, it is referring to the one divine act of creating man, the Adam. Made in the image of God, man represents God in the physical world in which God is invisible. Made in the likeness, man corresponds in his faculties to God.

We saw that the likeness of man to God does not consist in man's physical shape or substance but in his dynamic faculties. Making this observation is important, for God is Spirit and does not have a body. But, in stressing this we must be careful not to separate the image and likeness of God in man from his body. Man is the image of God precisely because he is a physical being. Being physical, he is the visual representation of God. His likeness to God is given in his body, for he hears with his ears, sees with his eyes, speaks with his mouth, etc. There is no idea in the OT that the image and likeness of God in man is something that exists above or apart from his body. He is the image and likeness of God in his body.

3. The focus on God's act

We have begun to speak of man as the image and likeness of God. This is legitimate, as we will see, but we should point out that this is not how the OT speaks of man. The OT only speaks of God making or having made man in his image (Gen 1.26, 27; 9.6) and according to his likeness (Gen 1.26) or in his likeness (Gen 5.1). The focus is not on what man is but on what God made him.

This focus on producing the image is brought out in Gen 5.3. It is written that Adam "...became the father of *a son* in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth." Notice that in the translation quoted the words "a son" are in italics, which means that these words are not represented in the Hebrew text. The Hebrew text puts it this way: he (i.e., Adam) fathered or procreated in his own likeness, according to his image. The focus is not on Seth being born in Adam's likeness but on Adam procreating in his likeness.

The fact that Adam produced his son and imparted his likeness to him is essential to Seth being in Adam's likeness and image. The apostle Paul picks this up in 1Cor 15 47-49. He says that we have borne the image of the earthy man, i.e., Adam (v 49). This explains what he says in v 48: "As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy." Paul's point is that we have had Adam's earthy nature imparted to us, and the fact that we are the actual descendants of Adam is essential to bearing Adam's image. If God created a man identical to Adam (who was not a descendant of Adam), he would be like Adam but he would not bear the image of Adam. He would not represent Adam. In the language of Gen 5.3, he would not be in Adam's likeness and according to his image. The same applies to Christ's relationship with us. In 1Cor 15.48-49 Paul says, "...and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly...we will also bear the image of the heavenly." It is not a case of us being made heavenly alongside of the risen Christ, but of Christ imparting his nature to us.

Part of what it means for God to make man in his image, according to his likeness, is the direct creational link between God and man. Just as Adam imparted his likeness to Seth in the act of procreating, so God imparted his likeness to man in the act of creation. We are not simply dealing with an external resemblance between God and man. We are looking at the vital connection from God to man. This reinforces what we saw earlier. To create man in his image, God turned within himself. In a profound sense, God created man out of himself. God imparted to man, in the act of creating, the characteristics that God has in himself, and this is essential to the idea of man being the image of God.

The creational fact that man was made in the image of God is only explicitly referred to two times in the NT. James 3.9 points out that people “have been made in the likeness of God.” This language is taken straight out of the OT (Gen 5.1). James keeps the focus on the act of creation. Paul is the only biblical writer who calls man the image of God. He does this in 1Cor 11.7 when he says that “he is the image and glory of God.” A close look at the context of 1Cor 11.7 makes it clear that Paul is still thinking of the image of God in terms of the direct link between God and man established in creation. He does not base the statement that man is the image and glory of God on any features found in man. Rather, he is thinking of the fact that man originates immediately out of God and that the woman originates out of man. Man is the image of God because in creation he comes from God. What he was made was imparted to him from God, and this is not true of animals. They were created by God, but their nature and characteristics were not imparted to them out of God.

C. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE THEME OF THE IMAGE OF GOD

We have focused on study on Gen 1.26 which introduces the truth that God made man in his image and according to his likeness. Now, we will see what the rest of the Bible makes of this theme. We will limit ourselves to the explicit references to the image and likeness of God in man.

1. Theme development in the OT

After Gen 1.26-27, the theme of man as the image of God is only brought up two times in the OT.

a. Adam passed on his image and likeness (Gen 5.1-3)

The OT is clear in this: God’s act of creating man in his image is left to the sixth day of creation. God blessed mankind as male and female and said, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1.28). The way this blessing to procreate takes up the theme of the image of God in Adam is pointed out in Gen 5.1-3. God made man in his likeness, and Adam procreated in his likeness and image. Since Adam was made in the likeness and image of God, he passed the image and likeness of God on to his children.

Between Gen 1.26-27 and Gen 5.3, the fall of mankind took place. Seth was born under Adam’s sin outside of the Garden of Eden. When Adam fathered in his likeness and image, he passed on his fallen state. Was the image of God lost? Genesis 5.1-3 does not raise this question. What it presents is a straightforward transmission of image. God made Adam in his likeness and Adam procreated in his likeness which was God’s likeness. The rest of the scriptures confirm this.

b. Moral implications (Gen 9.6 and Jas 3.9)

Genesis 9.6 treats people in the fallen world as possessing the image of God in which Adam was created. This suggests that mankind did not lose the image at the fall.

In Gen 9.6 man is set apart from animals by the fact that God made him in his image. This takes up a theme built into the pattern of creation. Earlier we noticed how the way God created man as his image sets him apart from the creation of animals. In the Noachic covenant, God points out the moral implications of this. Animal life can be taken so that animal flesh can serve man’s need, but human life is not to be taken. God identifies with the life of man by requiring the life of man from every man or beast that takes human life (v

5). This is based in the fact that God made man in his image (v 6). God identifies with man in a way that he does not identify with animals.

James develops this moral application of the theme of God's likeness in man. He points out the contradiction in blessing God and cursing people who have been made in the likeness of God (Jas 3.9). The moral reasoning is parallel to what we found in the Noachic covenant. Man is identified with God. If we bless God, we are not to curse man. We cannot divorce the way we relate to man from the way we relate to God because man was made in God's likeness. The link between assaulting man with the mouth and murder was made by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, and James is following through on the logic established by his Lord.

Genesis 9.6 establishes the nature of the sanctity of human life, and this bears significantly on the questions of abortion and euthanasia, which are major issues of moral conflict today. The practice of terminating the foetus or of ending a person's life because of the degenerated state of the person's condition rests on the twofold assumption that 1) the sanctity of life is based on a certain state of the development and enjoyment of human faculties, and 2) human life is at the disposal of the human will. Genesis 9.6 does not base the sacredness of human life on a person's state but on what God has done in creation: God made man in his image. This is an objective fact that is as independent of my own will or performance as the divine act of creation is independent of the creature. When it comes to procreation, we must recall that the image is transmitted in the act of procreating. It is not secured in the development of the foetus. The sanctity of human life rests in the will and work of the creator that precedes our individual existence. It was established on the sixth day of creation, and is given in the very act by which the formation of the child is initiated in the womb.

2. The theme of the image of God in NT doctrine

The OT does little more than give us the concept of man as the image of God within creation with a legal application on the subject of shedding human blood. In the NT this theme is integrated into the gospel, and into the doctrines of salvation and of the person of Christ. Here the theme introduced in Gen 1.26 receives doctrinal development.

a. The theme of the image of God in the apostolic gospel (Acts 17)

We saw that the word *selem* is used both for man as made in the image of God and for the images of forbidden idols. The OT never squares the two concepts: the prohibition against making images of deity and the fact that man was made in the image of God. The two themes are, however, brought together by Paul in his message to the pagans of Athens.

Paul pointed out that God has assigned to the peoples of all nations the task of seeking him if perhaps they might grope for him and adds, "...though He is not far from each one of us" (Ac 17.27). Then he points out wherein this nearness of God to all people consists by quoting a Greek poet who said that we are all God's *genos* (v 28b). I give the Greek word Paul uses because it is virtually impossible to translate its full sense with one English word. The word *genos* has a range of meaning: race, stock, offspring, breed or kind. It points to the kinship between deity and humanity. Humanity is the descendent race of deity and is of God's kind. We found that the OT idea of man made in the image of God takes in this range of ideas. As the offspring of God, we have imparted to us features of God and have a certain kinship with God.

Paul uses the idea that people are the *genos* of God to point out the folly of idolatry. He states his argument in v 29: "Being then the *genos* of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man." Paul is taking up the two aspects involved in the image of God. We saw that the image has imparted to it the living and intelligent characteristics of God, but the nature of gold, silver and stone do not have these features. We also saw that essential to the idea of man as the image of God is that God made man according to his thoughts and purpose. The idol, in contrast, is not a creator of man but created by the art and thought of man, and as such it lacks the defining feature of the divine nature as the nature of the creator. Psalms 115.4-6 and 135.15-18 point out the two features that

show that idols are not true gods: idols are made with human hands, and they are formed of dead material and lack the faculties of intelligent life.

God made man in his image. In this God is truly represented. He is the creator, and he imparts those characteristics that give us a living connection with God. Man, in his fallen state, is far from God in his heart, and seeks to set up his contact with the divine in the images he creates. The images are intrinsically unlike God. They are the creations of man and so do not represent God as creator, and they are lifeless.

Paul in his message to the Athenians is not just making a case against idolatry. He is pointing out a profound truth. The pagan seeks a direct and tangible contact with deity. Paul points out that the nearness of God to us lies in our created nature. We are all the *genos* or the image of God. Man must find his contact with God in God's relationship with him, rather than in something outside of him that he sets up. This insight prepares the way for the presentation of Jesus. He is the Man whom God has appointed and through whom God will carry out his role as the judge of the whole world (Ac 17.31).

Through the truth that Paul points out in Acts 17, we can see how the fact that man was made in the image of God undergirds the whole Bible. In the scriptures, God reveals himself as the God who establishes his relationship with his people. He has revealed himself through the covenants he made by which he bound himself to his people and bound people to himself. The demand of this relationship is stated in the dictate, "Be holy as I am holy." People are called to a relationship which God gives, and in this relationship they are called to being like God. This is consummated in Jesus Christ. God is fully revealed in the act of joining humanity to deity, and we come to know God by becoming like God as true sons, and this is brought about as we become like Jesus, the Son of God.

Once we see how the truth of man being the image and likeness of God gives shape to all that the Bible teaches about the divine-human relationship, we begin to hear echoes of Gen 1.26 in statements like these: "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt 5.48); "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children" (Eph 5.1); "...conformed to the image of his Son..." (Rom 8.29), and many statements that express the same sentiment of likeness to God and Christ.

b. The theme of the image of God in the new creation

The idea that the image was lost or ruined through the fall of mankind has been argued from Col 3.9-10. In this passage the idea of man being created in the image of God is stated as follows: "Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self (man) with its evil practices, and have put on the new self (lit., *the new one* in contrast to the old man) who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him." The phrase, "according to the image of the One who created him," is a clear allusion to Gen 1.26. From this it has been argued that Paul teaches that mankind lost the image of God in the fall and that in Christ this image is renewed.

A careful examination of Col 3.9-10 and of Paul's teaching shows that the apostle was not thinking of a renewal of the image in which man was created in Genesis 1. Take a closer look at the phrase, "the image of the One who created him." The word *him* does not refer to Adam or the old man. Rather, it refers to the new man that we are to put on. This new man was created by God in Christ and is the new human identity that we put on (Eph 4.24).

The contrast between the old man and the new man answers to Paul's teaching on the comparison and contrast between Adam and Christ in Rom 5.12-21 and 1Cor 15.22, 45-49. Paul sees only two men who impart to us their identities and natures: the first man, Adam, and the last Adam (he also calls them the first man and the second man). God made the first man, Adam, a living soul (1Cor 15.45, referring to Gen 2.7). Adam imparted to us his earthy nature as a living soul (vv 47-49). Christ does not restore us to Adam's created state before the fall as if he was a renewed first man. Rather, he became a life giving spirit, and he is the heavenly man. By this Paul is referring to Christ in his risen state as the source of resurrection life and heavenly glory for us. Christ does not renew us in the original image but imparts to us his image in resurrection life.

The first man imparted to us his image as a living soul. His nature was of dust and so mortal, though as long as he did not sin he remained in the Garden with access to the tree of life and so would not die. Paul follows Gen 5.1-3 and teaches that Adam passed on his created nature. But, through his sin the corruption of sin and mortality took over. This corruption does not remove the image of God in Adam. It only adds corruption to it. Paul points to this fact of corruption in Eph 4.22 when he says that the old man is corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit.

Jesus Christ does not reverse the corruption to restore the first man. He died on the cross, and in his death the old man is crucified (Rom 6.6). He rose as a new man to give to us a new humanity. Paul does not see a return to the beginning but a new beginning. This new beginning is seen as a new creation that is parallel to but not the same as the first creation.

c. Christ as the image of God

So far we have only looked at the created image of God. God created Adam in his image (Gen 1.26), and in parallel with this God created the new man in his image (Col 3.10). There is another and higher image. We read in Col 1.15 of the Son of God, "He is the image of the invisible God" (see also 2Cor 4.4).

If we read Col 1.15 in comparison with Gen 1.26-27, we will see the difference between the Son of God and Adam as the image of God. We noticed that the Bible always sees Adam as the created image of God. In Col 1.15 the Son is the image of the invisible God "for all things were created...through him and for him." The Son is the uncreated image of God who represents God the Father, the invisible God, to all creation, for the whole role of God in relation to creation was and is carried out through him (see also Heb 1.2-3).

In the Son of God, the image of God is within the triune Godhead. This sheds a whole new light on God's statement in Gen 1.26. When he said, "Let us make man in our image," God purposed to create man in a position that is parallel to that of the Son in the Godhead. This laid the foundation for the incarnation. Because man is the one creature who stands in a position parallel to the Son, the Son could become human. As the image of God man represents God in this world, and as the likeness of God he is endowed with the characteristics of God; this made it possible for the Son to become human without giving up his relationship with God and correspondence to God and without destroying man's created nature. The fact that we were created in the image of God also makes it possible for us in our created nature to become like the Son of God.

In our study on the doctrine of the trinity, we saw how in Christ God is revealed in his relationships and existence prior to the beginning in Genesis 1.1. Here we see God as the eternal trinity of divine persons. The revelation of God in his eternal being before the foundation of the world discloses to us the eternal purpose of God that is prior to the purpose of God in creating man stated in Gen 1.26. What we see is wonderful. Behind God's statement, "Let us make man in our image...", is God's eternal act of predestining us "to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren" (Rom 8.29). This raises the theme introduced in scripture in Gen 1.26 to the purposes of God that encompass the eternal past and future.