PRIMARY EVIDENCE FOR THE IMAGE
AS THE INTERPERSONAL CAPACITY

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Introduction

From evidence presented in the next three chapters, we conclude that having the image of God means having interpersonal capacity. At the outset we want to make explicit three notable ideas in the designation "interpersonal capacity." **(a)** Inter<u>personal</u> means that the image of God has to do with persons instead of things, forces, animals, or ideas. **(b)** <u>Inter</u>personal relates the image to the social setting. The image involves more than the individual because it pertains to marriage, community, church, society, humankind as well as God's purposes for persons.

The third point lies in the word **(c)** <u>capacity</u>. "Capacity" looks at potential more than actual. As attitude is more basic than action, so capacity is more basic than operation. The inner and the potential are the "heart" that the issues of life come from. We are in God's image even when we are not actually relating to another people and when our relating includes impersonal, even sinful, matters.

Restrictions on the Meaning of "Image"

Creatable

Certain guidelines should be in place before we look for a meaning for the image of God. First, whatever "image of God" means it must refer to something that can be created. Already that is a significant gain because interpreters often include an ethical dimension in the image of Genesis **1**:26-28. The limitation "creatable" applies because holiness is a characteristic of behavior, not being. Substance can be created; action cannot. In deterministic settings we might speak figuratively about creating an action by creating something that must act in a certain way. Human reason and will, however, eliminate a one-for-one relationship between our being and our behavior. An ethical quality cannot be created even indirectly. The very idea of ethics has no relevance to situations that exclude reason and will. Determinism contradicts not only our sense of what personhood is, but the Christian understanding of mankind in general.[1] Another difficulty with including an ethical dimension in the image is that it runs counter to the next observation.

Applicable to mankind after the Fall

Image indicates something mankind has despite the Fall. In recommissioning the human race after the flood, God commanded capital punishment for murder *"because [God] made people in God's image"* (Genesis **9**:6). In 1 Corinthians **11**:7 Paul generalizes that a human person *"is the image and glory of God."*[2] In a broader context, James **3**:9 highlights the inconsistency between using the tongue to bless God and curse people, *"who are made after God's likeness."*[3] Not only is he speaking after the Fall, but he does not condone cursing people who have lost the "ethical" image. Having the image is not something we can avoid because we are all members of the human race. Sin did not destroy the image in our first parents, nor does it remove the image in subsequent persons when they sin personally.

Applicable to mankind at the individual level

The image of God applies at the individual level as 1 Corinthians **11**:7 declares*, "A man ought not have his head covered because he is the image and glory of God."* Adam had the image before Eve was created from him. Image-likeness terminology describes Seth in Genesis **5**:3, *"Adam . . . became the father of a son in his own likeness after his image."* Applicable to individual people brings another gain because it means that the image does not directly describe some group level of mankind—the human race, the family, or marriage. Applying the image at the individual level also relates to the following observation that image connects with each of us as a whole.

Applicable to mankind as a whole

Image texts say either that mankind is <u>in</u> (and <u>after</u>) the image-likeness of God (Genesis **1**:26- 27; **5**:1-3; **9**:6) or that mankind <u>is</u> the image of God (1 Corinthians **11**:7; James **3**:9). They do not say that the image of God is <u>in</u> man. The latter phrasing might suggest that image applies at too detailed a level within a person. Genesis does not say God created Adam in God's image in some respect. <u>Mankind</u> was in the image of God; he did not have some trait that God also has. The image does not consist of rationality or some other human distinctive that is less than everything personhood is.

Inclusive of shared and unshared characteristics

"Likeness" terminology accompanies image terminology. When something is "like" something else, the whole entity can be in view including the unshared characteristics harmoniously connected; otherwise, the two things would be "the same," not "alike." Our likeness to God involves both shared and indirectly the unshared characteristics. More importantly, this observation combines with wholeness to indicate that even the unshared

components connect with the image—as in the functionality of the whole. Image must be creatable likeness to God that connects to the whole individual even after the Fall.

Deductive Arguments for the Image as Interpersonal Capacity

Interpersonal purpose and interpersonal image

Out of the nature of God comes the purpose of God.

Out of the purpose of God comes the purpose of man.

Out of the purpose of man comes the nature of man.

The interpersonal purpose of mankind implies interpersonal capacity in mankind. The purpose of anything determines its nature and design. Likewise, the purpose of mankind establishes the nature and design of mankind. The reason God made us determines the way God made us. Similarly, the origin of anything determines its nature and meaning: "Your 'roots' define you." God created us in his own image and that makes all the difference.

In this case the situation is not so much that nature determines use or purpose, but *vice versa*. If something already exists, what it is like determines what it can do and what someone can do with it. In God's case, his purposes arise from his nature because he is eternal; his nature is already in place before anything else He that alone has no beginning determines his own purpose by what he is. We, however, were created by another with a beginning that manifested the purpose of the creating Other. As Paul said in a different connection, *"By the grace of God I am what I am"* (1 Corinthians **15**:10). What we are comes from the "grace" of another. But when God said, *"I am what I am,"* he made a statement about himself as ultimate reality.[4] Because we have a beginning through him by creation, our nature communicates his purposes, which are interpersonal. From the beginning, scripture associates interpersonal purposes with God's image. The purposes that imply interpersonal capacity cause us to identify that capacity with God's image in us. We come from God by creation in the image of God: purpose, origin, nature.

He created us for fellowship and function, relationship to him and responsibility toward him, to walk with him and be stewards. So he created us with capacities for relating and being responsible. Both fellowship and responsibility imply interpersonal capacities, fellowship because it implies likeness to the "Other" and responsibility because it requires abilities that fulfill purpose. The responsibility implied by "dominion" stands in association with God's image (Genesis **1**:26-28; cp. Psalm **8**). Mankind was to till the ground (Genesis **2**:5), and dress and keep the Garden (**2**:15). Christ gave the Great Commission to people who were to call other people back into fellowship with God (Matthew **28**:19-20, *etc*.).

Interpersonal capacity is involved in the different covenants God has made with mankind. Covenant again combines responsibility and fellowship. As far back as Genesis **2**,

God's covenant name Yahveh appears in the account of establishing mankind's relationship to the plant world (**2**:4-17), the animal world (**2**:19-20), and the human world (**2**:18, 21-25). Later came the rainbow covenant (**9**:1-17), the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant, and so forth.

Fellowship with God is shown in the terminology used for his people—sons of God, friends of God—in his communicating with us, and in having his tabernacle with us (Revelation **21**:3). He created us able to love and be loved.

Fellowship is existential and stewardship is eschatological. The first has to do with our present, the second with our future. Together they comprise the primary dimensions of interpersonal existence. They both require personhood and equally contribute to personal meaningfulness. We are to walk with God, in the first case, and to multiply his handiwork and grace, in the second. Within that second case, we are stewards of God's common grace of creation and his proffered grace of redemption (1 Corinthians **4**:1-2; Titus **1**:7; 1 Peter **4**:10). Accordingly, we glorify him by fulfilling the management and mission mandates; and when we do, we have fellowship with him who meets our needs (1 Corinthians **6**:6-11). There is interplay between the biggest dimensions of human experience: relationship and responsibility. The image as interpersonal capacity harmonizes these aspects of human existence.

Interpersonality as our distinctive nature ties into the meaning of "God's image" because Genesis uses that expression to characterize us. We infer that the image is the interpersonal capacity when we reason from interpersonal purpose to interpersonal nature.

Interpersonal deity and interpersonal image

We can also reason from God's interpersonal nature to our interpersonal nature who are created in his image. Scripture's most programmatic statement about our nature is that he created us in his image. What we know about humanity from any source seems natural to associate with the image terminology, especially those items scripture mentions alongside that wording. It is natural as well to associate with it what we know about deity from the rest of scripture beyond the creation texts. If God is interpersonal and humanity is interpersonal, we expect that capacity to connect with the image.

We need not belabor here the idea that God is interpersonal. New Testament revelation makes that abundantly clear, and that understanding belongs within the meaning of "God's image" in Genesis. In addition, materials presented under the next heading highlight certain data in the creation account itself that belong to that understanding of deity, hence the understanding of humanity and the understanding of the image-likeness terminology used for humanity. The God of the Bible has the characteristics and behaviors we associate with personhood. He has rationality, affection, volition, and self-transcendence. He cares, communicates, and conducts

himself ethically (holiness). We know him as Father-Son-Spirit. We know from experience and revelation that we also have those capacities and can do those same behaviors; so we are like God in those respects. We need only to associate that set of likenesses with the "image" expression to conclude that it means interpersonal capacity.

<center>Inductive Arguments for the Image as Interpersonal Capacity</center>

We are now prepared to reason from specifics in the creation account to the meaning of the _imago dei_ expression. The two previous arguments set the expectancy that human distinctives present in Genesis **1-3** correlate with the distinctive description of us used there. The following paragraphs draw attention to four phenomena that suggest interpersonal capacity as the definition of image. The thought pattern moves from the particulars of one topic to the overall picture, back to other particulars of a related topic, to the same overall picture, and so forth. So far, interpersonalism has accounted for the reasons for creating mankind and for particulars in God's nature. Now we argue that interpersonalism accounts for the particulars associated with "the image of God" expression. Interpersonalism accounts for an increasing number of topics associated with mankind. As that number rises, we gain confidence that the features of personal relationship form the Christian view of anthropology and establish the Christian worldview. At the same time, our confidence grows that interpersonalism correctly accounts for each topic we have already associated with the image.

Parallelism between "us" and "them": relational being

> _Let's make mankind in our image after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the cattle, all the earth, and everything that moves on the ground." And God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it"_ (Genesis **1**:26-28a).

Plurality in oneness. The first observation on the image that highlights the interpersonal character of mankind is the parallelism between us and them: _"Let us make mankind in our image . . . and let them have dominion . . . ."_ As "them" shows plurality on the side of the created, "us" shows plurality on the side of the creator. "Us" creates "them." _"Let us make man in our image"_ reflects the interpersonal character of God himself (cp. **3**:22; **11**:7; Isaiah **6**:8). Even if Genesis had said simply that God created mankind in his own image, we could have inferred that "image of God" included interpersonal capacity because Christianity understands that God is interpersonal. But the creation account makes that point explicitly by referring to the

creator as "us" and "our." Accordingly, we take "us" as a reference to **(1)** the three-person oneness of God commonly called "trinity." Except for the four "us" passages that hint at the triunity in the Old Testament, nothing explicit about it is revealed until we get to the New Testament.[5] From the New Testament we read trinity back into these relatively ambiguous texts in the Old.[6] "Us" and "our" presumably refer to God and so to his triunity since no one else has been mentioned so far in Genesis. The fact that mankind has interpersonal capacity derives from the interpersonal nature of God who made us in his own image. The nature of God establishes the nature of man.

"Let us make mankind in our image" is not a case of **(2)** "majestic plural," we take it, since **(a)** farther along in the account **3**:22 speaks about "one of us." "Majestic plural" refers to the Semitic idiom that uses plural number to indicate great degree—in this case the greatness of God. Majestic plural is something like the comment, *"I learned a lot,"* which may really mean, *"I learned something especially significant to me."* The speaker did not learn "many things," as the collective expression "a lot" might imply. Plural number means high degree (importance). There could be no speaking about "one of" such a plurality: *"Adam has become like one of us."*

Besides, with majestic plural **(b)** the parallelism would be lost between us and them. "Us" would really be singular while "them" would be plural. The text and context bring together the plurality-in-oneness of God and the plurality-in-oneness of mankind, especially the male-female oneness (cp. **2**:24). "He created" stresses God's oneness while "let us make" stresses his plurality, even as "created him" emphasizes mankind's oneness while "created them" emphasizes our plurality.

Finally, **(c)** majestic plural in reference to God (*Elohim*) always uses singular grammatical elements with it (adjectives, verbs, pronouns), not plural ones like "us." The rest of the verbs and pronouns in this context are singular. Since pronouns with *Elohim* as their antecedent are everywhere singular, us here is not a plural form because it refers to *Elohim* as a majestic plural, nor is us such a plural because its own verb ("make") is plural.

An ancient Jewish interpretation makes "our image" refer to **(3)** God and the elements. Mankind is a combination of what is like God and what is like matter: spirit and matter. God did not make the universe out of himself so as to be included in "ús." Besides, how likely would it be for God to talk to the elements, the universe, the dust of the ground that he is going to use to create mankind from (**2**:7; **3**:19)? How likely would it be for the dust to help God make the man? God did not make the universe out of himself so as to speak of it indirectly as part of himself? With mankind as with animals, the earth brought forth, and God made (cp. **1**:24 + 25).

The previous "let" statements, however, are abstract references (*"Let there be . . ."*; **1**:3, 6, 14), third-person references (*"Let the waters," etc.* **1**:9, 11, 20, 22b, 24), or second-person references to fish and birds (*"Be fruitful and multiply . . . "*; **1**:22a). They are not first-person

references (*"Let us"*). In the statement of accomplishment, the text says mankind was made in the image of <u>God</u> and <u>in [God's] own image</u> (**1**:27), not in the image of the earth or God plus the earth or in "their" image. Paul does make the statement, *"As we have borne the image of the earthly, we will bear the image of the heavenly"* (1 Corinthians **15**:49). Although the terminology is similar to being created in the image of the earth, the reference is different. Paul is contrasting two <u>stages</u> of human nature, not two <u>aspects</u> of the same stage, which could then correspond with the original God-earth aspects of the "our" image.

"Let <u>us</u> make man in <u>our</u> image" does not mean **(d)** <u>God plus angels</u>. Conceivable arguments <u>for</u> this interpretation include the fact that the word translated "God" here is used for angels on occasion,[7] although there seems to be no instance where it covers both God and angels at the same time. A blurring of the God-angel distinction does occur especially in connection with the expression "the angel of Yahveh," or "the angel of the Lord."[8] At the calling of Moses and the giving of the Law, the Old Testament says <u>God</u> spoke to Moses (Exodus **3**:14), but three different New Testament sources associate the giving of the Law with <u>angels</u>: Stephen (Acts **7**:38, 53), Paul (Galatians **3**:19; cp. **1**:8 and 2 Cor. **11**:14), and the writer of Hebrews (**2**:2). *"The angel of the Lord"* may refer to pre-incarnate appearances of the Son, but more likely it reflects the Semitic tendency to streamline causal series. What someone does through another he does himself. In this application of the streamlining idiom, what God does indirectly through his "messenger" has God's authority and character behind it. For all practical purposes, the "ambassador" is an extension of God.[9] *"The angel <u>of the Lord</u>"* obviously indicates that angel is not identical to "Lord."[10] Though God and angel are related in these cases, the blurred God-angel distinction raises a question about God <u>or</u> angel rather than an observation about God <u>and</u> angel. The two are still distinct. If "us/our" did mean God plus angels, our inference would still stand—that the image is the interpersonal capacity. But we have no basis for bringing angels into the picture.

Among arguments <u>against</u> understanding "us" to mean God and angels, we note again that **(a)** angels have not appeared in the context so as to be antecedents of a pronoun.[11] The word for angel does not occur at all until Genesis **16**:7.[12] Unlike angels, however, Spirit and Word are implicitly in the context by virtue of the very term "God," who said, *"Let <u>us</u> . . . ."* In a sense, Spirit is specifically mentioned (**1**:2, or "wind"), though the Son is not. We learn from the rest of revelation that God is Father-Son-Spirit and that there is plurality within the triune God, but under the trinity interpretation an antecedent for "us" does exist in the context as based on the New Testament's more complete revelation about God's nature.

Furthermore, **(b)** angels do not create; yet the one(s) whom God addresses in **1**:26-27 create: *"Let <u>us make</u> man in our image."*[13] We know from elsewhere that the Word-Son-Christ created (John **1**:1-3, 10; 1 Corinthians **8**:6; Colossians **1**:16; Hebrews **1**:2) and so did the Spirit,

although scripture states the Spirit's involvement less clearly (Genesis **1**:2; Psalm **104**:30?). We have no statement about angels creating, and we doubt they can do it since creating from nothing appears to distinguish deity from non-deity.

Thirdly, **(c)** we are said to be created in the image and likeness of <u>God</u>, not only here but in Genesis **5**:1; **9**:6; 1 Corinthians **11**:7; and James **3**:9 (cp. Acts **17**:28-29). Such phraseology does not occur anywhere for our likeness to angels.

(d) The text says that God created man in "<u>his</u> own image" (**1**:27), not "<u>their</u> image." Under the view that "us" means God plus angels, both would have this "image." We would expect the presentation to keep the same frame of reference throughout and to read something like *"Elohim [God or God and the angels] created man in <u>their</u> image."* There is no way to cover God plus angels with a singular pronoun, but the godhead can be referred to by singular pronouns, adjectives, and verbs. Besides, as a majestic plural designation for God, *'Elohim* translates into Greek in the singular form *theos*, which the Septuagint version uses in **1**:27 and throughout the creation account.

Taken together, the last three considerations make it difficult not to conclude that **(e)** polytheism would be pictured in this context if "us" meant God plus angels. The "angels" would be creating, they would be called "god," and man—created in the image of God—would be created in their image.

Finally, we doubt that **(f)** "let us" is a poetic device for indicating <u>God's social nature</u> (though a singular being). The phrase would indicate, not an interpersonal <u>plurality</u> in the creator, but an interpersonal <u>bent</u> in him. God wants to relate to other persons. In that case, "let us" would assume poetic usage; **2**:7 shows that poetic expression does happen in the text: *"God breathed into [Adam's] nostrils the breath of life."* The whole issue about literary genre in Genesis **1-3** can bear on the meaning of "let us." Items in chapter **3** like a snake that talks, a fruit that makes people wise or one that makes them live forever have been taken as indicators of myth genre, which in turn reduces the amount of correlation with reality that the interpreter expects to derive from these chapters. A higher level of figurativeness in the whole raises the likelihood of higher figurativeness for expressions within the whole. Regarding Genesis **1-3** as myth rather than history would increase the likelihood that some less direct meaning lay in "let us." However, historical presentations contain figurative items and myths contain literal expressions. Therefore, considering this expression poetic would not remove the whole from the historical literary genre, and considering Genesis **1-3** as myth would not remove "let us" from attesting to the interpersonal plurality of God. The rest of scripture always deals with these chapters as history as far as man-God and man-woman relationship are concerned.[14]

Although we have argued against understanding <u>us</u> as a reference to God plus angels or the material realm or as a poetic expression for interpersonal bent, those views would still imply

that the image of God is interpersonal capacity. The quality of interpersonal oneness would perhaps be less. Angels, for example, are more like a group of persons than Father-Son-Spirit or husband-wife is; consequently, diversity, interdependency, and complementariness would not come through so decisively in the image. Instead of majestic plural, God and the elements, God plus angels, or interpersonal bent, "us" most naturally indicates God in his interpersonal oneness.

If arguments for an interpersonal interpretation of "let us" seem unsatisfactory, we suggest restructuring the argument. The plurality-in-oneness of God known from the New Testament applies to God anytime he is mentioned. God is always who he is and what he is like, and scripture gives harmonious testimony to the subjects it treats anywhere. If the New Testament teaches God's plurality-in-oneness, then the God who said "let us" is a plural-in-one God, which is especially appropriate to the "us" who created mankind in his own image. Since interpersonal humanity bears the image of interpersonal deity, we can identify the image of God with the interpersonal capacity that humanity also has as known from experience and other scriptures. Both God and mankind love. Scripture's most definitive statement about mankind includes God and mankind's most distinctive characteristic.

Diversity in oneness. A second observation on the image that highlights man's interpersonal character is the correlation between "us" and "male-female." In this feature of Genesis **1**:26-27 *"let us make man in our image"* and *"in the image of God he created him,"* on the one hand, parallel *"male and female he created them,"* on the other. The image evidently relates in some way—indirectly, formally, or analogously—to the male-female nature of humankind. The image harmonizes with bisexual interpersonalism. Since God is spirit (John **4**:24), physicality and sexuality *per se* are not the point. We can say that the plurality-in-oneness of marriage is analogous to the plurality-in-oneness of trinity, not the same as or included in. "Same as" would lapse back into what ancient paganism portrayed in its male and female deities. "Included in" would picture deity as somehow a combination of male and female traits.[15] God transcends the masculine-feminine differential because he is spirit.

Marriage is comparable to trinity in that **(a)** marriage provides the most intense, permanent, all-inclusive interpersonal relationship in human experience. Marriage has the character it does primarily because in it mankind most distinctively demonstrates the intense, permanent, all-inclusive oneness of the godhead. As a total identification, marriage simply intensifies what in principle exists in all other forms and circumstances of interpersonal relationship. It involves common purpose, shared values, and all the facets of both persons' lives. To put it otherwise, marriage is first of all interpersonal; then the physical distinctives overlay that reality.

Analogy to marriage and the godhead also lies in the fact that **(b)** male-female unity epitomizes interpersonalism across diversity (Genesis **2**:24). The image is not just unity-in-

plurality; it is unity-in-diversity. Beyond transaction and interaction in a plurality of individuals, diversity leads to complementariness, interdependency, hierarchy, compenetration, and overlapping capacities. Paul uses the body figure to illustrate characteristics like these in the church setting (Romans **12**:4-8; 1 Corinthians **12**:4-30; Ephesians **4**:4, 15-16; cp. **1**:22-23; Colossians **2**:19). Within both the human and divine, there are differences between the individuals who comprise the categories—differences perhaps in talents, interests, statuses, and roles that combine to form the whole and unite to achieve the goal. The work of the Father, Son, and Spirit stresses the initiating, creating, sustaining, redeeming, sanctifying functions in their combined operation. Likewise, within their very constitutions male and female are diversely gifted for fellowship, for multiplying and subduing the earth, for fulfilling the mission mandate. Diversity in <u>inborn talents</u> leads to diversity in <u>developed skills</u> and perhaps to diversity in <u>supernatural gifts</u> for varying roles. What is particularly true <u>between</u> male-female is true also between persons within the <u>same</u> "mode" of the image, male or female.

<u>Walking with God</u>. Genesis **1-3** pictures God in direct relationship with our first parents. He walked with them in the Garden prior to their sin. There was direct communication on a periodic basis (**3**:1-10). When Cain sinned, he went out from the presence of God (**4**:16). Before Eve was formed, God said that it was not good that the man should be alone (**2**:18). In contrast, Genesis **1** describes the final situation and calls it "very good" (**1**:31). Being alone is "not good" or "not as good as" for what is constituted as relational being.

The "dominion mandate": responsible being

<u>Commission</u>. When we discussed the reasons for creating us, we observed that we were to take responsibility for the earth and everything in it. From this fact we later deduced our first argument for the image of God as interpersonal capacity. In our present effort, we need only to draw attention to that point and note that it is a part of the information that leads to identifying that capacity as the image. Immediately connected with the statement about creating us in the image of God, we received this general <u>commission</u> as a responsibility (**1**:26-28). More specifically, God commanded us to till the ground and dress the Garden (**2**:5 + **3**:22; **2**:16). Responsibility and accountability are interpersonal phenomena. Since the Genesis text associates them with image terminology, they argue for the image as interpersonal capacity.

<u>Covenant</u>. In a less decisive way, image terminology relates to <u>covenant</u> in Genesis **9**:1-7. After God destroyed the human race, he made a covenant with Noah's family and his descendants that he would never again kill mankind with a universal flood. We were not to kill fellowman because we are in God's image (**9**:6). An agreement with promises and conditions takes place between persons and serves as a guide for their interaction. Inbuilt natural "law" can

govern impersonal reality, but persons covenant with one another. Personal behaviors like trust and love accompany such arrangements between those who are in the image of God.

"Forbidden fruit": ethical being

Mandates. By setting up a situation that involved commands and prohibitions, God put Adam and Eve in a "morality matrix." They were to exercise dominion over the plant and animal kingdoms (**1**:26-30; **2**:5-9). They were not to eat from the "tree of knowledge." Morality and ethics address interpersonal circumstances because they have to do with values and purposes, which persons are not externally compelled or internally programmed to do. A person can choose to apply or not apply a principle of interaction with another person relative to some purpose.

Accordingly, the tree of knowledge corresponds with **(a)** the principle of free will, which can transgress the boundaries of restriction set by "revelation." Adam and Eve used free will to disobey God's injunction not to eat from the tree of knowledge. That contrasts with the tree of life, which corresponds with **(b)** the principle of "intervention" to determine a boundary that cannot be crossed (external compulsion). After their sin, God intervened to block their doing what they had the ability to do: eating from the tree of life. **(c)** "Creation" sets an even wider limitation through internal ability. Ethics does not apply to the last two categories because people cannot cross the lines of restriction in either case. But people can choose to cross over limitations imposed by revelation; so receiving revelation puts them in the morality matrix.

Self-consciousness. The coming of a sense of nakedness accompanied the disobedience in the Garden. Being self-conscious is a function of conscience that relates to people's unique characteristic of blushing. Along with self-consciousness, the sense of guilt is largely an interpersonal phenomenon, which Adam and Eve reflect in hiding from God after they sinned (Genesis **3**:7-8). From the subjective side, they distanced themselves from God. From the objective side, they were removed from the Garden where they had previously "walked" with God (**3**:8; cp. **5**:21; **6**:9; **17**:1; **24**:40; **48**:15). Going out from God's presence (**3**:8; cp. **4**:16) is a spatial separation that results from an interpersonal separation, which in turn results from "un-ethical" behavior. Going out from the Garden was one of several punishments Adam and Eve received for wanting to become more "like" God than he wanted them to be (**3**:16-19, 22-24). A sense of guilt and punishment for guilt are both interpersonal.

People have the moral capacity, which is part and parcel of what it means to be a person. Therefore, moral requirements and punishment for failure in them imply interpersonal capacity. The commandments for what Adam was supposed to do occur in connection with the image terminology. The failure to refrain from what he was not supposed to do occurs in connection with "likeness" to God. So, ethical being relates interpersonal capacity to image and likeness; the

specific abilities that make inter-personhood possible are the same ones that make ethics possible. That fact lies behind using the natural image as a designation for the ethical image: "image of God."

"God said-Satan said": communicative being

Revelation. When God created man and woman, he communicated to them their role in the creation. Their operation was not so much genetically encoded in them as verbally communicated to them. They received revelation also to the effect that they were not to eat of the tree of knowledge in the midst of the Garden, that is, a boundary on the exercise of their role as humankind. Language communication is unique to interpersonal capacity and relationship in keeping with the fact that it derives from rational capacity.

Naming the animals. In preparing Adam to see that nothing in the animal kingdom corresponded to him, God had him name the animals. The fact that he could fulfill that task shows his uniqueness from the animals. His ability to differentiate, associate, categorize, and label relates again to rational capacity.

Influence. When Satan approached Eve, he played on people's ability to be influenced by words, by persons who use words, by imaginable prospects, by trust and distrust, and by love. Influence contrasts with force as an interpersonal way to affect behavior. It appeals to people's emotions, thoughts, and conscience to persuade them to use their will in some way. People can be deceived by information, arguments, and projected possibilities.

What Satan did with Eve she turned around and did with Adam. Scripture says that Adam was not deceived (1 Timothy **2**:14), but he illustrated another interpersonal phenomenon associated with communication: the ability to be moved by the preference and belief of someone loved even if we "know better." The power of another personality can suffice to override our better judgment. In short, a man's ability to be tempted by beauty and pride relates to his social nature. In Genesis this temptation took place through the same medium God used for positive influence on Adam and Eve. Communication is interwoven with responsibility, ethical expectancy, and social relationship to form a cluster of interpersonal capacities. The fact that the text likewise associates them with the image terminology implies that the image consists of interpersonal capacity.

Aspects of the Image

Since scripture is written in every-day language, it tends to speak phenomenologically and functionally more than analytically, or "scientifically." It can describe things in terms of the way they look and how they work. In the previous part of this chapter, we looked at specifics in

passages associated with the image. Those passages talk about <u>activities</u>: exercising dominion, communicating, fellowshiping, (dis)obeying. In this part of the chapter, we are extracting from such complex activities those more specific capacities that comprise the interpersonal capacity and the activities performed in the context of personal relationship. The first endeavor exegeted revelation while the second analyzes experience.

We have enough indicators in the text to let us (a) conclude what the reality is—interpersonal capacity (synthesis). Then we can (b) identify the aspects of the image that make its manifestations possible (analysis). An added step is to (c) identify other aspects of the interpersonal experience. The combined list describes what it means to be a person and what it takes to relate to other persons in interpersonal ways. The image of God involves what people have in common with each other and with God.

Primary

    <u>Reason</u>. Over the centuries theologians have given extensive thought to the interpretation of Genesis **1**:26-27 and related materials: *"Let's make mankind in our image after our likeness."* Traditionally they have highlighted four aspects of the "image." Reason has headed the list. The capacity for abstract thought is probably the most distinctive thing about the human race; so people naturally correlate it with the image.

    <u>Will</u>. The will frees persons to choose <u>between</u> alternatives, not just to respond to a <u>given</u> alternative. People are not limited to a stimulus-response existence where response is determined by the most intense stimulus in the environment. Will relates to choice and therefore purpose, and implies something about motives and motivation.

    <u>Conscience</u>. People can feel guilty, which feeling naked pictures (Genesis **3**:7-11). Conscience ties persons to values and emotions. The pangs of conscience often do not bother us unless someone faces us with our failure to live up to shared standards. Conscience responds to the <u>person</u> who gave the commandment or the <u>person</u> with whom we breach a shared value. Conscience responds to a face. Consequently, guilt indicated by a bothered conscience results from two relational factors: (1) the lack of correlation between behavior and a standard for behavior plus (2) the lack of correlation between one person's behavior and other persons' expectancy who share those values.

Conscience is not itself a standard of performance but a capacity for sensing inconsistency between standard and performance, or more exactly, between expected standard and actual performance. Conscience operates on ingrained, more than inborn, values. It is educated by social experience. It does not function relative to items not known, not knowable, or not agreed to. People's conscience can begin to bother them later about an action they did not know or believe was bad when they did it. The ability to feel guilty retroactively is especially

personal. People can even feel guilty about something in front of someone they love and respect even though they themselves do not think it is wrong. These experiences show that conscience and guilt are not just in reference to abstract interpersonal values. They are more interpersonal (real) than that.

Affection. Emotion distinguishes people from much of the created realm because they care, have feelings and emotions, experiences affection for other persons. They can love and be loved, which offers a point of contact for personal bonding between individuals. The ability to be loved makes it possible even to retrieve people whose sin has separated them from other people.

Spirit. Man has a spirit—an incorruptible part that continues after the body dies. Traditionally, mankind has been regarded as created in God's image because he has rational, volitional, ethical, emotional, and spiritual capacities. In various combinations these simple capacities help make the complex interpersonal capacity possible and create the complex abilities discussed below.

Derived

The great variability in humankind derives especially from reason and will. Reason lies behind imagination to "create" what is not there yet. Satan appealed to this capacity when he tempted Eve with the prospects of being wise like God. Mind altered values in this case. The ability to think abstractly relates to language communication, creativity, self-transcendence, self-awareness, self-objectification, responsibility, even humor. People can penetrate a situation in thought and imagination. Will enables them to respond differently from what the personal influences and physical stimuli around them urge. People are much less determined than the inorganic, plant, and animal kingdoms. Some of these derived capacities we can look at in more detail.

Language communication. One distinguishing feature between mankind and the rest of "this creation" is the ability to carry on word communication based on symbolic thought. People are not "dumb brutes." Animals can do what might be called "communication," but they do not communicate through language systems.[56] Their communication is genetically based and transmitted and operates in stimulus-response fashion. Human language, however, is rationally based and culturally transmitted. It is a function of a culture, specialized to the interests, needs, characteristics, and perceptions of a given society.

Human language is hierarchically structured in that it has levels—sounds (phonemes) that grammar relates together (morphemes) to create words; groupings of words to make phrases, clauses, sentences, and the like (tagmemes). Language has "deep structure," which corresponds to the categories of formal analysis based on rational categories. Animal communication has one "level," and there is no grammar between parts. Its elements do not form a "system" of

interdependent phonemes, morphemes, and tagmemes. Instead, there is a set group of separate items.

Human language is <u>arbitrary</u> since there is no necessary connection between the linguistic item and what it refers to, which is partially what we mean when we say that language is "symbolic." By "dancing," bees tell other bees where a source of nectar is located. The bees' flight movements are "iconic"; they indicate direction and distance like a map in the air.

Human language is <u>imaginative</u> in that it is not based on external reality itself but on the speaker's subjective conceptualization of that reality. People can lie (contradictory to reality), talk about unicorns (contrary to reality), and communicate things of the past, the future, the distant, the unperceivable—things that require "trust" for the hearer to come to know about and believe (displaced reality). Either by place, time, or perception, there is separation between the speaker/hearer and the topic of conversation.[17]

Human language is <u>creative</u> in the sense that it generates new words, sounds, and combinations; it evolves. In this way, whole new language systems emerge and hundreds of such systems currently exist in flux. Animal language is static rather than dynamic. All members of the same species use the same sounds for the same "meaning," and new systems do not emerge. The distinctiveness of human language is one of the most important indicators of our uniqueness from animal, which correlates significantly with being in the image of God.

<u>Ethical capacity</u>. The rationality that leads to self-transcendence, self-awareness, self-objectification, imagination, and the like, operate in the social setting, where morality plays out. Social existence and therefore the ethical situation require the ability to project consciousness over behind the eyes of other people to determine how best to ought to act toward them. Only in the social circumstance can the self define itself as a self. Conscious self-awareness arises from interaction with other selves. Long ago George Herbert Mead observed that self emerges when a person can take the role of the "generalized other" and look back on the self.[18] The Golden Rule assumes this mechanism made possible by reason in conjunction with the other primary capacities that the image includes.

<u>Self-image</u>. From the social context also comes our self-image, which depends largely on feedback from other people. As interpersonal capacity enables us to relate to them, relating to them comes back to us in a way that we are not only aware of ourselves as selves, but we make inferences about our worth as implied by the way other persons treat us. Experiencing self-image is distinctively personal. It starts with interpersonal capacity and moves through other persons back to us to produce a value judgment about ourselves.

<u>Aesthetics</u>. The primary capacities enable persons to appreciate beauty, which consists of proportion, *etc*., recognizable by reason as well as perceived through sense stimulation. Beauty is also a matter of social decision. What people consider beautiful may change over time within

culture, and different cultures do not consider the same things beautiful. Beauty is more than something pleasant to the senses, which are based in genetics. Aesthetics is to the impersonal what ethics is to the interpersonal.

Summary

Since God created mankind in his own image, the task of identifying the image consists of comparing the biblical teaching about God and mankind and integrating it with confirmatory evidence from human experience. Restrictive guidelines for understanding "the image of God" include the fact that it is creatable, applicable to mankind after the Fall, applicable at the level of the whole individual, related to the social setting, and inclusive of even the unshared characteristics between God and mankind.

The first positive approach to the meaning of image is the fact that purpose determines nature. (1) Arguments for the interpersonal purpose of mankind likewise argue for mankind's interpersonal nature. Since being created in the image of God is scripture's most generalized statement about human nature and since those purposes are stated in conjunction with image terminology, we identify the image with interpersonal capacity. Furthermore, (2) since God himself is interpersonal, being created in his image means having interpersonal capacity. Finally, (3) several specifics in the context of image terminology also add up to interpersonal capacity: relationship ("let us"), responsibility ("dominion"), ethical behavior ("forbidden fruit"), and language communication. Primary capacities like rationality, affection, will, conscience, and spirit serve as "aspects of the image" that enable persons to function in these interpersonal ways. What distinguishes us from animals constitutes the image of God in us.

Endnotes

[1]Part of the reason people include an ethical dimension in the image itself is Paul's later use of the expression in an ethical sense. Restoring the image (cp. Romans **8**:29) implies that it was previously not there. That further implies that it was lost at some point because we had the image originally. The inference is then made that the image was lost to some degree in the Fall. But that is a second, or adapted, usage of image, not a usage that highlights an ethical dimension always present in it. Paul's usage of ethical image is not in series with the natural image of Genesis **1-3**, but in parallel with it; that is, he uses natural "image" to picture ethical character, a particularly deft stroke because the natural makes the ethical possible. The image in Paul's sense is lost when each individual "falls" by sinning. "Creating" a "new man" uses the historical beginning of mankind as a picture of a new ethical beginning of him. Creation, resurrection, new birth, and metamorphosis are all "natur-al" images for spiritual change.

[2]For a discussion of how Paul means that man *vs*. woman is in the image of God, see Chapter 4.

³Our approach to the image question does not distinguish "image" and "likeness." We regard the two expressions as different ways of saying essentially the same thing.

⁴Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians **15**:10 (εἰμὶ ὅ εἰμι; *eimi ho eimi*) has to do with salvation and calling to mission, but it is <u>verbally</u> parallel to God's self-description in Exodus **2**:14 (cp. **6**:3 and note John **8**:58; Revelation **1**:8; **4**:8) and <u>conceptually</u> parallel to it at the abstract level.

⁵Some scholars have thought that the Old Testament implies distinctions within the godhead. Genesis **19**:24 says, for example, *"Yahveh rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Yahveh out of heaven."* This instance may simply represent Semitic parallelism or tautology. Deity is associated with <u>Messiah</u> in some texts. The Son who has the eternal government on his shoulders is called "Mighty God" (Isaiah **9**:6-7). In Jeremiah **23**:5-6 Messiah is named *"Yahveh our righteousness."* Less clearly Psalm **110**:1 says, *"Yahveh said to my Lord . . . "* (cp. Matthew **22**:41-46; Mark **12**:35-37; Luke **20**:41-44; note Benjamin B. Warfield's article "The Divine Messiah in the Old Testament" in the 1916 *Princeton Theological Review*). The <u>angel of the Lord</u> phenomena (noted below in footnote 8) also associates deity with certain theophanies (Genesis **16**:10, 13; **22**:11-16; **31**:11, 13; Exodus **3**:2, 4; Joshua **5**:13-15; **6**:2; Zechariah **1**:10-13; **3**:1-2). Distinctions within the godhead are conceivable on these grounds, but these texts do not depict trinity very clearly.

⁶*"Angel of the Lord"* is a second phenomenon in which Christians have seen nascent revelation of the trinity in the Old Testament. We suppose that God's tri-unity was not stressed in the Old Testament for practical reasons to help safeguard against fostering polytheism in Israel.

⁷The Hebrew word אֱלֹהִים (*ᵉlohim*) does have other usages besides as (1) <u>an attributive name for the one true God</u> (Deuteronomy **4**:35, 39; *etc.*). It derives from the Semitic root אֵל (*'ēl*), which has to do with power; so by derivation it can be applied to a range of beings who possess significant power. It is a standard term for (2) <u>pagan deities</u> (Exodus **18**:11; **22**:19; Joshua **24**:20; 2 Kings **18**:33, *etc.*) and occurs a few times as a designation for (3) <u>angels</u> (Psalm **8**:5 = MT **8**:6 as interpreted in Hebrews **2**:7-9; Psalm **138**:1? = LXX **137**:1; some Greek readings for Daniel **2**:11; for the idea that the Mosaic Law came through angels when the Old Testament says God spoke to Moses, see Deuteronomy **32**:43 in LXX especially plus Acts **7**:38, 53; Galatians **3**:19; **1**:8; Hebrews **2**:2; note 2 Corinthians **11**:14). The word also indicates (4) <u>leaders</u> in Israel (Psalm **82**:1 + 6; cp. John 1**0**:34-38; see also Exodus **21**:6?; **22**:8?).

⁸The texts include Genesis <u>**16**:7-14</u>; **18**:1-33; <u>**22**:11-18</u>; **24**:7 + 40; <u>**31**:11-13</u>; **32**:24-32; **48**:15-16, <u>Exodus **3**:2-4:17</u>; **13**:21; **14**:19; **23**:20-33; 32:34-**33**:17; Numbers **20**:16; <u>**22**:22-35</u>; Joshua **5**:13-**6**:2; Judges **2**:1-5; **5**:23; <u>**6**:11-23</u>; <u>**13**:2-25</u>; 2 Samuel **24**:16; 1 Chronicles **21**:9-17; and 1 Kings **19**:5-7; 2 Kings **1**:3, 15; **19**:35; Psalm **34**:7; **35**:5-6; Isaiah **63**:9; Daniel **3**:28?; **6**:22?; Malachi **3**:1-6. For a brief, representative analysis, see J. M. Wilson, "Angel" in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (rev.), edited by G. W. Bromiley, Vol. I, p. 125.

For our part, we think that many of these passages describing "theophanies," that is, manifestations of deity *per se*, are really cases of God's speaking through angelic mediation (see following footnote). *"The angel of the Lord" spoke* to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus **3**:2); yet the succeeding account (and Deuteronomy **33**:16; note context) repeatedly says that <u>God</u> was speaking to Moses (**3**:4, 6, 7, 14, *etc.*). Since Yahveh who spoke in the bush is Yahveh who gave the Law, the giving of the Law is said to be through angels (Hebrews **2**:2-3) in a New Testament context that makes them lower than the Son, who is the effulgence of divine glory and the substance of deity (Hebrews **1**:1-**2**:1). In this one case at least, the Hebrew writer's distinction

between the Son and angels disallows the angel of the Lord at the burning bush to be a pre-incarnate theophany of the Son. In another example, the New Testament identifies Malachi **3**:1a (*"I will send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me"*) with John the Baptist (Matthew **11**:10, 14; Mark **1**:2; Luke **7**:27). Malachi **3**:1b-6 does predict the incarnation; but since it is a prediction, it is not a pre-incarnate theophany but the future incarnation itself. Other angel-of-the-Lord texts are ambiguous. The most likely theophanies are those in italicized references at the beginning of this note.

[9]A New Testament example of this idiom appears in John **14**:9, when Jesus answers Philip's request to see the Father: *"Have I been with you so long, Philip, and you have not seen me? The one that has seen me has seen the Father. How do you say, 'Show us the Father?'"* In the succeeding context, however, Jesus talks about going to the Father (**14**:12, 28), praying to the Father (**14**:16), being sent by the Father (**14**:24), having the Father send the Spirit in Jesus' name (**14**:26), and being commanded by the Father (**14**:31). Jesus is not only "at one" with the Father (**14**:10-11, 20); he is "we" with the Father (**14**:23).

[10]The construct state on the word "angel" could conceivably indicate the equivalent of an appositive genitive, in which case angel and Lord would be synonyms (cp. the "Sea of Galilee").

[11]In the same context that says, *"Who will go for us?"* Isaiah **6** does mention seraphs (2-3, 6-7); consequently, the "us" in **6**:8 does not so clearly refer to divine plurality-in-oneness as it seems to do in Genesis **1**:26; **3**:22; and **11**:7.

[12]Some interpreters take Genesis **6**:2 ("sons of God") as a reference to fallen angels, although that is not certain.

[13]We are not denying that angels already existed at the time when God created people. Satan existed by the time God tempted Eve. Job **38**:4-7 says, *"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . . when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"* Sons of God is an angelic reference in Job **1**:6; **2**:1 (cp. Genesis **6**:1-4?). Our point regarding Genesis **2** is not an observation about reality but a literary observation: angels are not part of the presentation in this literary context.

[14]The different conclusions regarding the mythological *vs.* strictly historical genres for the first chapters of Genesis have been argued by critical scholars for three centuries or more. The intensified creationist-evolutionist controversy since the mid-l960's has occasioned the production of a vast literature on the myth-history debate as exemplified on one side by Conrad Hyers in *The Meaning of Creation: Genesis and Modern Science* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press,1984) in contrast to writings on the other side by Henry Morris, John Whitcomb, Duane Gish, and others associated with the Creation Research Society.

[15]An example of the attempt to combine male and female traits appears in the contemporary notion of "the eternal feminine" and the insistence on "inclusive language" relative to deity. Deity is neither male nor female nor both; deity is without reference to sexuality physically or psychologically; deity is asexual. The uniform use of masculine pronouns and images for God in the Bible derive from functional analogies, not ontic realities.

[16]For brief treatments of the distinctions between human language and animal communication systems, see Charles F. Hockett, *A Course in Modern Linguistics* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), chapter 64; or "Animal 'Languages' and Human Language" in *The Evolution of Man's Capacity for Culture*, ed. by J. N. Spuhler (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1959), pp. 32-39. Among more recent publications the book by John C. Condon, Jr. can introduce the subject: *Semantics and Communication* (New York: Macmillan, l985. 3rd ed.),

particularly pp. 8-14. At a more technical level, see Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M. I. T. Press, l965); pp. 64-106 discuss "Aspects of Deep Structure." Robert A. Hall's *Introductory Linguistics* (Philadelphia, PA: Chilton Books, l964) is a good general introduction to the study of human language. At a somewhat less technical level, see *The Language Gap* by Clifford A. Wilson and Donald W. McKeon with an appreciative response by Marvin K. Mayers (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984) or *Monkeys Will Never Talk . . . or Will They?* (San Diego: CA: Master Books, 1978) by Clifford A. Wilson. More general works of importance include Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought and Reality*; Edward Sapir, *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*; Susanne K Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, 1942); Benjamin Lee Whorf and Edward Sapir, *Hypotheses*; Church, *Language and the Discovery of Reality* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., l921); Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Culture* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1953).

[17]In contrasting human language and animal communication, Cassirer discusses displacement under the terms symbol and signal (*Essay on Man*, pp. 41-62). Symbolic "represents" while signal "announces." A signal has a one-for-one association with the referent while symbol can vary in both connotation and denotation depending on shifting contexts. Symbolic stands for something in the absence of; signal points to something in the presence of. The former represents one thing by something else; the latter directs thought and leads to response, which is the mechanism behind operant conditioning. Researchers can train animals to perform certain operations to obtain food, pleasurable experience, or tangible consequence.

[18]George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society*, pp. 226-31. On page 134 he says,

> *"The human individual experiences himself as such not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same societal group, or from the generalized standpoint of the social group as a whole. . . . For he enters his own experience as a self . . . not directly or immediately, not by becoming a subject to himself, but only so far as he becomes an object to himself just as other individuals are objects to him, . . . and he becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitude of other individuals toward himself."*