

“In Our Image, Our Likeness”: Genesis, John Paul II and Chiara Lubich

Introduction

“Let us make a human in our image, by our likeness”¹ – the affirmation of Genesis concerning “humankind”: אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדִמוּתֵנוּ *na 'āšeh 'ādām b'šalmēnū kidmūtēnū*; Saint Pope John Paul II: priest of the Catholic Church in Poland, bishop, Pope, and declared a saint by the Catholic Church; Chiara Lubich: Italian Catholic laywoman and foundress of the *Opera di Maria*, the Focolare Movement, whose Cause for Beatification was initiated in 2014: from these three sources – Scripture text, Magisterium, and Catholic lay spirituality – we aim to glean the particular geniuses within the masculinity and femininity of humankind.

Genesis Becomes Source

The biblical genesis of humanity finds its source in God’s idea of revealing himself to his creation.² After separation within and embellishment of his

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¹ Scripture texts are taken from Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible*. Volume 1: The Five Books of Moses. Torah. Translated with Commentary (New York – London: W.R. Norton, 2019).

² John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris dignitatem*, 8, at https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html [accessed 13 August 2019]: “The presentation of man as ‘the image and likeness of God’ at the very beginning of Sacred Scripture... is the key for understanding biblical Revelation as God’s word about himself. Speaking about himself, whether through the prophets, or through the Son (see Heb 1:1, 2) who became man, *God speaks in human language*, using human concepts and images. If this manner of expressing himself is characterised by a certain anthropomorphism, the

creation, God said: “Let us make a human in our image, by our likeness; to hold sway over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the heavens, and the cattle, and the wild beasts, and all the crawling things that crawl upon the earth.” God’s deliberation before creating humankind already shows that we are here in the presence of God revealing himself in communication and dialogue.³ Pope John Paul II expresses this deliberation in the following manner:

In the biblical narrative, the difference between man and other creatures is shown above all by the fact that only the creation of man is presented as the result of a special decision on the part of God, a deliberation to establish a particular and specific bond with the Creator: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen 1:26). The life which God offers to man is a gift by which God shares something of himself with his creature.⁴

John Paul II continues to expound on this deliberation and states that, according to the description in Genesis 1, the creation of humankind is preceded by the Creator’s “addressing” himself, *ad intra*, in this particular way. This *ad intra* exchange in itself suggests already a kind of a divine monologue, but which seems to give an inkling of the divine wish to have a more real dialogue that is indeed dialogue between the Creator and his creatures.

reason is that man is ‘like’ God: created in his image and likeness. But then, *God too is* in some measure ‘like man,’ and precisely because of this likeness, he can be humanly known. At the same time, the language of the Bible is sufficiently precise to indicate the limits of the ‘likeness,’ the limits of the ‘analogy.’ For biblical Revelation says that, while man’s ‘likeness’ to God is true, the ‘non-likeness’ (see Num 23:19; Hos 11:9; Is 40:18; 46:5), which separates the whole of creation from the Creator is *still more essentially true*. Although man is created in God’s likeness, God does not cease to be for him the one ‘who dwells in unapproachable light’ (1 Tim 6:16): he is the ‘Different One,’ by essence the ‘Totally Other’”; see also John Paul II, *Theology of the Body. Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997), 452 on *Mulieris dignitatem*.

³ John Chrysostom, *Sermons on Genesis*, 2.1, PG, 54:587-588. See *Genesis 1-11 (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture)*, ed. Andrew Louth (Downers Grove/IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 28. Callan Slipper quotes Chiara Lubich: “God in it [in the human being] shares Himself directly, placing the soul in it as His image and placing it upon earth for the adventure of becoming God, returning to the Father who created it, by participating in the divine life, by means of grace.” “Towards an Understanding of the Human Person According to the Mystical Experience of Chiara Lubich in the Paradise of ’49,” *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture*, 1/1 (2012): 36.

⁴ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae*, 34: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html [accessed 13 August 2019].

Chiara Lubich propounds an interesting interpretative slant on God's inner dialogue before creating humanity. The biblical divine deliberation account suggests that we recognise the mystery that is disclosed little by little in history. Male and female were created "in the image of God," but we cannot know the ultimate term of this analogy – God – and therefore all three terms, male, female, and God, cannot be the objects of "clear and distinct" ideas. We constantly need to keep in mind two perspectives: (1) the need to somehow hold an original difference between Creator and creatures that is the spring of reciprocity between God and humankind, and among human beings themselves, and (2) the impossibility of reaching certain conclusions about its content.⁵

For this dialogical and indeed "communional" and communitarian reason, God creates humankind in "their" image and by "their" likeness.⁶ In the General Audience of 14 November 1979, John Paul II emphasises this communion in a philosophical key: "Following the narrative of Genesis... creation of man consists in the creation of the unity of two beings. Their *unity* denotes, above all, *the identity of human nature*; their *duality*, on the other hand, manifests *what*, on the basis of this identity, *constitutes the masculinity and femininity* of created man."⁷

In her book *Gesù nel fratello*, Chiara Lubich focuses on a very particular aspect in the creation of humankind by God in his image and by his likeness. Lubich writes that the text of Genesis 1:26-27 does not primarily say what humankind is, but rather what God intends to do and what he actually does. Both divine intention and the actual realisation of creating humankind in God's image and likeness show that the Creator girds himself to create someone who can relate to him.⁸

"God created the human in his image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:26-27).⁹ That God looks at what he

⁵ See Giulia Paola Di Nicola, "Chiara Lubich and Gender Sociology," *Claritas. Journal of Dialogue and Culture* 4/1 (2015): 31.

⁶ General Audience, 9 April 1986, §3, at https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/audiences/1986/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19860409.html [accessed 14 August 2019].

⁷ Ibid., §1, at https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19791114.html [accessed 17 August 2019].

⁸ Chiara Lubich, *Gesù nel fratello* (Roma: Città Nuova, 1979), 18-19.

⁹ The triple use of the verb בָּרָא *bārā* "he created" is indeed striking. It seems to give a particular importance and "intensity" to the creative act. בָּרָא is always used of divine activity, with *accusativum rei*. See Francis Brown – Samuel R. Driver – Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 135 [hereafter, Brown – Driver – Briggs]; *The Dictionary of Classical*

had created and sees that it was good (Gen 1:4.10.12.18.21.25), and looks at “all that he had done,” and considers it as “very good” (Gen 1:31), after he created humankind in his image, goes to show a functional “goodness” in creation as far as humankind is concerned, and a functional “goodness” in humanity as far as God’s revelation is concerned.¹⁰ The two differing depictions of creation seem to balance out each other. Whereas the first account in Genesis 1 depicts God as more transcendent, speaking creation into being by his word, the second account in Genesis 2 portrays God as being more immanent, fashioning humankind from the dust of the ground, much like a potter working with clay, and conversing with humans. In the second creation narrative, with a different theology, where, for example, the concept of טוב *tób* (good, beautiful, attractive ...) is lacking, humankind is the only creature that has a direct and personal relationship with God; he stands opposite him (Gen 2:18).¹¹ Humankind stands in front of God, he is his “you”. Such a special personal relationship with God is constitutive of his being-humankind.¹²

The character of what makes the טוב *tób* that God saw in his creation takes on different categorisations and forms: the usefulness of the light in v.4; the benefits of having separate abodes for the seas and the dry land in v.10; the green light given to self-generating vegetation producing its own seeds in v.12; the benefits caused by the daily alternation of day-night, and the cyclical dry-wet seasons in v.18; the populating of the seas with its fish, the skies with their birds and every creature that moves on land in vv.21.24. If God created humankind in his own image and likeness, then he wanted humankind to reflect him and be like him in

Hebrew, vol. 2, ed. David J.A. Clines (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010), 258: “always of God.” See also, John Paul II, General Audience, 9 April 1986, §4.

¹⁰ See Gianfranco Ravasi, “Dio vide che era *tób* (Gen 1),” in *La bellezza: Parola, Spirito e Vita* 44 (2001): 11-20.

¹¹ The Hebrew עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ *‘ezer k’negdô* is notoriously difficult to translate. *k’negdô* means “alongside him,” “opposite him,” “a counterpart to him.” “Help” (as in KJV, NJB, RSV, NRSV), “adiutorium” (NOV, VUL), “ghajnuna” (SAY, GhBM⁴), “aide” (FBJ; TOB), “aiuto” (CEI, IEP), “Hilfe” (LUT17), is an under- and too weak a translation of *‘ezer*, because it suggests a merely auxiliary function, whereas *‘ezer* elsewhere connotes active intervention on behalf of someone. See Edward Lipiński, עֵזֶר *‘ezer*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 11, eds., Johannes Botterweck – Helmer Ringgren – Heinz-Josef Fabry; trans. Douglas W. Stott (Grand Rapids/MI - Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 14-16; Clines, *Dictionary*, vol. 6, 341-342.

¹² Lubich, *Gesù nel fratello*, 19. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11. A Continental Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 79; 157-158, states that humankind’s being itself can only be understood in his relationship with God.

his creating all that is beneficial to creation so that he could reveal himself and so that creation could embrace that revelation.¹³

Chiara Lubich expresses amazement at this particular characteristic: “Is it not perhaps humankind that “calls” the existence of God, becoming in turn his most significant testimony? Is it not mankind that feels in his heart the recall to something, to someone who transcends it, the deep longing for the infinite and the immortal?”¹⁴

In an unpublished text, Chiara Lubich pens an extremely daring piece of mysticism:

Man is Creation and, being redeemed, all is redeemed. And anyhow, he is the one destined to be *another God*. He is the “in fieri” masterpiece of God, the Recreation of God, His image and His likeness, which means: another Him. Above all, God aimed His gaze to be able to *live* as a human creature beyond the divine Nature and try to love “naturally” beyond the “supra-natural”; in other words, to become a creature Himself, the Creator, and live the life he had generated, to wed the Creation He had created becoming *one* with it: *One, inseparable Unity*.¹⁵

The ontological dimension of unity and duality in humankind has an axiological meaning. From the text and the context of Genesis 2:23, which is theologically different from Chapter 1, it is clearly seen that humankind was created as a particular value before God. “God saw all that he had done, and, behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31). But אָדָם *hā’ādām* was also created as a particular value for itself—first, because he is אָדָם; second, because אִשָּׁה *hā’iššāh* the woman is for the man, and vice versa אִשָּׁה *hā’iš* the man is for the woman.¹⁶

“Image of God” became an important theme in Christian thought. Interpretations can be categorised historically as “functionalist” (“image” referring to the task of ruling) or “substantialist” (“image” referring to the human soul mirroring its divine archetype).¹⁷ It is a must here to add what John Paul II

¹³ “By creating, He lived and lives «externally», «outside Himself», the same dynamics of His Trinitarian life and, therefore, in some way places outside Himself another Self like a true *partner* made in His image and likeness (*Genesis* 1:26-27), called to freely participate, from the first moment of existence, in the life of love (*kenosis*/elevation) of the three divine Persons,” Lubomir Žak, “The Trinity and Creation,” *Journal for Perspectives of Economic Political and Social Integration*. *Journal for Mental Changes* 22/1 (2016): 6.

¹⁴ *Gesù nel fratello*, 19.

¹⁵ Quoted in Žak, “The Trinity and Creation,” 6.

¹⁶ General Audience, 14 November 1979, §1.

¹⁷ J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids/MI: Brazos, 2005), 19-20.

stated during the General Audience of 24 November 1999, namely that “At the same time, the passage [Gen 1:26-27] clearly says that neither man nor woman separately are the image of the Creator, but man and woman in their reciprocity. Both are equally God’s masterpiece.”¹⁸ Furthermore, through the symbolism of the creation of woman from man’s rib (or side, as the lexeme *שֵׁלָה* *šēlā* means¹⁹), Scripture stresses that humanity is not in fact complete until woman is created (see Gen 2:18-24).²⁰

Created in the image and by the likeness of God opens up infinite possibilities for humankind to be, and to live, as an image and likeness of God, thus in turn revealing God for who he is.

Chiara Lubich perceives this concept very clearly. “This is what Chiara’s spirituality does: It presents a journey with God through which men and women may discover God, themselves, and each other in their true identity and in reciprocity.”²¹

However, this concept of God’s revelation in his creating humanity does not seem to be so fundamental as it should be for the Bible itself. David Clines’s statement is typical of this view: “The importance of the doctrine [of the image of God] is out of all proportion to the laconic treatment it receives in the Old Testament.”²² However, brevity should not be equated with lack of importance. “The image of God opens the Torah and therefore sets the tone for the entire Hebrew canon.”²³

¹⁸ General Audience, 24 November 1999, §1: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_24111999.html [accessed 14 August 2019].

¹⁹ See Brown – Driver – Briggs, 854; Clines, *Dictionary*, 7:126. In the General Audience of 9 April 1986, John Paul II explains Genesis 2:21-22 – God calling the woman into being – by drawing her from the body of the man, from “one of his ribs” as indicating their identity in humanity, and their essential similarity although distinct. Both have the same dignity as persons, since both share the same nature.

²⁰ John Paul II explains the phrase “It is not good for the human to be alone; I shall make him a sustainer beside him” of Genesis 2:18 in an original manner. He states: “Woman is able to collaborate with man because she complements him perfectly. Woman is another kind of ‘ego’ in their common humanity, which consists of male and female in perfectly equal dignity,” see General Audience of 24 November 1999, §2. See also John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 449, on *Mulieris dignitatem*, 6. Furthermore, Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained. A Commentary on John Paul II’s “Gospel of the Body”* (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2003), 74-76.

²¹ Di Nicola, “Chiara Lubich,” 31-32.

²² “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 53.

²³ Kory Eastvold, “The Image of God in the Old Testament Theology,” *Stone-Campbell Journal* 21 (2018): 240.

The Authorial Intention of Image and Likeness in Genesis 1:26-27

The first-person plural

What does the first-person plural consist of (“our image”): *na’āseh ’ādām b’šalmēnū?*

Ancient Jewish interpretation (followed also by some Christian writers) saw the use of the plural *נֶאֱשֶׂה na’āseh* “Let *us* make ...” as meaning that God deliberated with the angels, his heavenly court, so as to imply that God had created them at the very start, when “he created the heavens and the earth”. But the use of the plural should rather be taken as reflecting the greatness and power of God.²⁴

The eleventh-century Jewish commentator Rashi interprets this plural context in the sense that God was consulting with his court. Human beings are made both in the image of heavenly beings (v.26, “Let *us* make human beings in *our* image”) and in the image of God (v.27, “*God* created humankind in *his* image”).²⁵

Of similar opinion is Clines who states that God’s deliberation in verse 26, “Let us make humankind in our image,” refers to the assembly of heavenly beings as they deliberate about matters affecting the earth. Abundantly attested in comparable religions and in the Hebrew Scriptures, the assembly (sometimes referred to as “gods” in the Bible) appears frequently in the Bible, for example, Genesis 11:4,7; Deuteronomy 32:8; Psalm 29; 82; Jeremiah 23:18.²⁶

That God is addressing the heavenly court opens the possibility that humans are made not only in God’s image but in the image of angels/heavenly beings, whether functionally or physically.²⁷

²⁴ *The Navarre Bible. Genesis*, trans. Michael Adams (Dublin – New York: Four Courts – Scepter Publishers, 2010), 40.

²⁵ See Rashi’s *Parashah* on Genesis 1:26-27 in *The Torah with Rashi’s Commentary*. The Sepirstein Edition; The ArtScroll Series (New York: Mesorah Publications, 1995), 15-17.

²⁶ Richard J. Clifford, “Genesis,” in *The Paulist Biblical Commentary* (New York – Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2018), 16-17.

²⁷ John Paul II, in the Audience of 9 April 1986, §3 wished to include – most probably for completeness’ sake – yet another interpretation of this plural use of “Let us make a human in our image, by our likeness” of Genesis 1:26. He comments: “According to some interpretations, the plural would indicate the divine ‘we’ of the one Creator. This would be, in some way, a first distant Trinitarian indication.” The Pontiff seems to indicate the anachronistic interpretation by following his comment by “In any event...” (“In ogni caso,” is the Italian original version of the

Chiara Lubich, quoting Irenaeus of Lyons,²⁸ emphatically shows how the plural “Let us make,” and “our image” cannot refer to the angels – they are always at God’s disposition to obey him – but to the Son and the Holy Spirit.²⁹

Thus, one is left to discern precisely what God, the heavenly beings, and humanity have in common. The common denominator seems to be God’s rule of creation delegated to humanity in deliberation and dialogue. For example, humans have the task of guarding the garden, which is taken away and handed over to the cherubim (Gen 2:15; 3:24).³⁰

“צֶלֶם” *selem*

This term stems from an unused root meaning “to shade,” “a phantom” (figuratively), “an illusion,” “resemblance,” “a representative figure”: especially an idol likeness.³¹

Recent research from the last few decades have shown that two basic interpretive models have emerged for Genesis 1:26-27. The first model views humankind as God’s representative on earth, commissioned with rulership and dominion over the rest of creation.³² The second views human beings as God’s counterpart in a dialogical relationship that becomes possible between God and human beings.³³

phrase). In his audience of 24 November 1999, §2, John Paul II is much more assertive, without any hint of hesitance: “In the human person considered in his ‘relationality,’ we find a vestige of God’s own mystery revealed in Christ as a substantial unity in the communion of three divine Persons.”

See also John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 46-47; *Mulieris dignitatem*, 7 – “Being a person in the image and likeness of God thus also involves existing in a relationship, in relation to the other ‘I.’ This is a prelude to the definitive self-revelation of the Triune God: a living unity in the communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

²⁸ *Adv. Haer.* IV, 20, 1; *PG*, 7, 1032.

²⁹ Lubich, *Gesù nel fratello*, 21.

³⁰ Eastvold, “The Image of God,” 240-242.

³¹ See צֶלֶם in Brown – Driver – Briggs, 853-854; Clines, *Dictionary*, 7:124.

³² Hendrik Bosman, “Humankind as Being Created in the ‘Image of God’ in the Old Testament: Possible Implications for the Theological Debate on Human Dignity,” *Scriptura* 105 (2010): 563. John Paul II explains this dominion feature in the “image of and likeness to” God characteristic of humankind as “the basis of the dominion over the other creatures in the visible world, which are called into being in view of man and “for him” (General Audience, 9 April 1986, §6).

³³ Franz Josef Stendebach, “צֶלֶם” *selem*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 12, eds., Johannes Botterweck – Helmer Ringgren – Heinz-Josef Fabry; trans. Douglas W.

The first model is represented by various scholars,³⁴ and unequivocally articulated by Walter Gross who asserts that “human beings are created in the image of Elohim, that is, they are created to rule over the animal world.”³⁵ Manfred Görg modifies this interpretation in that human beings “in the ‘image of God’ now assume the function of “God’s spirit” over the chaos of the world (Gen 1:2c).”³⁶ Diodore, Chrysostom, and Theodoret understood the image to entail delegated authority over creation.³⁷ Modern critical scholarship has recently picked up this view, though with virtually no conscious deference to its forebears.

The second model similarly allows for various representations,³⁸ but that of Klauss Westermann stands out.

Westermann concludes that “what God decided to create must be something that has a relationship to him.”³⁹ The author of Genesis 1 differentiates between the creation of humankind and the creation of the universe as having two independent authorial narratives, thereby emphasising that the creation in the image of God establishes a special relationship between humanity and the Creator that did not apply to the world in general.⁴⁰

Stott (Grand Rapids/MI – Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 392. See also Bosman, *Humankind*, 562.

³⁴ Gerhard von Rad, Carl Gustav Hempel, Hans Wildberger, Odil Hannes Steck, Heinz Wolff, Horst Dietrich Preuss, Thomas R. Schreiner, Josef Scharbert.

³⁵ “Die Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen im Kontext der Priesterschrift,” *Theologische Quartalschrift* 161/4 (1981): 259.

³⁶ Manfred Görg, “Alles hast du gelegt unter seine Füße. Beobachtungen zu Ps 8,7b im Vergleich mit Gen 1,28,” in *Freude an der Weisung des Herrn*. Beiträge zur Theologie der Psalmen: Festschrift Heinrich Gross (Stuttgart: Verlag Katolisches Bibelwerk, ²1987), 146.

³⁷ See Frederick G. McLeod, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 51-85. See also Jarosław Kupczak, “Man as the Image and Likeness of God,” 24 July 2011, Harman Lecture, John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family, Melbourne (Australia), at <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/48806168/man-as-the-image-and-likeness-of-god-john-paul-ii-institute-for-> [accessed 17 August 2019].

³⁸ Walther Zimmerli, Johann Jacob Stamm, Victor Maag, Friedrich Horst, Kurt Galling, Wilhelm Rudolph, Oswald Loretz.

³⁹ *Genesis 1-11*, 157-158.

⁴⁰ Bosman, “Humankind,” 563. See also Paul Sciberras, “The Biblical Perspective of the Human Person,” in *Lejn hajja sesswali isbah* (Klabb Qari Nisrani 104; Malta: Kummissjoni Djoċesana Żgħażaġh – Moviment ta’ Kana – Dar Gużepa Debono, 2007), 27-29.

Ultimately, “this further determination in the account of creation of human beings... consists in determining further the nature of the act of creation which enables an event to take place between God and humans; it is not a question of a quality in human beings.”⁴¹

How does this interpretation and determination fit in when seen in the light of other texts where שֵׁלֶם *selem* occurs, namely 1:22; 5:3 and 9:6? A comparison of 1:22 with 1:28 reveals that the blessing over the waters and birds in v.22 is introduced by the infinitive לְאֹמַר *lē'môr* which has become stereotyped as an adverb in the sense of “thus, as follows.”⁴² By contrast, v.28 introduces the blessing over human beings with the full and immediate וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם *wayyōmer lāhem* “he spoke to them,” indicating that human beings are functioning as God’s dialogue partners.⁴³ “The presupposition for God addressing human beings in this way is that [they] are created as God’s counterpart, expressed in the assertion that they were created in the image of God.”⁴⁴ John Paul II expounds on this human-divine characteristic of dialogue in this manner:

How very significant is the dissatisfaction which marks man’s life in Eden as long as his sole point of reference is the world of plants and animals (confer Gen 2:20). Only the appearance of the woman, a being who is flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones (confer Gen 2:23), and in whom the spirit of God the Creator is also alive, can satisfy the need for interpersonal dialogue, so vital for human existence.⁴⁵

This creative interpersonal dialogue that ensues in deeper and stronger communion proclaims the dignity of man and woman as created in the image of God-Communion! The biblical anthropology of “relationality” leads us to genuinely understand the human being’s identity in its relationship to others, particularly the relationship between man and woman. When the human person

⁴¹ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 157-158.

⁴² Gesenius’ *Hebrew Grammar* as edited and enlarged by the late E. Kautzsch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), §114.

⁴³ The phrase “image and likeness” signal the overture to the bilateral covenant between God and man in Scripture. “In [God’s] image and by his likeness” communicate to us that from the beginning humankind is the one to whom God addresses his Word and whose special status lies in his capacity to answer his divine call. God calls and humankind is able to respond: perfect dialogue. See Carl Anderson – José García, *Called to Love. Approaching John Paul II’s Theology of the Body* (New York: Doubleday, 2019), 22.

⁴⁴ Stendebach, “שֵׁלֶם” *selem*,” 395.

⁴⁵ *Evangelium vitae*, 35.

is considered in the dynamic of relationality, a vestige of God's own mystery is encountered.⁴⁶

Chiara Lubich, in her book *Gesù nel fratello*, comments that humanity cannot exist except in the image and likeness of God, One and Triune, if it wants to be as he wills it to be. All men and women must stand in a relationship of love with each other just as the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, in whose image and likeness they have been created, do.⁴⁷ Giulia Paola Di Nicola had this to say about Lubich's perspective of human relations within the framework of the Trinity:

The emphasis on the Trinity required a reinterpretation of theology and sociology because it required thinking of interpersonal relationships as an essential part of personhood, both human and divine. Therefore, what previously had been considered "feminine" in a disparaging way now became the universal and essential part of everyone's being and behaviour in the image of God, who is Love.⁴⁸

Chiara Lubich herself points out that the prophets' controversy with Israel about worship demonstrated that the proper relationship with God is determined by the proper relationship with humankind and that the divine service of the liturgy must always be accompanied by the service of people, since all human beings are created in the image and by the likeness of God.⁴⁹ Moreover, because God is self-giving, those made in his image and likeness are called beyond generosity, the sharing of things, to self-sacrifice, the sharing of one's life. A sign of such love is joy. A fruit of such love is unity.⁵⁰

Maria Voce, in her article in *L'Osservatore Romano*, of 2 February 2014, "Saving Love Everywhere," reveals how Chiara Lubich lived this verse: "Sacred Scripture itself justifies it. We read in the Book of Genesis: 'God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them' (1:27)."⁵¹ Commenting on this text, Chiara shed light on the fact that the

⁴⁶ See John Paul II, General Audience, 24 November 1999, §2. "Being created in God's image and likeness is the structural basis of biblical and Christian anthropology", John Paul II would strongly state in *Mulieris dignitatem*, 7.

⁴⁷ *Gesù nel fratello*, 21.

⁴⁸ Di Nicola, "Chiara Lubich," 23.

⁴⁹ Allocution, "Who is Our Neighbour in the Old Testament," Rocca di Papa, 5 October 1978, <http://www.centrochiaralubich.org/en/documents/texts.html> (accessed 12 August 2019).

⁵⁰ See Francis George, in Chiara Lubich, *The Art of Loving* (New York: New City Press, 2010), 9.

⁵¹ <http://www.osservatoreromano.va/en/news/saving-love-everywhere> [accessed 12 August 2019].

woman, like the man, is that person whom God created in his image, “whom he called, that is, to participate in his intimate life and to live in reciprocal communion with the man, in love, after the model of God who is Love, who is Trinity” – hence in reciprocal communion.⁵²

“In the other, whether man or woman, there is a reflection of God himself, the definitive goal and fulfilment of every person.”⁵³ This interpretation also corresponds to Genesis 5:3, where Adam begets his son Seth as his counterpart (בְּדִמּוּתוֹ כְּצִלְמוֹ *bidmûtô k’šalmô*), a relationship mirroring that between God and human beings continuing in the relationship between father Adam and his son Seth.⁵⁴ Here the substantialist perspective cannot be eliminated, since it better accounts for passages like Genesis 5:3 (his son resembled Adam physically). An image, after all, is a statue of someone.⁵⁵ Finally, 9:6 discloses that human beings, God’s counterpart, are to be protected. Human beings as God’s dialogue partners are thus the only creatures capable of responding to God. At the level of humanity in its entirety, 1:26-27 lays the foundation for what happens from Genesis 17 onward in God’s history with the patriarchs and with Israel.⁵⁶

דְּמוּת *d’mût*

“A resemblance,” “model,” “shape”; from the verb דָּמָה *dmbh* “to be like,” by implication “to resemble,” “to liken,” “to compare.”⁵⁷ According to Preuss, probably the earliest example of *d’mût* in the Hebrew Bible occurs in 2 Kings 16:10. The relatively concrete meaning in this occurrence is that of “image” or “copy, reproduction.” Its predominant usage in exilic texts, however, suggests the translation “form,” “appearance,” or more weakly “something like (similar to).”⁵⁸ The use of *d’mût* in the story of early humankind (Gen 1:26; 5:1,3) has always been of particular interest in the original Priestly writing, also exilic.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ *Evangelium vitae*, 35.

⁵⁴ Stendebach, “שֶׁלֶם” *šelem*, 395.

⁵⁵ Clifford, “Genesis,” 17.

⁵⁶ Stendebach, “שֶׁלֶם” *šelem*, 395.

⁵⁷ See דָּמָה, in Brown – Driver – Briggs, 197-198; Clines, *Dictionary*, vol.2, 448-449.

⁵⁸ Horst Dietrich Preuss, “דָּמָה *dāmāh*; דְּמוּת *d’mûth*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 3, eds., Johannes Botterweck – Helmer Ringgren; trans. John T. Willis – Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI - Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1978), 257.

בְּצִלְמֵנוּ כְּדִמוּתֵנוּ *b^ešalmēnū kidmūtēnū*

In Genesis 1:26 the word *šelem* is coupled with the word *d^emūt*, without any conjunction in the Hebrew text; they have no separate meaning but are used together to describe the same capacity. *d^emūt* is used here with *šelem* in Genesis 1:26 and before *šelem* in 5:3, while *d^emūt* occurs alone in 5:1. This interlacing and replacement suggest that the two lexemes are practically interchangeable and very little distinction can be made between them. In 1:26 the terms are used with the prepositions *b^e*, “in,” and *k^e*, “after” (the latter with *d^emūt*), while in 5:1,3 *d^emūt* is used with *b^e* (in v.3 *šelem* is used with *k^e*).

This dovetailing opposes too strong a differentiation between *d^emūt* and *šelem*. It also opposes an overemphasis on the use of the words with prepositions in contrast to their use alone. Instead, the juxtaposition of the two words in Gen 1:26 suggests that the writer is making a statement about the dignity of man, which he intensifies by combining similar concepts.⁵⁹

In Genesis 1:26a, *kidmūtēnū* seems to be an epexegetis of *b^ešalmēnū*; in other words, the two phrases function synonymously, with *kidmūtēnū* explaining the significance of *b^ešalmēnū*.⁶⁰ Translating one term thus determines the other’s interpretation. This paves the way in Priestly texts for recognition of the fact that in respect of an analogy no identity of God and man can or should be asserted, but only a similarity (“something similar to us”). At the same time, what the author of Genesis 1:26 has concretely in view cannot be determined simply by investigating these related ideas. It emerges only from the broader context (v.28) and is explained as a cooperative sharing in dominion.⁶¹ The consequence of all this is expressed by John Paul II as: “He [God] rested then in the depths of man, he rested in man’s mind and in his thought; after all, he had created man endowed with reason, capable of imitating him, of emulating his virtue, of hungering for heavenly graces. In these his gifts God reposes.”⁶² After listening to the deliberative, creative, voice of God in the first account of humankind’s creation, we can expect and perceive humankind’s responsive voice in the second account in Genesis 2:4-3:24. The second creation narrative, as it were, lifts the veil for us to rediscover the inner experience through which we are to respond to the divine Creator’s call.⁶³

⁵⁹ Ibid., 259.

⁶⁰ Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” 78; Edward M. Curtis, “Image of God (OT),” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 389.

⁶¹ Preuss, “דָּמוּת *dāmūt*,” 259.

⁶² *Evangelium vitae*, 35.

⁶³ Anderson – Garcia, *Called to Love*, 22. “The second creation account shifts the point of view of the story: Now it’s man who speaks and reveals his interior world. This account doesn’t

Bosman summarises this issue in the following words:

There is no firm consensus that the combination of *šelem* and *ḏmûth* must be understood as a type of *hendiadys* where two terms combine to communicate the same idea, or that *ḏmûth* is a term that was added at a later stage to bring more ambiguity into the interpretation of the *imago Dei*.⁶⁴

Philologically, one might agree with Hermann Gunkel⁶⁵ and Gerhard von Rad⁶⁶ that image refers to physical form. However, no conclusions can be drawn from lexicography alone, especially given the metaphorical nature of Genesis 1:28.⁶⁷ Yet to anticipate the conclusion, if the whole of Genesis 1–11 is a critique of Mesopotamian royal ideology, as Richard Middleton proposes,⁶⁸ then this incorporates the idea that humanity *is* God's image, wherever that identity begins or ends.

Conclusion

The foregoing understanding of *ḇšalmēnû kidmûtēnû* is further clarified in God's words: "...And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." In other words, humankind was made as a representative of God on earth, to rule over the creatures and the earth they inhabit. It implies that humankind was to rule after God's example, as if God were ruling the earth, according to his will, embodying an aspect of God's

just observe man from the outside; it presents the human journey of wonderment from man's own point of view. By putting us in man's shoes as he was in the beginning, the second creation account unfolds the 'original experiences' that ensued upon God creating humankind."

In the General Audience of 9 April 1986, §5 Pope John Paul II takes the interpretation of Genesis 2:19-20, Adam naming the animals, to a very original level. Adam naming the animals (Gen 2:19-20), but not being able to find "a sustainer beside him," recognises humankind's uniqueness. Although the account of Genesis 2 indirectly presents a clarification of the "image" of God in humankind, it presents some of its essential elements – the capacity of self-knowledge, the experience of man's own being in the world, the need to fill his solitude, his dependence on God. On humankind's solitude in John Paul II, see West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 70-73. See also General Audience, 14 November 1979, §2.

⁶⁴ *Humankind*, 563.

⁶⁵ *Genesis*, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 114.

⁶⁶ *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 58-59.

⁶⁷ Eastvold, *The Image of God*, 243.

⁶⁸ *The Liberating Image*, 185-231.

revelation as king and ruler of all creation. For the creatures of the earth and the earth itself, it would be *as if* God himself were ruling. According to John Paul II, that humankind was created “in God’s image and likeness” speaks of the personal God so that – unlike the whole world of other living creatures, including those endowed with senses (*animalia*) – man is also a rational being (*animal rationale*).⁶⁹ Thanks to this property, man and woman are able to ‘dominate’ the other creatures of the visible world (confer Gen 1:28).⁷⁰ By reflecting on the whole account found in Genesis 2:18-25, and by interpreting it in light of the truth about the image and likeness of God (confer Gen 1:26-27), we can understand even more fully what constitutes the personal character of the human being, thanks to which both man and woman are like God. For every individual is made in the image of God insofar as he or she is a rational and free creature capable of knowing God and loving him. Moreover, we read that man cannot exist “alone” (confer Gen 2:18); he can exist only as a “unity of the two,” and therefore *in relation to another human person*. It is a question here of a mutual relationship: man to woman and woman to man. Being a person in the image and likeness of God thus also involves existing in a relationship, in relation to the other “I.”⁷¹ Chiara Lubich underscores this particular aspect with reference to the Trinitarian “similitude” of humankind to God.

Yet humankind was not God, nor was it a part of God.⁷² God did not take of his essence and make humankind a mini-God, so to speak. Humanity, as a created being itself, carried the representation of God (and it appears as a physical representation as well) to the created earth. Humankind was not in any sense God. Yet it was *as if* it were God to the earth. A clear distinction must be maintained here. It is a copy and representation, not a clone.

The Priestly view of humanity presupposes that they are created in the ‘*image of God*’ not only with regard to “*their function as God’s deputies, but also with regard to their inherent nature*.” While the functional dimension of the divine image is emphasised in Genesis 1, a physical likeness between God and humans is reflected in Genesis 5 and 9.⁷³

⁶⁹ See St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 29, art. 1.

⁷⁰ *Mulieris dignitatem*, 6; see also John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 450-452.

⁷¹ *Mulieris dignitatem*, 7.

⁷² “Although man is created in God’s likeness, God does not cease to be for him the one ‘who dwells in unapproachable light’ (1 Tim 6:16): he is the ‘Different One,’ by essence the ‘totally Other,’” *Mulieris dignitatem*, 8; see also John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 452.

⁷³ Bosman, “Humankind,” 568.

Thus, whether we accept the “functionalist” (“image” referring to the task of ruling) or “substantialist” (“image” referring to the human soul mirroring its divine archetype) interpretation, it is always the relational, “communional”, deliberative aspects in their dialogical framework that hold together the image and likeness of God in humanity.

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