

## THE IMAGO DEI AND CHRISTIAN AESTHETICS

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In one of the few discussions that seeks to relate aesthetics to the Image of God, Calvin Seerveld cautions that comparisons of God as Creator and man as image-of-God-creator are speculative and misleading. "Man is not God's image," says Seerveld, "a finite parallel to an infinite perfection, only Christ is a spitting image of God." The Image of God for him lies in the fact that men carry with them inescapably a restless sense of allegiance to God until they rest in commitment to him. He concludes that this whole discussion looks too hard and overlooks the limited knowing craftsmanship character of artistic activity.<sup>1</sup> But surely the discussion of the image of God and aesthetics merits more attention than this if only to attempt to relate man's uniqueness before God to his aesthetic sensitivity. Is the *Imago* limited to man's sense of allegiance to God? Or put another way, granted the image finds its fullest meaning in being turned toward that of which it is the image, is man's capacity for "knowing craftsmanship" (a pregnant concept) unrelated to this chief end of man? We think not. In any event from Dr. Seerveld's helpful study we can perhaps be stimulated to go deeper into the idea of the image of God, to see if and where it might be relevant to a development of Christian aesthetics.

Let us consider this present essay an attempt to consider the doctrine of the Image of God as traditionally understood and as presently discussed in the light of human artistic sensitivity and expression. We mean this to be a contribution not so much to reflection upon the image of God in man, as upon how this idea might illumine Christian consideration of human artistic activity.

### BIBLICAL BASIS

The Biblical locus of the doctrine of the Image is Genesis 1:26-28. Here God declares "let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . ." The two Hebrew words *Zelem* and *Demut* have been the occasion for much controversy. By the Reformation the Church had come to see them in terms of Hebrew parallelism, two complementary ways of expressing

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1. C. G. Seerveld, "The Relation of the Arts to the Presentation of the Truth." *Truth and Reality: Philosophical perspectives on reality. Dedicated to H. G. Stoker.* Braamfontein. S. A.: De Jong's Bookshop. 1971, pp. 167, 8.

the same thought. Some, however, have persisted in seeing a spiritual-intellectual reference in one and a moral allusion in the other.

What is the meaning of the words themselves? *Zelem* or 'image' as von Rad notes, denotes predominately an actual plastic work, a duplicate, sometimes an idol.<sup>2</sup> This is clearly seen in four of the five appearances of this word in the Old Testament (I Sam. 6:5; Num. 33:52; II Kings 11:18; Ezek. 23:14). Only in the fifth occurrence is the meaning weakened to a semblance (Psalm 39:6, "Surely man goes about as a shadow [*Zelem*]..."). *Demut* or "Likeness" is more a verbal abstraction connoting something abstract as in "appearance," "similarity," or "analogy." (Cf. Ezek. 1:5, 10, 26, 28). Only in II Kings 16:10 is the stress on the exactness of the likeness: "And King Ahaz sent to Uriah the priest a model (*Demut*) of the altar, and its pattern exact in all its details." In all events, the two words should be seen as having complimentary rather than competing meanings. The first stresses its being shaped and the second its being like the original in significant ways. Von Rad adds that the 'in' of 'in our image' is the Hebrew *b* of essence and thus could be translated 'as our image.'

One is struck at once by the material and plastic aspect of that which is created. Although von Rad feels that the connection of the Genesis account with ancient Near Eastern mythology must condition his emphasis ("Our text may not be simply detached from its broader connection with this obviously common oriental circles of ideas." *op. cit.*, p. 56), nevertheless he allows "...one will do well to split the physical from the spiritual as little as possible; the whole man is created in God's image." At least three texts of the Old Testament support this thought and it would be instructive to note them.

The first of these is Genesis 9:6 in the indictment against murder. Man's blood should not be shed by man: "for God made man in his own image." Here the grounding of the image is clearly in man's body.<sup>3</sup> In the second passage, Psalm 8:5, most exegetes agree that the 'image' here includes outward splendor: "...Thou hast made him (man) little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor."<sup>4</sup> It is significant moreover that *cabod*, "glory" the distinctive possession of God is here attributed to man. It is to be recalled that the fundamental meaning of this word is physical "weight" and "wealth" which by themselves command respect and honor. Here, as Buber points out, is the force of dignity of a being which shines out and therefore assumes visible form.<sup>5</sup> Finally, in Ezekiel 28:12 the prophet in a lamentation over the King of Tyre, refers to the perfection of the state of creation in general, and man's place therein in particular: "You were the signet of perfection,

2. *Genesis* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961) *in loc.*

3. Kittel, Ed., *Theological Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing House, 1966) volume II, p. 391.

4. Briggs, *Psalms* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1906) Vol. I, p. 66, and Kittel, *op. cit.*

5. Quoted in Kittel, *op. cit.*

full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." Clearly an outward perfection is an intricate part of that original state. At the very least one should observe with von Rad that the issue of the image calls to question the spiritual/material split; it is the whole of man that partakes in the likeness of God.<sup>6</sup>

The most vigorous debate lies before us when we consider the effect of the fall on the image. Granted that the original state included a physical endowment that somehow resembled the Godhead, was a part spared the ravages of the Fall? Here we observe the tendency of theologians to locate—dare we say limit—their discussions of the image to spiritual and moral dimensions. Luther in equating the image with original righteousness, claims that it was completely lost at the Fall.<sup>7</sup> Calvin locates the whole discussion in the context of man's knowledge of God. Since the Fall man can come to true knowledge of himself and his situation only by regarding himself in the mirror of Scripture. And we must look to Scripture to see what special prerogatives given at creation have been lost. Calvin grants "that the image of God was not utterly effaced and destroyed in him (man), it was, however, so corrupted that any thing which remains is fearful deformity. . . ."<sup>8</sup> This part which Calvin allowed though in deformity has come to be known somewhat disparagingly as the "relic" of the image. This "relic" takes on great importance in the present discussion. If the image was indeed lost (either materially or formally) there is no possibility of discussing Christian aesthetics in this context. Barth is typical of much of contemporary theology in this regard. After declaring that "man's capacity for God, however it may be with his humanity and personality, has really been lost," he proceeds to admit that questions of humanity and personality must be considered as purely secular in character.<sup>9</sup> Already we are in a position to offer a tentative rebuke to such a formulation. We have seen that the image of God must be broadened beyond its purely spiritual and strictly theological character. If we allow man's capacity to know God has been lost and thus his essential character as image-bearer altered, it does not follow that his God-like valuational and normative sensitivities are destroyed, or even that they are of a purely secular character. Man is intrinsically norm and value oriented, a fact allowed in the traditional theological formulation of common grace. Herein lies his continuing authoritative stance over against creation. Of this we shall have more to

6. Cf. G. van der Leeuw: "Here we are concerned with man, not with his consciousness or immortality." *Sacred and Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 310. And G. C. Berkouwer who sees this kind of anthropomorphism as a means of knowing (not falsifying) God. *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), p. 80.

7. "I am afraid that since the loss of this image through sin we cannot understand it to any extent. . . . Not only have we had no experience of it, but we continually experience the opposite." *Works* (St. Louis: Concordia), Vol. 1, pp. 61, 63.

8. *Institutes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) Bk. 1, Ch. xv, pt. 4, cf. Wendel, *Calvin* p. 185. (London: Collins, 1965).

9. *Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936) I, 1, p. 273.

say shortly; for the present let us review the Scriptural references to the status of man after the Fall.

Genesis 5:1-3 seems to indicate that the image was given to Seth in the way it had been received: "Adam...became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image and named him Seth." Apparently, as von Rad notes, the image however conceived is theologically relevant to all generations and not to the original pair only.<sup>10</sup> Again Genesis 9:6 and Psalm 8:5 referred to above, imply the image remains. To be sure physical deterioration (f.i. of longevity) is not unrelated to image, and the least that can be said is that the image has been diminished.

In this connection it is significant to recall the second commandment of Exodus 20, against making any graven image. This is often taken as the supreme proof that no material shape can be ascribed to God. In Jewish and Moslem thought this has been taken as an indictment against artistic activity that represents not only God but man and creation as well. But the command stresses not so much that man is to avoid making—and worshipping—a likeness of God, as that he is to avoid making a likeness of any created object and worshipping it as God. So, far from stressing the pure invisible spirituality of God as is usually thought, the whole passage implies that any and all plastic reference to God is to be found in his physical creation and only there. He left his mark on what he has made and it is sure to be missing in the work of our hands. 'I the Lord your God am a jealous God,' the passage states, implying the worship and credit for what He has made belongs to him alone. To make some other plastic image of God is to be dissatisfied with the image that He has left us, namely man himself.<sup>11</sup>

The Fall resulted from an elevation of the image into the place of that of which it is the image. The mistake did not destroy this likeness, it was simply no longer seen in the perspective of its source. One clear indication of this is to be seen in man's continued vocation as ruler over creation. If he is not to attempt to repeat creation, man can at least understand and cultivate what God has made. We did not mention this endowment above because we agree with von Rad that it is not to be included in the gift, but is that for which man is capable as a result of it. Because of man the creature is given a new responsibility to God.<sup>12</sup> And there is throughout Scripture a continued reference to man in this function as God's emblem of authority. Psalm 8 is of course the paramount example.

We see this responsibility of man as of great significance to the question of aesthetics. Man is asked to do more than just tend creation.

10. Kittel, *op. cit.*

11. It is interesting to note the Old Testament references to the poor and the physically deprived. God always set himself against such suffering perhaps seeing in it an insult to his image in man.

12. *Genesis, op. cit.*

He is asked to name the animals. He is in a sense to give form to what has been created, one could say almost to complete creation.<sup>13</sup> He is to till the ground, not incidentally to while away his time, but as an essential expression of who he is, created in the image of God. Though after the fall the new dimension of sweat and frustration is added, i.e., his authority is challenged, his assignment is basically unchanged: cultivate creation. As Langdon Gilkey put it: the image is not a shadow, "... and this meant that he (man) existed and could be creative in a creaturely way, as God existed and was creative in a divine way."<sup>14</sup>

The Fall had, of course, important implications for the image. This becomes evident in the New Testament and the appearing of Jesus Christ. Clearly we must look here for a fulfilled meaning of the image of God. The word used in the New Testament for image is *eikwv*. Kittel points out that in the New Testament usage of the word the original of the image is always present in the image itself. For example, in the discussion of the law in Hebrews it is expressly stated that the law is the *skia* (shadow) and not the *eikwv* of what was to come (10:1). In speaking moreover of Christ as the *eikwv* of God all of the emphasis is on equality of Christ with God (especially in John 14:9 and 12:45).

The New Testament teaching of the image has a Christological orientation throughout. In calling Christ the image of God the stress is on the presence of the nature and personality of God in the image. Here also the stress is on Christ as the *visible* expression of the invisible God. "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation" (Col. 1:15).<sup>15</sup> Significantly this passage goes on to underline all the aspects of the image we have noted with respect to man, now completed and fulfilled. He is not only the perfect visible expression of God, but also the means and end of creation (v. 16). With respect to the latter, man was asked to cultivate and complete creation's relation to God, but was unable to do so. Thirdly, Christ is called the head of the body, the new and final authority that God has placed in creation. As man was to fulfill the role of master of creation, Christ is the head of the new creation, the Church. If man lost his control in the original creation and something of the beauty intended for it was lost, Christ has re-established Authority in the new creation. Finally, in an aspect we will explore in more detail later, Christ succeeded in re-creating the loving and fruitful relationship God intended at creation by relating creation to its source (v. 20 reconciliation). This parallel of Christ as the restored image and man as broken image is made explicitly by Paul in Romans 5:12-17.

13. Cf. Harvey Cox. *The Secular City* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 76; von Rad, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

14. *The Maker of Heaven and Earth* (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1965) p. 64.

15. Cf. Hebrews 1:3. Christ bears the very stamp of the nature of God. Here the Greek word *karaktur* extends the visible nature of Christ's imaging God to an almost plastic sense. Cf. "the proposition that Christ is the image of God is not an achievement of rational knowledge, but an affirmation of faith, a postulate which faith lays down as a basis for knowledge." S. V. McCasland. "The Image of God' according to Paul." *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 69, 1950, p. 87.

Human nature as *eikv* in the New Testament is primarily viewed as restored through relationship with Christ, the true *eikv*. In Romans 8:29 the real image is the one who is conformed to the image of Christ. This is the object of the divine foreknowledge. The elements of the restored image are the qualities of Christ's nature. Here one is drawn toward the moral and ethical character of the restored image. In Paul's listing of the characteristics of the renewed image, righteousness and holiness are particularly stressed (Eph. 4:24 and I Cor. 1:30).<sup>16</sup> But the re-birth is not without implications for human ecology. Paul states in Romans 8:19 that the creation itself yearns for the revealing of the sons of God—that is those in whom the image is renewed. This implies that the divine adoption of God's children enables them to regain the proper creative authority over creation, and that the present "bondage to decay" is related to man's degenerate state. This line of thinking is of course full of implication for present environmental discussions.<sup>17</sup>

Beyond what we have called this ecological relation there is clearly a restored authority connected with the image in the New Testament. Here Christ is the authority of God in being his physical and moral image. And Paul uses this element in stressing that man is the image and glory of God as the woman is of the man (I Cor. 11:7). This is an unpopular intimation in our day of women's liberation. Suffice it to note that authority in our fallen world has come to denote exclusively domination rather than, as in the New Testament, loving service and care. (Mark 9:35: "If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.")

All these strands are brought together in II Corinthians 3:18 where Paul exults that the Christian in being changed into the likeness of Christ is transformed "from one degree of glory to another."

With this Biblical purview behind us we can proceed to a discussion of the implications of the image of God for Christian aesthetics.

#### CONSTRUCTIVE IMPLICATIONS OF THE IMAGE OF GOD

A. The unity of the person. Theologians have been unable to locate the image of God in any particular faculty of man. The elusiveness of the image has been furthered by contemporary dialectical theologians who refuse to ground the image in the person at all, but only in man as he is related to God. We maintain this confuses the image itself with the end for which it was given, viz. communion with God. As an example of this thinking let us examine Emil Brunner.

In the appendix to *Man in Revolt*, Brunner tries very hard to avoid

16. Cf. S. Vernon McCasland, *op. cit.*, p. 88: "... Growth into moral character patterned after Christ."

17. It is here we must lay the blame for the exploitation of our resources and not the divine command to subdue the earth. See Richard T. Wright. "Responsibility for the Ecological Crisis." *BioScience*. August 1, 1970, pp. 851-853.

saying either that man has the image or that he does not. At one point he says the image is not lost at the Fall. But what remains is not exactly the image, or its relic, but what Brunner calls *humanitas*. This he says must be understood in the light of the original image of God. It is not understood quantitatively as a relic, but dialectically as a structure of man's being which is based on law dialectically related to the Gospel.<sup>18</sup> In the text of the book he is perhaps clearer when he elaborates that since man's creation by God is in and for God, the image of God can be nothing in and of itself. Man's meaning and intrinsic worth do not reside in himself. Rather, man finds his true nature in being addressed by God, in knowing himself to be in God (p. 96).

That man is created for relationship with God is of supreme importance to the image, but, we believe, does not define that image. Even to say relationship is intrinsic to image does not strengthen the case. The question that Brunner refuses to answer remains: What is there about man that makes possible or appropriate a relationship with God? He cannot answer with Barth that it is nothing but the address of God. For he will not go the distance with Barth when he says that it makes no difference that man is a man and not a cat. There is a distinctive quality that Brunner has called *humanitas*. If then God's addressing of man is not incidental but essential to man as *humanitas* then it follows that the image of God must be defined otherwise than by address. The fact is that if man were not like God in some way he could not know him or be addressed by him.<sup>19</sup>

Gerardus van der Leeuw in his profound if problematic attempt at theological aesthetics follows a similar tact. He affirms that Genesis implies there is a fundamental likeness between man and God, i.e. similar form. This is not, he insists, metaphorical language, but a visible and tangible reality. Nothing is to be spiritualized. He affirms that the place of man in creation is a result of creation after the image of God. Yet on the very next page he goes on to say:

Man as human being has inherent possibilities and other powers, but he does not have the image of God. If he is ever to receive it again, it needs nothing less than a new creation.<sup>20</sup>

The image has been lost and is possible only in faith. Thus he has proceeded to do what he said he would not do: spiritualize the concept of the image. It is grounded not in man by creation, but in a new creation grounded in faith, though it becomes thereby no less concrete (one of the more dialectical of dialectic statements).

Another Dutchman located more in the Evangelical tradition, G. C. Berkouwer, takes a similar position. He dismisses any broader sense of

18. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1947) pp. 500, 514.

19. Charles Hodge noted this is his theology 100 years ago. (New York: Scribners, 1871) Volume II, p. 97. Reprinted in 1952 by Eerdmans.

20. *Sacred and Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art*, op. cit., pp. 309, 319, 320.

the image as arbitrary. He doubts that Scripture gives any basis for seeing the image other than in the active sense of communion with God. Says Berkouwer: "Appealing to the ontic aspect of the image can almost automatically lead to a relativizing of man's corruption."<sup>21</sup> Man is man-in-his-guilt, insists Berkouwer. Something remains of man's humanness since the fall, but the image is what is done *in actu* with these qualities not the qualities themselves, and this is where man's weakness is most apparent. Berkouwer senses these qualities and the image are not totally unrelated and asks: can we relate manness to the image? Yes, he answers, in that we can never think of man apart from the original aim of creation. Finally, however, he concludes that synthesis is not possible; sin affects not only nature but essence, man is estranged from God and from himself. The image is then restored through communion with Christ.<sup>22</sup>

Berkouwer hails modern attempts to connect the image with the whole man. Yet he rejects the idea of a remnant as resting on a idealistic view of man and insists that one cannot speak of man apart from his relation to God without falling into abstractions. At the same time, however, he claims that original sin is not essential to man's nature, but accidental. "The work of God (our real nature) and that of the devil remain distinct from each other."<sup>23</sup> The question is why one must not speak of man apart from communion with God, especially if original sin (man's inability to know God) is not essential to man's nature. The answer of dialectical theology of course is that man is only truly man when he is addressed by and responds to God; Professor Berkouwer's answer would correspond. But what of those other activities of man, his moral and aesthetic sensitivities, that are exercised—howbeit imperfectly—apart from a God-relationship. Are not these among the characteristics that most resemble the Lord God who is throughout Scripture described as righteous and whose name, the Psalmist tells us, is beautiful? We have already pointed out that it does not disparage man's chief end as communion to insist his nature as image bearer is retained in his fallen condition. To locate the image only in communion we have noticed has two consequences. In associating the image with man's moral and spiritual faculties alone as they are exercised in the relation with God, the unity of man is inevitably endangered. Consequently justice is not done to man's unique function in creation as the emblem of divine authority.

It is just these conceptions—his unity and his moral and valuational authority—that the image of God most naturally assures. We have seen that the likeness cannot be applied to man's spirit over against his body. It is man as man, as a unity, that has been created in the image of God and is somehow like God, with the potential for relationship with God

21. G. C. Berkouwer. *Man: the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962). Pp. 43 ff.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 65.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 133. Cf. Gilkey, *op. cit.*, p. 64.



and his creation. True, the unity as we have noted is broken and can only be renewed in fellowship with Christ, but man is not thereby less human. The unity, image, though incomplete, still asserts itself. Man must rule, seek that spiritual fulfillment of which he alone is capable. Indeed it is often this yearning and feeling of estrangement that speaks most eloquently of his wholeness. Man's artistic creations can but express this in myriad ways. For just as the body will share in redemption, so it shares in the longing and that great sensitive quest for beauty and truth.

B. The locus of value in the individual. When God looked on creation and pronounced it very good, He was doing more than giving approval to his work. He was acknowledging that here lay beings with positive value in themselves. The premise of order in human affairs, the foundation of all history and political philosophy is to be found here. The premise of order in the physical world, the foundation of all science is likewise located here. Man, having been created in the image of God, finds his meaning, his value, in his created context. This has two implications for our study.

Primo, man has been created as an individual that stands over against God; he is dependent and yet a real center of being and of power. He is a center of value, in a real world. He is important in the value structure of that world. So much so that his lordship, following upon his divine image, is not only of dominion, but of valuation.

This is to say (*segundo*) that not only is he a locus of value as an individual, but it has been given to him to know and to recognize value, indeed to create objects that embody it. Man, the image bearer, is the only creature to whom value is important whether truth, beauty, or goodness. He has been created in essential kinship with all good and beautiful things. William Temple has recognized that the correspondence of mind with reality is the essential condition of value or good.<sup>24</sup> And it is this that has been given to man as the Image of God.

This is by no means to be considered as an abstract and static condition. Man has been placed in the situation of active dominion, and relationship, with all of creation. He is thus destined to be always creating, discovering and controlling what he finds at hand. It is here we must seek the reason for man's urge to travel to the moon, not in practical dividends or national security. Thus there is an analogy between our feeble, distorted and yet persistent attempts to create, and the living God speaking and it was done. Man creates, acknowledges, and contemplates reality, longing for the divine, for that rebirth in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness: the pure image of God. Only then will values be fully seen and known.

C. Spiritual transcendence. When we speak of the transcendence of God we imply his separateness from creation and his lordship over it.

24. *Nature, Man, and God* (London: Macmillan, 1960). P. 149.

He has created time but is not bound by it. In an analogous sense man, though a creature of time, through his self-consciousness becomes spiritually transcendent over time. While forced to live and work in time, man's mind is free through the use of language and memory to anticipate the future and recall the past.

Augustine was perhaps the first Christian theologian to recognize this principle of spiritual transcendence. Deriving the idea of *vous* from his neo-platonic heritage, he saw that transcendence in the human spirit had reached the point of self-transcendence. Human memory is of particular importance in this regard. It is a prime indication that, as Augustine put it, the human mind is too strait to contain itself. In this single conception of self-transcendence and its theological context, he was able to avoid the subtle trap of mysticism to which he might have been tempted.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the error of mysticism is one of the most important abuses to which the idea of image has been subjected. It is true as both Christianity and mysticism have understood that the human spirit in its depth reaches into eternity. But though one can, by the grace of God, know God through the mind, the mind cannot comprehend God. The image is not that of which it is the image. There is nowhere within the spirit of man to which he can repair to satisfy his divine longing. All attempts to find such a place in mystical ecstatic experience must be judged retreats, regressions to prenatal type of comfort; the creative search and longing is finished. It is finally God's revelation—objectively—of himself as transcendent yet imminent that gives substantial meaning to man's spiritual transcendence.<sup>26</sup>

Augustine saw this power of transcendence was so great that it placed man above all other creatures and suggested a relationship that only God himself could satisfy. His confession on this point is worth noting:

I dive on this side and on that, as far as I can and there is no end. So great is the force of memory, so great is the force of life, even in the mortal life of man. What shall I do then, O Thou my true life my God? I will pass beyond this power of mine which is called memory; yea, I will pass beyond it that I may approach unto Thee, O Sweet Light. And where shall I find Thee? If I find Thee without my memory then do I not retain Thee in my memory? And how shall I find Thee if I remember Thee not?<sup>27</sup>

Augustine's search led him to God. Because man is made in the image of God he is committed to search, to range over reality seeking that to which this transcendence answers.

Reinhold Niebuhr is one of the contemporary theologians who believes this capacity for self-transcendence to be a key to the under-

25. Here I am indebted to the discussion in Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Scribners, 1941). Vol. I, pp. 155 ff.

26. See Dooyewaard's *The Antithesis between Symbolism and Revelation* (Amsterdam, 1899).

27. *Confessions* (New York: Washington Square, 1960). Bx. X, par. 7-17.

standing of the image of God. This goes, he feels, beyond the capacity for forming general concepts, though that is derived from this self-transcendence. Christ is understood as that historical figure which though historical is the trans-historical norm. He summarizes: "The individual is conceived of as a creature of individual possibilities which cannot be fulfilled within terms of this temporal existence."<sup>28</sup>

Man the creature of temporality seeks fulfillment in spiritual transcendence. In this tension lies rich creative possibilities. Man must speak in concrete and temporal terms. But the flesh and the concrete are not merely limitations for man—as for the Greek mind—but can become symbols of the spiritual transcendence with which man is endowed. In fact every aspect of his environment is a potential symbol of his hopes, desires and values. Because of his self-transcendence man is potentially the spiritual master of his physical environment, enabling him to see and create significance (in its radical sense).<sup>29</sup>

D. The Image of God as relational. We have said the Image of God implies the essential unity of man as a center of value and his power of self-transcendence. Earlier we had occasion to criticize Brunner's doctrine of the image of God as inimical to the essential unity of man. Moreover in stressing the relational aspect of the image he limits any ontological reference. We must understand that it is a reaction to scholastic theologians who stressed the ontological almost to the exclusion of relationship that motivates these remarks. In this sense, the modern emphasis has been a healthy corrective.

Thus the final implication we wish to point out is that the image, if not essentially relationship, is made for community and finds its highest expression therein. Man is created in and for covenant and fellowship. It is significant that in the same verse wherein God is said to have created man in his own image, he continues: "male and female created He them" (Gen. 1:27). Here is covenant not merely diversity. It was a human community that God was creating, not, as they are understood in their fallen condition, "the masses." It is significant as well that in the eschatological community that is to be the bride of Christ, this restored fellowship is the keynote. It is this capacity for relationship that characterizes the image of God. This is to be seen on three levels.

The first is of course man's relation with God. Man finds his completeness and his fulfillment only in communion with God, as made

28. Neibuhr, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 157, 170. Cf. Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), Vol. II, p. 49. Rather than doing away with Aristotle's *animale rationale* as Brunner suggests, *op. cit.*, p. 94, we would place it in this self-transcending context.
29. C. F. W. F. Lynch, *Christ and Apollo* (New York: Mentor, Omega, 1963). Pp. 23-33, who sees in the image of Incarnation the definitive argument for blazing the trail to insight and beauty through the particular and definite and through temporality.

possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As we have observed, the image is the ground for such a communion.

Secondly, man is created for human community. Most of his psychological problems are to be traced to isolation, either real or imagined. But real communion is a faint glimmer of that communion which God enjoys in himself; it is possible at all because man is made in the image of God.

But finally and significantly for our study, man is created in responsible relationship with creation. The creation has been placed morally and spiritually under his authority. Though this cannot be reciprocal in the sense of fellowship, man has been placed in a creative relationship with created reality. For this the image of God has uniquely fitted him.

Man is placed in an active role. His task is obedience. Here we agree with van der Leeuw's conclusion:

This cultural task is in reality the obedience of faith and it is fulfilled where we recognize the form of God's creation and adapt ourselves to it.<sup>30</sup>

Man is suited not merely to enjoy the world, but to tend it and form it in ways that reflect the goodness and beauty of God himself.

30. *Op. Cit.*, p. 322. He goes on to sound two warnings: against mysticism and idolatry.