

Running Head: IMAGE OF GOD

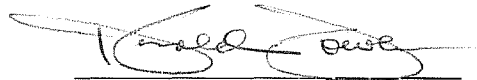
What It Means to Be Created in the Image of God

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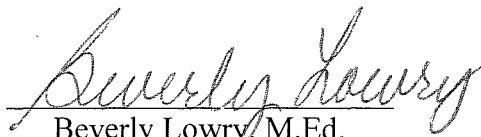
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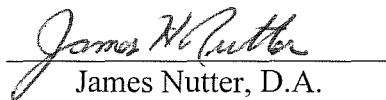
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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to understand what it means to be created in the image of God. In order to do this, both the form and function of the image of God in humankind are considered. Gen. 1:26-27 is the primary text, but is always understood in the greater context of Gen. 1-3, as well as the references to image and likeness in 5:1-3 and 9:6. Atomizing the form of the image of God into a particular human characteristic or attribute is proven to be insufficient, while identifying the function of the image of God as human dominion is revealed to be an over simplification of the issues at large. Instead, the likeness of the image of God in *adam* is understood to be the holistic human being as displayed in relational fellowship with God, dominion over creation, and intimate union with each other as male and female. From understanding the image of God in the human being, we learn four things about God Himself: that He is seeking to have relationship with the human being, that He has a kingdom in which humankind is invited to live and work, that there is a unified plurality in the Godhead, and that He has an intimate love for humankind.

### What It Means to Be Created in the Image of God

The purpose of this study is to understand what it means that humankind is created in the image of God. In order to do this, both the form and function of the image of God in the human being will be considered. Gen. 1:26-27 will be the primary text, but will always be understood in the context of Gen. 1-3, as well as the references to the image and likeness of God in 5:1-3 and 9:6.

The context of Gen. 1:26-27 is a very important clarification, for the majority of published research does not consider the so-called second creation account in Gen. 2 to be related or relevant to the creation account in Gen. 1. The study begins with the understanding that Gen. 1 and 2 are distinct but inseparable in their recording of the events of the creation of humankind. While Gen. 1:26-27 introduce the creation of humankind in the image of God, it is impossible to appreciate the full intended understanding of the image of God without understanding the expanded explanation of the creation of the male and female in chapter 2. Gen. 1 is a creation account that focuses on the form of creation and identifies the form of the image of God in man. The function of the image of God, which is essential for the understanding of what it means that humankind is created in the image of God, is only momentarily introduced in Gen. 1 and subsequently developed in Gen. 2. Therefore, there is a certain consistency, by obligation, of those whose source criticism approach requires their study to be confined to the so-called priestly account in Gen. 1, which is entirely isolated and incomplete in its understanding of the image of God. This study, through an appreciation of the unity of the two creation accounts, exposes the inadequacies of the conclusions made from Gen.

1:26-27 in isolation, and displays a proper holistic understanding of both the form and function of the image of God in humankind.

In seeking to define exactly how humankind is created in the image and likeness of God, a series of criteria are instituted as a filter towards an accurate and consistent conclusion. Developed from Gen. 1:26-7; 5:1-3; and 9:6, the image and likeness of God:

1. Distinguishes humanity from the animals.
2. Is consistent with the likeness and image of Adam in which Seth was born.
3. Is violated by murder.

With these criteria in mind, the study of the form and the function of the image of God can begin.

### The Form of the Image of God

Before discussing the question of what it means to be created in the image and likeness of God, one must first understand what is created in this unique manner. Gen. 1:26-27 [NASB] states, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man [*adam*] in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule . . .’ And God created man [*adam*] in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

The text clearly answers this initial question: *adam*,<sup>1</sup> or humankind, is created in the image of God.

A sense of climax in the creation account develops through the presentation of

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<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew term *adam* is a masculine noun that can be understood to mean “man” in reference to an adult male, or “humankind” in reference to the human species encompassing both male and female. From the clear incorporation of male and female in *adam* from 1:27, *adam* will be understood in this study to mean humanity, or humankind, encompassing, without exclusion or emphasis of one or another, both male and female. The proper and unitalicized name “Adam” will be used when the first male is to be recognized as distinguished from the original human pair.

God's declaration. The shift from jussive verb ("let there be") in the previous days of creation to a cohortative ("let us make") alerts the reader to anticipate something momentous is about to happen.<sup>2</sup> The animals that precede *adam* are created according to their own kinds. The sea creatures, birds of the air, beasts, cattle, and things that creep on the ground are all made after their own kinds, to look and act like their own species. This distinction, however, is not made of the *adam*. Humanity is uniquely introduced as created in the image and likeness of God. John Sailhamer explains, "Man's image is not simply of himself; he also shares a likeness to his Creator."<sup>3</sup> In some way, humankind is made after God's own kind. In addition to this unique mold, humanity is specified as male and female and given dominion over the animals that preceded him.

These distinctions beg the anthropological question: What exactly is this unique *adam*? How is humankind created in the likeness of the image of God? While this may seem to be a simple question, the Christian church has historically held an incomplete picture of humanity's uniqueness as the image and likeness of God.

#### The traditional view: Spiritual qualities.

Espoused by Philo and accepted by the early church, the traditional view proposes that humankind's uniqueness be specified to its spiritual qualities and capacities. This position is founded on the dual recognition that these spiritual qualities differentiate humans from animals and enable the male and female to have the dominion they are assigned. This traditional view remained prominent throughout a great duration of

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company:1990), 134.

<sup>3</sup> John Sailhamer, *Genesis*, EBC, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 37.

church history, though various commentators throughout the centuries have emphasized different aspects of man's unique possession and practice of intellect, will, reason, logic, personality, and self-consciousness as the definitive elements of the image of God in which humankind was created. Augustine emphasized the power of the soul, memory, intellect and will.<sup>4</sup> A Jewish writer understood man's unique imaging of God as his "spiritual capacities and a duly instituted ruler of noble qualities."<sup>5</sup> A Greek Orthodox theologian explains, "We understand the likeness to the divine in a person to consist mainly in human intellect and freedom."<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, a Roman Catholic dogmatic theologian summarizes, "It is the spiritual nature of human beings that really puts them in the image and likeness of God."<sup>7</sup> Though the specific qualities or characteristics emphasized have shifted between different commentators, the consistency of the traditional view is the focus on humankind's spiritual capacities as the quality definitive of the unique *adam*.

While the spiritual capacities of humanity distinguish the male and the female from the animals, and the traditional view does not contradict the uses of image and likeness in Gen. 5:1-3 and 9:6, this view is not supported by the Gen. context and is incomplete in its understanding. First and foremost, there is no mention anywhere in the direct context of Gen. 1 that suggests that the original pair's imaging of God relates to

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, tran. J. J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 149.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Benno Jacob, *Das erste buch der Tora: Genesis* (Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1934), 59, as cited in Westermann, 149.

<sup>6</sup> P. N. Bratsiotis, "Genesis 1:26 in der orthodoxen Theologie," *EvTh* 11 (1951/52): 15-44, as cited in Westermann, 149.

<sup>7</sup> Gottlieb Sohngen, "Die biblische Lehre von der Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen," *Festgabe Erzbischof Jager, Bischof Stahlin* (Munster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1963), 26, as cited in Westermann, 149.

their spiritual capacities. Karl Barth notices, “The biblical witness makes no reference at all to the peculiar intellectual and moral talents and possibilities of man, to his reason and its determination and exercise.”<sup>8</sup> The traditional view is based solely off the recognition of humanity’s uniqueness among the animals. Though these qualities are essential for the dominion the male and female are assigned, they are not definitive of who humankind is. Due to the lack of scriptural foundation, the traditional view seems too vague and leaves too much room for the commentator’s interpretation and emphasis on whichever characteristics of humankind he/ she feels are most important. Furthermore, the traditional view ignores the consistent use of *tselem* (“image”) throughout the Old Testament.<sup>9</sup> This refutation does not deny that the spiritual attributes of humans do in fact reflect an element of mankind’s uniqueness as the image of God, but they do not do so exclusively.

#### The modern view: Corporeal attributes.

Old Testament scholarship in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century created a dramatic shift in the understanding of unique human imaging of God from one’s spiritual characteristics to one’s corporeal, or physical, attributes. Often recognized with H. Gunkel’s conclusion that Gen. 5:3 requires the image of God to refer to the human corporeal appearance,<sup>10</sup> this new perspective was formulated by P. Humbert’s 1940 word

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<sup>8</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. J.W. Edwards, O. Bussey, Harold Knight, vol. 3:1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), 185.

<sup>9</sup> Detailed discussion of *tselem* to follow.

<sup>10</sup> Gunkel concluded that the same principle must apply to Adam’s begetting of Seth “in his own likeness, according to his image” (5:3) as in the creation of man “in (God’s) image, according to (God’s) likeness” (1:26). If man’s procreation is parallel to man’s creation in God’s image and likeness, then image and likeness must refer to corporeal appearance. Cf. Westermann, 149 or Barth, 193.



study<sup>11</sup> giving detailed attention and study of the terms *tselem* (image) and *d'mut* (likeness).

*Tselem* is rarely used in the Old Testament, and even more rarely in the context of the image of God. Only Gen. 1:26,27 and 9:6 specifically use the phrase “image of God.”<sup>12</sup> *Tselem* is used to refer to an idolatrous image in Num. 33:52; 2 Kin. 11:18; 2 Chr. 23:17; Ezek. 7:20; 16:17; 23:14; Amos 5:26. In 1 Sam. 6:5,11 *tselem* refers to images or models of tumors and mice that the Israelite priests instruct the Philistines to make. J. Maxwell Miller defines *tselem* as “a concrete term which is normally used in the OT to refer to a model or an idol of something and always has to do with a similarity in physical appearance.”<sup>13</sup> Horst further explains *tselem* to mean, “A hewn or carved statue such as an idol; altar also a sculpture, a facsimile in general; and finally, indeed, on one occasion a relief, and engraving. This word signifies, therefore, in every case a manufactured work in contrast to its subject; it means the picture prepared as a ‘copy,’ and stresses thereby its faithful agreement with the ‘original’.”<sup>14</sup> The Hebrew word *tselem* used to describe humanity clearly carries a physical denotation,<sup>15</sup> not exemplified in the traditional spiritual explanation of humanity’s unique imaging of God.

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<sup>11</sup> P. Humbert, “Etudes sur le recit. . . , L’imago Dei dans l’AT,” *Memoires de l’Universite de Neuchatel* 14 (1940):153-165, as referred to in Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1987), 30 and Westermann, 149.

<sup>12</sup> see also Gen. 5:1-3.

<sup>13</sup> J. Maxwell Miller, “In the ‘Image’ and ‘Likeness’ of God,” *JBL* 91 (1972): 291.

<sup>14</sup> Friedrich Horst, “Face to Face: The Biblical Doctrine of the Image of God,” *Interpretation* 4 (July 1950): 260.

<sup>15</sup> There are two exceptions to this corporeal use of *tselem* found in Ps. 39:6 and 73:20 where *tselem* is used to mean a phantom (paralleled with vapor) or dream respectively. Hamilton notes, “If *tselem* in these two texts is the same word used in Genesis and in the passages cited above, then it may be used for purposes other than describing the physical imitation of something. Here *image* would be something conveying the idea of emptiness, unreality, insubstantiality” (135). This, however, is not a necessary conclusion. J. Barr [“The Image of God in the Book of Genesis- A study of Terminology,” *BJRL* 51 (1968-69): 21] proposes and endorses the view that the *tselem* in these two Psalms is actually a different

This corporeal understanding of image is further reinforced by the term *d'mut*. Horst continues in his discussion of terms: “The word used in the second part of the word pair (*d'mut*) also denotes a copy. But the meaning is more abstract and weaker, the peculiar shade of meaning here lying in the resemblance which permits picture and original to be compared with one another. ‘Likeness’ is, therefore, the resemblance of the copy, and the likeness intended here would be that of the ‘facsimile’.”<sup>16</sup> Though more abstract than the primary term *tselem*, *d'mut* is still normally used in connection with visual similarities, and often carries the connotation of “has the appearance of.” In 2 Kin. 16:10, the altar is a copy, but not the real thing. In Dan. 10:16, there is the appearance of a hand writing on the wall, but it’s not really a hand. This concept is also apparent in Ezekiel’s description of the living beings in Ezek. 1:1-10. Miller concludes that although descriptions in Isaiah and Ezekiel are intentionally vague, “it is altogether clear from their descriptions, however, that God’s bodily form was understood to be essentially like that of a man.”<sup>17</sup>

Based upon these understandings of the terms *tselem* and *d'mut*, Humbert makes the exaggerated conclusion that humanity’s uniqueness is defined exclusively by corporeal appearance.<sup>18</sup> This new perspective continued to blossom among scholars, developing the conclusion that humankind’s unique imaging of God is displayed through the human corporeal presence. Gerhard von Rad says, “[The image and likeness] relate

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word, having its cognate in the Arabic *zalama* and corresponding with the Ethiopic word “be dark,” from which the Hebrew word *salmawet* (“shadow of death”) comes. See also Miller, 291 in support of Barr’s view.

<sup>16</sup> Horst, 260.

<sup>17</sup> Miller, 292, cf. J. Barr, “Theophany and Anthropomorphism in the OT,” *VTSup* 7 (1959): 31-38.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Humbert, 153-163, as cited in Wenham, 30.

equally, if not first and foremost, to the splendor of his bodily form.”<sup>19</sup> W. Zimmerli adds, “The human form is an image of the divine form.”<sup>20</sup> Ludwig Kohler concludes rather drastically that the definitive quality of humanity is upright posture.<sup>21</sup>

The conclusion that the image of God is found in the human’s corporeal attributes is supported by Miller’s comments regarding the relationship between *tselem* and *d’mut* in Gen. 1:26: “When two terms are used together as *tselem* and *d’mut* are in these passages, it is not the term with the broader and less specific meaning which affects the implications of the more specific one, but the other way around. If anything, *tselem* seems to clarify the rather vague implications of *d’mut* in these passages by specifying that the similarity between God and man to which it refers has to do with their corporeal appearance.”<sup>22</sup> Miller’s conclusion, therefore, is that the male and female are not only made in the general likeness of God, but specifically the corporeal form of God.

While the research of modern Old Testament scholars is appreciated, the conclusion that corporeal appearance is the exclusive or definitive quality consisting of the image of God in humanity oversimplifies the issues at large. The recognition of physical appearance in Gen. 5:3 and the study of the individual words *tselem* and *d’mut* are helpful, but just as with the traditional view, there is no evidence in the immediate text of Gen. 1 that suggests the unique image humanity bears refers to the human corporeal appearance. In response to Gunkel’s conclusion, Barth comments,

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<sup>19</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D.M.G. Stalker, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 145.

<sup>20</sup> W. Zimmerli, *Das Menschenbild des Alten Testaments*, *ThEx*, NF 14 (1949): 19ff. As quoted in Westermann, 149.

<sup>21</sup> Ludwig Kohler, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. A.S. Todd, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 147.

<sup>22</sup> Miller, 294.

Neither in Gen. 5 nor Gen. 1 is there any obvious mention of form or appearance as the *tertium comparationis* between original and copy. Again, the realism of what the Old Testament says about the quasi-human members of God is only meant, like the references to His knowledge, will, speech and activity, to give concrete attestation to the fact that He is genuinely and supremely the living God. But nowhere is there any independent interest in the realism, and it nowhere claims to give concept or picture of God as a magnified and more terrible man. Finally the passage Gen. 1:26-31 does not seem to pay any more attention to the body of man than it does to his soul, intellectual and spiritual nature.<sup>23</sup>

Placing the human posture as the definitive uniqueness of humanity is equally as overdrawn a conclusion as the limiting of the image of God to personality, intellect, or emotional capacities. Mere differentiation of physical appearance does not draw a sharp enough distinction between the human image bearer and animal.

Furthermore, the suggestion that the human form is a corporeal model of the divine form assumes the false notion that God has a corporeal form to be modeled. This is, as K. Gallig says, “too great an assimilation of God to human categories.”<sup>24</sup> The Bible does speak of God anthropomorphically, but that does not allow one to conclude that God has a corporeal form that the original pair are created to resemble. Horst explains the proper understanding of the corporeal relationship between God and humanity:

Whenever the Bible speaks of God anthropomorphically, we may observe how, precisely there, it is striving to hint at God’s wonderful and mysterious being and dealings, as if speech were a stammer which is trying to express the highest and most real quality of the living God. Thus, it is certainly not as if, in speaking of the divine image with which man was endowed, anything were said from a human point of view concerning God, concerning his form, his appearance, his nature, or his essence. Rather the situation is quite the reverse: for the concept merely seeks

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<sup>23</sup> Barth, 193-4.

<sup>24</sup> K. Gallig, “Das Bild vom Menschen in biblischer Sicht,” *Mainzer Univ. Reden* 3 (1947): 11ff, as cited in Westermann, 150.

to suggest and to claim that that which is peculiarly man's, the real and true manhood of man, is a mystery which comes from God.<sup>25</sup>

Concluding that man's corporeal form alone is the definitive characteristic of God's image presents a limited understanding of the Godhead and of humankind. This conclusion limits God to a corporeal form and is not distinctive enough to separate humanity from the animal kingdom over which the male and female are placed. Clines further summarizes this important understanding: "The primary function of an image is to express, not to depict. . . That man is the image of God need not in itself imply any similarity between man and God, especially if, as we have argued above, there is no *tselem* of God on the pattern of which man could have been made."<sup>26</sup>

The use of the terms *tselem* and *d'mut* in relationship with each other is accurately understood to be a clarification that humankind is a resemblance of God, rather than a literal bodily replication.<sup>27</sup> Clines describes humankind as a representational image.<sup>28</sup> Barr specifically states that *d'mut* is used to "define and limit" the meaning of *tselem*,<sup>29</sup> so that, as Horst says, "the uniqueness of God will be guarded."<sup>30</sup> The conclusion that *d'mut* is used as a directive tool to understand the accurate denotation of *tselem* is consistent with the writer's use of a major word followed by a minor word.<sup>31</sup>

It is vital for our understanding of humanity to recognize that *adam*'s corporeal appearance is an expression of God, but not an exact depiction of the divine form.

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<sup>25</sup> Horst, 264.

<sup>26</sup> D.J.A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," *Tyndale Bulletin*, 19 (1968), 90.

<sup>27</sup> This contrasts Miller's suggestion that *tselem* modifies *d'mut* requiring a literal corporeal image.

<sup>28</sup> Clines, 91,92.

<sup>29</sup> Barr, "The Image of God in the book of Genesis," 24.

<sup>30</sup> Horst, 261.

<sup>31</sup> In Gen. 1:26-28 alone, five word pairings are observed: image and likeness; create and make; male and female; fruitful and multiply; rule and subdue. Cf. Hamilton, 134.

Likewise, spiritual attributes distinguish humankind from the animal kingdom but are not in themselves definitive.

The suggested solution: The holistic human being.

Scripture itself states, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him” (Gen. 1:27). This chiasmic and climactic statement does not make any suggestion or reference to any specific character trait of the human being as possessing the image of God. It is, therefore, an overstatement to highlight one aspect of humanity over another when scripture makes no effort to do so. Instead of making overdrawn conclusions from outside the text that limit the full essence of the human being, the image bearer can be fully understood through a study of Gen. 2. But first, from a deductive and inductive look at Gen. 1:26-27, one can accurately deduce that *adam* is holistic and inductively recognize that *adam* is multigenderal as both male and female.

There is no textual reason to understand *adam* in 1:26-27 to mean anything short of the human as a holistic being. Suggestions that the image of God is captured in a particular human characteristic has developed solely from anthropological and lexical approaches that do not consider the text as a whole. F.K. Schumann says, “The Imago Dei does not consist in any particular detail of the person but describes the human being as a whole without limiting itself to anything taken in isolation.”<sup>32</sup> The discussion of human spiritual and corporeal aspects as the image of God is not wrong in and of itself, but merely incomplete. Problems begin when the attempt is made to separate the male and female’s spiritual nature from their physical existence. Clines explains,

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<sup>32</sup> F.K. Schumann, *Von Geheimnis der Schopfung: Creator spiritus und imago Dei* (Gutersloh: Der Rufer Evangelischer, 1937), as cited in Westermann, 150.

Man according to the Old Testament is psychosomatic unity; it is therefore the corporeal animated man that is the image of God. The body cannot be left out of the meaning of the image; man is a totality, and his 'solid flesh' is as much the image of God as his spiritual capacity, creativeness, or personality, since none of these "higher" aspects of the human being can exist in isolation from the body. The body is not a mere dwelling-place for the soul, nor is it the prison-house of the soul. In so far as man is a body and bodiless man is not man, the body is the image of God; for man is the image of God. Man is the flesh-and-blood image of the invisible God. This is not to say that it is the body as opposed to something else, e.g. the spirit, that is the image of God. For the body is not "opposed" to the spirit; indeed as far as the image is concerned at least, what the body is the spirit is.<sup>33</sup>

The human body and spirit complement each other. The two are so intimately intertwined that to try to explain one without the other is ridiculous and irrelevant.

It is a misdirected attempt to try to identify specific traits possessed by humankind that exemplify the human uniqueness before God. Claus Westermann points out, "The discussion whether the image and likeness of God referred to the corporeal or the spiritual aspect of the person has brought us to the conclusion that the question has been placed incorrectly. Gen. 1:26f. is concerned neither with the corporeal nor with the spiritual qualities of people; it is concerned only with the person as a whole."<sup>34</sup> Wenham adds, "The image of God must characterize man's whole being, not simply his mind or soul on the one hand or his body on the other."<sup>35</sup> Even Gunkel admits, "The image and likeness of God is concerned primarily with the human body but by no means in such a way as to exclude the spiritual."<sup>36</sup> Clearly, both the physical and spiritual elements of humankind are incorporated in the human image bearing.

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<sup>33</sup> Clines, 85-86.

<sup>34</sup> Westermann, 150.

<sup>35</sup> Wenham, 30.

<sup>36</sup> As quoted in Westermann, 149, cf. Wenham, 30.

*Adam* is holistic. The image and likeness of God that makes humankind unique is the very fact that he and she are human. Instead of trying to divide the human being into characteristics that image God's likeness to varying degrees, one must recognize that the whole essence of the human being is the unique image and likeness of God. Barth explains, "It [the image of God] is not a quality of man. Hence there is no point in asking in which of man's peculiar attributes and attitudes it consists. It does not consist in anything that man is or does. It consists as man himself consists as the creature of God. He would not be man if he were not the image of God. He is the image of God in the fact that he is man."<sup>37</sup>

So then, what is *adam*? *Adam* is the unique creation of God made in the image and likeness of the Divine Creator. The text does not indicate any particular trait or characteristic that carries the image of God, only the human being itself. The holistic human being images God, including both spiritual capacities and physical presence. The two cannot be separated or excluded from the other. Understanding the holistic human being as the image of God brings great appreciation of the human existence. Clines states, "The importance of this understanding of the image is obvious; the value of the body is strikingly affirmed."<sup>38</sup> W. Eichrodt adds, "The body is not an object which we possess, but which stands outside our real being; it is not simply the natural basis and instrument to which we are assigned, but which does not belong to our essential self. It is the living form of our essential self, the necessary expression of our individual existence,

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<sup>37</sup> Barth, 184.

<sup>38</sup> Clines, 86-87.



in which the meaning of our life must find its realization.”<sup>39</sup> The human being, in its entirety, is essentially the image and likeness of God.

Before concluding the discussion of what *adam* is, one must recognize the crucial clarification regarding *adam* given by the author of Genesis. In 1:27, the author clearly states, “And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; *male and female* He created *them*.”<sup>40</sup> Humankind, *adam*, includes both male and female. The repeated use of the plural pronoun<sup>41</sup> draws attention to the cohesive union between the male and the female. As Wenham points out, “The definite article is used, and clearly humankind in general, ‘male and female,’ not an individual, is meant.”<sup>42</sup> In this, the first statement introducing humankind, God immediately displays the union of the male and the female created in His unique image and likeness. Clines explains, “The image of God does not subsist in the male but in mankind, within which woman also belongs.”<sup>43</sup> Martin adds, “Neither sex is the image of God to the detriment of the other: it is humanity as male and female which embodies something of God in this world.”<sup>44</sup> One of the key elements to understanding holistic humanity is that *adam* is male and female. The male and female are not only equally definitive, they are co-definitive of humankind. Westermann states, “There can be no question of an ‘essence of man’ apart from existence as two sexes. Humanity exists in community, as one beside the other, and there

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<sup>39</sup> Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J.A. Baker, vol. 2, (Westminster: Philadelphia, 1967), 149.

<sup>40</sup> Emphasis mine.

<sup>41</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural “them” is used four times in 1:26-28, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural “you” is used twice in 1:29.

<sup>42</sup> Wenham, 32.

<sup>43</sup> Clines, 95.

<sup>44</sup> Martin, 255.

can only be anything like humanity and human relations where the human species exists in twos.”<sup>45</sup> There can be no question as to the unity of male and female in this passage. The two are inseparable. This unified relationship is the springboard the author uses to lead into a detailed recording of the events bringing male and female together in Gen. 2. God’s only negative statement regarding His creation is made in reference to the male being alone, thus prompting the creation of the woman. After the creation of the woman, the first time the male and female are mentioned separate from one another is at the fall when Satan either crafts or capitalizes on their vulnerability. Barth summarizes, “Men are simply male and female. Whatever else they may be it is only in this differentiation and relationship. . . . Man can and will always be man before God and among his fellows only as he is man in relationship to woman and woman in relationship to man.”<sup>46</sup> The author clearly does not intend *adam* to be understood apart from male and female.

Concluding, Gen. 1:26-27, in consistency with the creation account, identifies how the first human beings were created. While the animals are created after their kind, the humankind is created in the likeness of the image of God. The likeness of the image of God is not found only in human spiritual capacities or physical posture, but in holistic male and female.

### The Function of the Image of God

With this explanation of image understood, one can expand the understanding of what it means to be created in the image and likeness of God by turning attention to the functional image of God in *adam*. This aspect of the definition of the image of God does

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<sup>45</sup> Westermann, 160.

<sup>46</sup> Barth, 186.

not ask how is the human being made, or in (from) what is *adam* made, but *for* what is the human made? In this, one recognizes that the image of God in humankind is dualistic, explaining both the form and the function for which he is created.

The very creation of humankind in the unique form of the likeness of the image of God certainly begs speculation as to why God would go to this creative measure. Two potential functions of the image of God arise from the text. From the study of Gen. 1:26-30, some argue that the human's functional imaging of God is exclusively their dominion as a royal representative of God. However, the male and female's relational qualities carry heavier emphasis in Gen. 2. Unfortunately, the discussion of function often replaces or overshadows the identification of the form of the image of God. Clines identifies the dualistic aspects of the image of God as ontological (or form) and existential (or function). Though the ontological is the primary aspect in view in 1:26-27, Clines accurately argues that the existential element "can hardly be excluded from the content of the image itself."<sup>47</sup> The form and function of the image of God are so intimately intertwined that only together is the full understanding of the image of God in humankind achieved. Defining the image of God apart from both perspectives is incomplete.

While Gen. 1:26-27 identifies the form of the image of God as holistic male and female, their function is only briefly introduced. Therefore, the author's understanding of the human likeness to the image of God can only be fully appreciated through

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<sup>47</sup> Clines, 101. Clines unfortunately identifies the image bearing function of man to be dominion over the animals. This quote is used to illustrate the intimate connection between the form and function of the image of God, not to endorse Clines' conclusion.

recognizing the function of humanity as developed in Gen. 2. Commentators whose source criticism prevents them from reading Gen. 1 and 2 together as complementary accounts are unfortunately forced to draw premature conclusions of the primary function of the image of God. This inadequate exegesis typically overstates the importance of human dominion and underscores or ignores the relational priority developed in Gen. 2.

#### Humankind in dominion.

The first suggestion we will entertain is that the human being functionally images God through one's dominion as God's royal representative on earth. Before all creation, humankind is created to represent who God is and to execute His authority. W. H. Schmidt writes, "In the Old Testament, wherever a human being is, God is proclaimed. The person represents, attests, God on earth. So the person as such, created by God, is God's witness . . . it is of the nature of an image to allow what it represents to appear; so where the person appears, God also appears."<sup>48</sup> Clines clarifies that the human being is not so much representational as it is a representative.<sup>49</sup> The male and female are not physical representations of God, but rather God's representatives to creation through their authority to rule.

This theory is founded upon the conclusion that the vagueness of terms *tselem* and *d'mut* in Gen. 1:26-28 require an assumed understanding by the original audience. Hehn concludes that the assumed understanding of the original audience of Gen. 1 was the Hebrews' understanding of their pagan neighbors' traditions and literature referring to

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<sup>48</sup> W.H. Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift*, WMANT 17 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener-Verlag, 1964), 144, as quoted in Westermann, 152,3.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Clines, 101.

Semitic kings as the image of God.<sup>50</sup> Hehn observes that among Babylonians, an image could stand in the place of God, be divinized, and actually become a representation of a god. The king himself could be described as an image of the god, and images were used as representatives of the divinity. The Egyptians were known to regard the Pharaohs as the incarnate image of God – referring to the ruler as a representative or viceroy of deity. Hehn concludes that the Genesis account fails to define “God created man in His own image” because the Hebrews would clearly understand this phrase to refer to human royal representation as developed through other ancient cultures. Wilderberger<sup>51</sup> and Schmidt have conducted separate studies supporting the conclusion that the image of God in Gen. 1:26 refers to humankind’s royal attributes.

Humankind’s royal activities are granted and practiced through the dominion they are given over all creation (1:26, 28). H. Gross says, “The image and likeness of God consists essentially in one’s sharing in the dominion of God.”<sup>52</sup> Certainly *adam*’s assignment to rule over the animals distinguishes humankind from the animals and makes the original human pair like God in some sense. Wenham points out that this conclusion also fits the common use of *tselem*: “Images of gods or kings were viewed as representatives of the deity or king. The divine spirit was often thought of as indwelling an idol, thereby creating a close unity between the god and his image.”<sup>53</sup> Considering

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<sup>50</sup> J. Hehn, “Zum Terminus ‘Bild Gottes’,” *Festschrift E. Sachau* (1915): 36-52, as summarized in Westermann, 151.

<sup>51</sup> cf. H. Wilderberger, “Das Abbild Gottes, Gen 1:26-30,” *TZ* 21 (1965) 245-259, 481-501 as referred to in Westermann, 153.

<sup>52</sup> Heinrich Gross, “Die Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen,” *Lex tua veritas; Festschrift für Hubert Junker zu Vollendung des siebzigsten Lebensjahres am 8 August 1961* (Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1961), 98.

<sup>53</sup> Wenham, 31, cf. Clines, 81-83.

Old Testament scripture outside of Genesis, the idea of humanity as a royal representative is seen in Ps. 8:5,6 [NASB Updated Edition]:

Yet You have made him a little lower than God,  
And You crown him with glory and majesty!  
You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;  
You have put all things under his feet.

There is no question as to humankind's assignment and authority to rule over creation and subdue the earth. The command is stated clearly in Gen. 1:28, and is consistently seen throughout scripture. However, while dominion, as a royal representative, is a function of the image of God, it is not the exclusive or primary quality.

One must be very careful here in explaining accurately humankind's royal and representative qualities. To say that *adam* is a representative of God is exactly correct. Holistic humankind is created to be the closest representative of who God is. This representative is indeed given dominion. However, the assignment to rule is a functional consequence of man's image bearing, not solely definitive of the image of God or the primary purpose for God's creating humankind. Martin explains, "In regard to the blessing and its concomitant command to be fruitful, fill and subjugate the earth, and to rule over the living creatures, it is important to note once again that this follows upon being the image of God but does not constitute it."<sup>54</sup> Human dominion is a part of the package of imaging God, but does not constitute God's image in itself.

While Hehn's research regarding the influence of other ancient cultures is appreciated, one must be careful with the conclusions drawn from it. It is clear that the

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<sup>54</sup> Martin, 255.

terms image and likeness refer to a physical resemblance of the original.<sup>55</sup> However, further connection between royalty in ancient cultures and *adam* is improper because the differences far outweigh the similarities. Though Semitic kings may have been referred to as images of god(s), never in ancient literature was all of humanity given this distinction.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the idea of a king being the incarnation of God is “an idea foreign to Israelite thought.”<sup>57</sup> Bird concludes against the royal representative theory: “It is true that OT uses of *tselem* do not point to such a thesis, nor does the OT’s ideology or lexicon of kingship. If a royal image lies behind the use of *tselem* in Gen. 1:26-27, it must rest on an idea or expression of kingship found outside of preserved Israelite sources.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, it is inappropriate to associate the concept of kingship with the image of God in Gen. 1:26-28. Surely dominion is a function of imaging God, but the conclusion that royal representation is the definitive or exclusive functional quality of the image of God overstates the role of dominion and oversimplifies the issues at large.<sup>59</sup>

Humankind’s dominion as a royal representative is a convincing argument if the only context one considers is 1:26-28. However, suggesting that the initial pair’s primary imaging of the Almighty God is their assigned dominion entirely ignores the emphasis placed on relational intimacy as developed in Gen. 2. Nevertheless, though humankind’s dominion over creation is a functional element, it is not the primary quality of God’s image.

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<sup>55</sup> cf. Horst, 264.

<sup>56</sup> cf. Wenham, 30, cf. Westermann, 153.

<sup>57</sup> Phyllis A. Bird, “Male and Female He Created Them: Gen. 1:27b in the context of the Priestly account of creation,” *HTR* 74:2 (1981): 141.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Miller, 296.

Humankind in relationship.

The definitive functional quality of the image of God is that humankind is essentially relational, as displayed in humankind's relationship to the Creator, the creation, and to each other. In order to understand the accurate and full explanation of the functional element of the image of God in humankind, one must first recognize and appreciate that Gen. 1:26-30 only introduces humankind as the image of God, whereas Gen. 2 is the explanation of how the image of God functions. Sailhamer explains:

It is important to read chapter 2 as an integral part of the first chapter. . . . It seems apparent that the author intends the second chapter to be read closely with the first and that each chapter be identified as part of the same event. Thus the author explicitly returns to the place and time of chapter 1 at the point where he links it to chapter 2: "When the Lord God made the land and the sky" (2:4b). It is likely that the author's central theological interests in chapter 1 would be continued in chapter 2 as well – the theme of humanity's creation in the "image of God." Thus we may expect to find in chapter 2 a continuation of the theme of the "likeness" between humankind and the Creator.<sup>60</sup>

Therefore, it is impossible to understand the full and accurate functional image of God in humankind if source criticism prevents one from reading the first two chapters of Genesis as complementary. Three primary relationships are introduced in Gen. 1:26-28, but the demonstration of their functional outworking is not developed until Gen. 2. Different commentators emphasize particular relationships more strongly than others, but only when all three relationships are seen does one gain a full appreciation of the humankind being created in the image of God.

The first relationship displayed in the Genesis account is humankind's relational partnership with the Creator. This relationship is introduced in 1:26 with the hortatory

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<sup>60</sup> John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 97.



declaration that *adam* would be distinctively created in God's own image and likeness. The intimacy of this relationship is first suggested by God's final approval of His now completed creation as *very* good (1:31). It is not until the second chapter, which is devoted to developing the intimate relationship between God and humankind, that this relationship is described in full blossom of intimacy in communication and fellowship. The human being is the only creature whose life is initiated by the divine breath (2:7). In the second chapter, *adam*'s creation is mentioned before the garden to establish God's priority of importance in the creation (2:7-8). The garden is described as the specially designed inhabitation for humankind (2:8-9). Full provision of beauty (trees) and food are given to humankind (2:9). God grants the human beings a domain to cultivate, and communicates openly the freedoms and prohibition given to them (2:16-17). God creates woman to complete humankind, assist the male, and satisfy the male's being alone (2:18,22). Man and woman's recognition of the sound of God walking in the garden clearly show that God had made it His regular practice to commune with His image bearers (3:8). This is the intimacy of fellowship and relationship in which God created the original human pair. Throughout the Gen. 2, the author clearly displays an emphasis on the relationship of humankind with the Creator as a functional expression of the image of God.

W. Riedel became one of the first modern theologians to espouse this view by saying, "It [the image of God] consists in this, that God and human beings can have dealings with each other, that God can speak to humans and that they can understand him

and answer him.”<sup>61</sup> Victor Maag very clearly defines the position, “To say that a human being has been created as a being like God means that a person is capable of entering into a relationship with the creator.”<sup>62</sup> Karl Barth, however, is the most prominent supporter of this viewpoint: “The meaning and purpose of God at his creation were as follows. He willed the existence of a being which in all its non-deity and therefore its differentiation can be a real partner; which is capable of action and responsibility in relation to Him; to which His own divine form of life is not alien; which in a creaturely repetition, as a copy and imitation, can be a bearer of this form of life. Man was created as this being.”<sup>63</sup> Barth argues that the very purpose for which humankind was created is to be in fellowship with God. The first humans were created in the imitation of God’s image, but only as the likeness (rather than an exact copy) of God, so that the male and female would be non-deity and available for fellowship with the Almighty. Barth calls this relationship “the existence of the I and Thou in confrontation.”<sup>64</sup> While Barth’s conclusion stems from the understanding that the plural “let *us* make” in Gen. 1:26 is a reference to the plurality of the Godhead, one can find sufficient support for the relationship between God and the original human pair regardless of one’s understanding of the plural in 1:26. There is clear development of the relationship between God and humankind from Gen. 2 and throughout the whole of scripture. J. J. Stamm comments, “. . . a human being is regarded as God’s counterpart, as the ‘You’ who must listen to

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<sup>61</sup> W. Riedel “Die Gottesnebildlichkeit des Menschen,” *Alttestamentliche Untersuchungen* 1 (1902) 42, as cited in Westermann, 151.

<sup>62</sup> Victor Maag, “Alttestamentliche Anthropologie in ihrem Verhältnis zur altorientalischen Mythologie,” *Etudes Asiatiques* 9 (1955), 34, as cited in Westermann, 147.

<sup>63</sup> Barth, 184-5.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

God, whom God questions and who must answer him . . . following the Old Testament one is correct in agreeing with Karl Barth that the basic meaning of the *Imago Dei* is that partnership, of ability to enter into relationship.”<sup>65</sup> *Adam* is the “thou” in God’s conversations. Although this I/Thou relationship is not clearly identified until the second chapter, Stamm identifies this to be the consistent purpose of the creation of the humankind throughout scripture.<sup>66</sup> From the creation story in Gen. 2, through the covenants, exodus, and God’s dealings with Israel through prophets, exile, and the return to Jerusalem, and ultimately through the sacrifice and second-coming of His Son, the clear purpose for the creation of humankind is to be in relationship with God.

The sovereignty of God and the obedience of humankind are the key roles in this relationship. Walter Brueggemann explains, “Yahweh as Creator of humankind and of each human person is sovereign in that relationship. Human persons are creatures who are dependent on and created for obedience. Even before any concrete content is applied to the commands of Yahweh and the obedience of human persons, the category of sovereignty and obedience is a crucial and definitional mark of humans.”<sup>67</sup> In the confrontation of the I/Thou relationship, the male and female recognize God’s sovereignty and understand the importance of their obedience (cf. Gen. 2:16-17; 3:2). Brueggemann continues, “The human person is not, and cannot be, sufficient to self, but lives by coming to terms with the will and purpose of the one who gives and commands

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<sup>65</sup> Johann Jakob Stamm, “Die Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen im Alten Testament,” *ThSt* 54 (1959), 19, as cited in Westermann, 151.

<sup>66</sup> God clearly expresses his desire to be in relationship with his people. Cf. – Ex. 25:8; 29:45; Lev.26:11ff; Deut. 23:14; Jer. 29:10-14; Ezek. 14:11;36:28;37:23,27; Rev. 21:3.

<sup>67</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 454.

life.”<sup>68</sup> The significance and power of human life is not found in an autonomous agent, but remains in the One who makes life possible through the giving of breath.<sup>69</sup>

The human being was indeed created for the purpose of relational intimacy and partnership with God. *Adam* is partner with God in conversation. God walks together with the male and the female in the garden. The garden itself was designed for the pleasure of beauty and provision of food from God to *adam*. Humankind is created as a relational being, in the likeness of the image of God, so that communication and interaction is possible between Deity and His image bearer.

The second relationship introduced in 1:26 is humankind’s relationship to all creation. Immediately after declaring the creation of *adam* in His image, God assigns humankind the responsibility of ruling over creation. It would be foolish not to recognize that this dominion is part of humankind’s representation of God, but it is equally as foolish to consider humankind’s dominion the definitive or exclusive quality of the functional imaging. The key to accurately appreciating this element of the image of God is the recognition that this association is another expression of the human relational essence.

Human dominion over creation meets two objectives. First, the assignment gives the human being a kingdom in which to rule and exercise responsibility and volition. Dallas Willard explains the importance of this dominion: “Every last one of us has a ‘kingdom’ – or a ‘queendom’ or a ‘government’ – a realm that is uniquely our own, where our choice determines what happens. Here is a truth that reaches into the deepest

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 454.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 454.

part of what it is to be a person.”<sup>70</sup> Indeed, a person’s ability to have say over something, even if it is as simple as one’s own body, work, or creative thoughts and dreams, is crucial to one’s personhood, and a small reflection of God’s sovereign ruling over all creation: “Any being who has say over nothing is not person at all.”<sup>71</sup> A being without volition is only an animal. Two clarifications need to be made here. First, hypothetically, if humankind ceased to be in dominion over creation, one would not lose this image bearing quality because one’s volition would still exist in relationship to himself. Dominion over creation is stated in 1:26,28 as a display, but not the exclusive display, of humankind’s diminutive quality as a functional imaging of God. Second, humankind’s dominion is designed to be exclusively exercised in union and submission to God. Willard says, “We are meant to exercise our ‘rule’ only in union with God, as he acts with us. He intended to be our constant companion or coworker in the creative enterprise on earth. . . . Apart from harmony under God, our nature-imposed objectives go awry.”<sup>72</sup> The relationship that humankind is assigned to have with creation is very intimately connected with the primary relationship humankind is designed to have with God. As His image bearer, humankind should rule with the same character and creativity as God. It is only when humankind exercises their diminutive capabilities apart from their partnership with God that sin enters and is practiced. The first objective of humankind’s dominion is the establishment of personhood through creating an area in which one’s choices can be carried out.

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<sup>70</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998), 21.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.

The second objective of humankind's dominion concerns specifically the human relationship with creation. God brings all creation into relationship with humankind, and through humankind, into covenant with God. Barth explains, "God has assigned to them an exalted position of lordship within the surrounding animal kingdom of land, air and water. But it is not in this that the divine likeness consists. . . . It is only in this relationship in dependant connexion with man, that the animal kingdom can and will participate in the mystery of all creation as it is revealed in man, and in the promise of this mystery. . . . it describes the manner of its inclusion."<sup>73</sup> The assigned dominion brings all creation into relationship with humankind. Through this relationship, all creation will participate in God's covenant with the male and the female. Human dominion is introduced in 1:26,28, but the relationship with creation is displayed through Adam's<sup>74</sup> care taking of the garden (2:15) and naming of the animals (2:19-20). Notice that Adam is not a tyrant over creation. Brueggemann comments, "There is also no doubt that all human creatures are held accountable for the maintenance of healthy life in the world. Human persons are commanded, by virtue of their very creatureliness, to live lives for the sake of the well-being of the world."<sup>75</sup> Humankind is placed in the garden to "cultivate and keep it," and it is through Adam that the animals receive their names. Human dominion is designed for the prosperity of creation, as well as humankind. Therefore, humankind's relationship with creation first grants them a kingdom in which

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<sup>73</sup> Barth, 187.

<sup>74</sup> Though the female is not yet present in 2:15, 19-20, it is clear that is it not God's intention for the male to practice human dominion alone (2:16). The plural pronoun "them" in 1:26,28 makes clear the original intention of human dominion is as male and female.

<sup>75</sup> Brueggemann, 456.

their will is effective, establishing in the human being the personhood that images God and separates them from animals, and secondly, brings all creation into covenant with God through human dominion.

The third relationship humankind is placed in is their relationship with each other as male and female. The plurality of *adam* is first introduced with the third personal plural pronoun in 1:26, “and let *them* rule,” and defined in 1:27 as “male and female.” The question that remains unexplored consists of issues concerning the quantitative phrase male and female. Does *adam*’s creation as male and female relate in any way to image bearing?

It is possible that the male/female distinction of 1:27 is simply to clarify the procreation capabilities of humankind and says nothing of the divine image bearing.<sup>76</sup> Those proposing this interpretation contest that sexual distinction is assumed and therefore unnecessary for the animals, but necessary for the species called *adam* due to its unique creation in the image and likeness of God. Phyllis Bird states, “The specifying clause, ‘male and female he created them’ must not be understood as distinguishing humans from other creatures or as giving to human sexual distinction a special meaning. In the economy of the Priestly writer’s account it is mentioned here only out of necessity.”<sup>77</sup> In Gen. 6:19 and 7:9, the phrase “male and female” is used in reference to the animals, clarifying that the two animals of each kind consisted of a male and a female. Bird argues that the statement “male and female” is likewise used simply for

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<sup>76</sup> Certainly procreation is not what defines humankind’s likeness before God, for all the animals possess this ability.

<sup>77</sup> Bird, 148.

clarification in 1:27, concluding that “*adam* is created *like* (i.e., resembling) God, but *as* creature, and hence male and female.”<sup>78</sup> To support her view, Bird understands 1:27 as progressive, not synonymous, parallelism. In relation to the image of God, Bird concludes:

[The statement, “male and female he created them,”] says nothing about the image which relates *adam* to God nor about God as the referent of the image. Nor does it qualify *adam*’s domination over the creatures or subjection of the earth. It relates only the blessing of fertility, making explicit its necessary presupposition. It is not concerned with sexual role, the status or relationship of the sexes to one another, to marriage. It describes the biological pair, not a social partnership; male and female, not man and wife. . . it is P’s own formulation, dependant upon his overarching theme of the sustainability (fertility) of the created order.<sup>79</sup>

According to Bird, the human distinction as male and female has no relevance to the image of God. Hamilton agrees that in 1:27, “the emphasis is on the male and the female as procreators, rather than their role of companions.”<sup>80</sup> With this perspective, regarding Gen. 1, Bird is forced to conclude: “There is no message of shared dominion here, no word about the distribution of roles, responsibility, and authority between the sexes, no word of sexual equality. What is described is a task for the species (*kibsuha*) and the position of the species in relation to the other order of creatures (*redu*).”<sup>81</sup>

Humanity is created for the purpose of procreation and dominion. The male and female distinction carries no importance other than procreative function.

This is a classic example of an incomplete conclusion that is made when Gen. 1:26-28 is isolated from Gen. 2. If one is to look at 1:26-28 exclusively, Bird’s

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>80</sup> Hamilton, 139.

<sup>81</sup> Bird, 151.



arguments and conclusions are sustainable. However, her exegesis ignores the larger picture of who humankind is created to be. Gen. 2 clearly displays that the humankind is created for greater purposes than simply procreation. In fact, there is no mention of procreation between the male and female until Gen. 4:1. The rebuttal of this oversimplification of human beings as procreative beings is developed through the positive arguments for an understanding of the male/female companionship as a reflection of the God/ *adam* relationship.

One is blind to the text if he/she fails to recognize the intimate relational union between male and female emphasized in Gen. 2, and the crucial role it plays in understanding of mankind's image bearing. The male/female unity is displayed through the emphasis placed on the plural pronoun "them" at the end of 1:27, contrasting the singular "man" and "him" earlier in the verse. This emphasis is reiterated through the consistent use of the plural pronoun following the distinction of male and female in 1:27b. The importance of this unified relationship is indicated by the placement of the male and female distinction immediately following the redundant statement of *adam*'s creation as the image of God (1:27).

Whereas the first chapter successfully introduces humankind as being male and female, there is a continuation and expansion of this theme in Gen. 2. The clues necessary to understand how the male/female relationship plays a role in the imaging of God are primarily found in the Gen. 2. Creation is not completed and declared *very* good by the Creator until both the male and female have been created (1:31). In fact, the scenario is clearly *not* good when the male is alone in the garden (2:18). The female is

created as the male's helper (2:18) and made out of his side (2:21-22). In the first poem of scripture, the man immediately recognizes his union with the female and declares, "Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh." (2:23). She is affectionately named "woman" because she is made out of man (2:23). If the words of Adam are not enough for the reader to recognize the intimate unity of the man and woman, the narrator explains that is it for a woman that a man will leave his family, in order to become *one flesh* with the woman (2:24). The male and female live in complete vulnerability before one another, yet there is no shame, fear, anxiety, or power struggle between them before the fall (2:25). After their union, the first time the man and woman are mentioned as separate is when the serpent singles out the female in the deception (3:1).

Scripture clearly develops an intimate union between the male and female that is foundational to how one understands who humankind is. Surely Westermann is correct in stating, "There can be no question of an "essence of man" apart from existence as two sexes. Humanity exists in community, as one beside the other, and there can only be anything like humanity and human relations where the human species exists in twos."<sup>82</sup> Scripture also clearly associates this union with the image of God through the repetition of "male and female" in connection with "image" in Gen. 5:2. Martin explains, "P's insistent joining of the two notions "image" and "male and female" must have a reason. The correspondence of the two realities is not immediately apparent, and for that reason it is reiterated. This type of thinking can best be understood if we admit that something of the image reality is found in the fact that the human being, the "totality with a particular

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<sup>82</sup> Westermann, 160.

stamp” of male and female, *is relational at every level of existence*.<sup>83</sup> The author of Genesis does not allow for the reader to misunderstand that something of the image of God is displayed in the relational priority of the male and female. Clines places continued emphasis on the male/female relationship by saying, “the most basic statement about man, according to Gen. 1, that he is the image of God, does not find its full meaning in man alone, but in man and woman.”<sup>84</sup> Barth goes so far as to say that “male and female he created” them must be recognized as “the definitive explanation given by the text itself” of the image of God.<sup>85</sup> Humankind is clearly created as male and female, and the emphasis on this relationship in Gen. 2 and 5:2 leads us to the conclusion that something of the image of God is to be understood through the male/female relationship.

The relational unity between the male and the female is designed to be a reflection of the intimate, self-sufficient, relational unity within the Godhead. Rather than state who He is, God, in His divine prerogative, chooses to create a species in His image and likeness as a display of His divine person and character. Through their creation into a relationship with God, humankind can come to some understanding, though limited, of who God is. God creates humankind as co-dependant male and female, so that they can understand something of the unity within the Godhead. Sailhamer explains, “The singular man is created in a plurality, “male and female.” In a similar way the one God (“and God said”) created man through an expression of His plurality (“Let us make man in our image”). Following this clue the divine plurality expressed in v.26 is seen as an

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<sup>83</sup> Martin, 259. Emphasis mine.

<sup>84</sup> Clines, 95.

<sup>85</sup> Barth, 195.

anticipation of the human plurality of the man and woman, thus casting the human relationship between man and woman in the role of reflecting God's own personal relationship with himself."<sup>86</sup> Old Testament scholars accurately argue that it is possible but not necessary to understand the plural in 1:26 to refer to a plural Godhead. However, the existence of a plural Godhead involved in the creation is clearly presented in the New Testament through the incarnation of Jesus as the Son of God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.<sup>87</sup> Though it is unfounded to establish the Trinity through Gen. 1, it is not erroneous to suggest that God created His image bearer with relational intimacy as male and female, for the purpose of displaying the unified plurality of His nature, even before fully disclosing His triune person in the New Testament.

Something should be learned of God's love for man through the relational design between the male and the female. Martin explains, "Beside the functional and relational aspects there is, as well, what we may call the symbolic. In relating to each other, human beings can express through their total reality as bodily personas something of the love that God has and is. This imaging of God finds its exemplar in the positive relationship between man and woman, as in any relationship, reaches its perfect expression when the love is mutual. In relating reciprocally, human beings symbolically display a dimension of God's presence to the world and manifest his own desire to relate to us."<sup>88</sup> The love between a husband and a wife is designed to provide and protect, to develop joy, satisfaction, and significance in one another through servanthood and sacrifice. This

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<sup>86</sup> Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 38.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. John. 1.

<sup>88</sup> Martin, 259.

relationship is designed to be a representation of who God is. The love that is discovered between a man and a woman, most purely and fully enjoyed through marriage, is not created by humankind, but placed there as a experiential demonstration of who the Creator is. Eph. 5:25-32 clearly makes the connection between the love of God and the marital relationship, calling the husband to love his wife in the self-sacrificing manner that Christ loved the church. God designs the male/female relationship in order that humankind may know something of who God is, and His love for humankind, as well as experience together God's great love.

Both the relationship within the Godhead and the love of God towards man are studies in and of themselves, requiring detailed research of many texts throughout the whole of scripture. The purpose of mentioning them here is not to explain the full implications of who God is or how He loves humankind, but simply to identify that the male/female relationship is designed to be a testimony of these two characteristics of God.

### Conclusion

God chooses to introduce Himself to His creation by making a species in His own image and in accordance with His likeness. Rather than describing Himself, God chooses to introduce Himself to creation through the display of humankind. This capstone of His creative effort is created to know God and to be in relationship with Him. Through the observations of the full creation account of Gen. 1 and 2, the creatures created to be in relationship with the Divine can discover a touch of who this God is that created them according to the Divine likeness.

The form of the image and likeness of God is the holistic human being. The image of God in humankind is not limited to any particular characteristic, attribute, or function, but incorporates all the above. Humankind may be like God in the sense that he has the capacities of reason, intellect, self-conscience and personality, but they do not constitute humankind's likeness of God. The human being certainly has a corporeal structure, but it is not definitive of God's image. The image and likeness of God cannot be limited to any characteristic of the human being, but must be understood as the definitive essence of who humankind is. The human being, by definition, in its most foundational essence, is the image and likeness of the Almighty and intangible God. The male and female are God's representative to all creation. If the image and likeness of God were to be removed, humankind would be no more than an animal. The image and likeness of God is what makes *adam* an *adam*.

To appreciate fully the image of God in *adam*, one must consider the cohesive ideas of humankind's form and function. It is, however, entirely insufficient to limit the functional imaging of God to the assignment to rule and subdue all creation. Human dominion is an element of imaging God, but to make it the primary or exclusive aspect oversimplifies the issue by elevating one aspect of human nature and ignoring the clear emphasis in scripture to others.

The accurate understanding of humankind's functional imaging of God is that the human is primarily a relational being at every level of existence. The three relationships introduced in Gen. 1:26-27, and later developed in chapter 2, are humankind in relationship to God, creation, and each other as male and female. These three

relationships demonstrate the very essence of who humankind is. The human being is uniquely able to be in fellowship and communication with God. The relationship with creation both gives humankind a place of dominion and incorporates the rest of God's creation into His covenant with humanity. Finally, *adam* is designed as male and female with a deep and intimate unity with one another. Through these three relationships we discover the functional element of the image of God in humankind.

Therefore, the likeness of the image of God in *adam* is understood to be the holistic human being as displayed in relational fellowship with God, dominion over creation, and intimate union with each other as male and female. This explanation can only be understood in the unified context of Gen. 1 and 2, as well as keeping in mind the perspective of scripture as a whole.

From understanding what the image of God is, one can then understand something about God Himself. One learns that God Himself is relational, seeking to have relationship with the human being. He, too, has a kingdom, in which humankind is invited to live and work. Finally, one learns that there is a unified plurality in the Godhead, and that He has an incredible love for humankind.

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