

The Fall's Impact on Image and Dominion

The fall of humanity had far-reaching consequences for the vessel created by God in His image and according to His likeness to contain Him as life and to express Him and represent Him on the earth. The fall came about when Adam and Eve partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was not just an act of rebellion and disobedience against God; it introduced the element of sin, causing an intrinsic change in the human being, damaging the expression of God in humanity and allying humanity with God's enemy in rebellion against God's dominion over the earth. The account in Genesis 3 speaks of the occasion of the fall and shows the sowing of the seed of sin with its elements, such as exaggeration, lying, contradiction, disobedience, and rebellion. The seed of sin develops in Genesis 4 through 11 into a further stage of the fall—the complete rebellion of fallen humanity against God at Babel. As a result of the fall, humanity created in the image of God to express God instead expresses the self, and humanity created to represent God in carrying out God's dominion on the earth instead opposes God's dominion and is one with Satan, God's enemy, in total rebellion to God, becoming scattered and divided into nations unable to coordinate together to exercise God's dominion on earth. The seed of sin develops further in the rest of the Old Testament, presenting a black background for God to come as the Redeemer and Savior, as seen in the types of the Old Testament and their fulfilment in the New Testament.

Image and Dominion— God's Expression and Representation

Genesis 1:26-27 tells us that God created humanity in His image and according to His likeness so that they would have dominion over the earth and its creatures. *Image* (*tselem*, perhaps related to a verb meaning “cut out”) refers to an expression of some form. It is usually translated in the Septuagint εἰκών, (“image,” “icon,” “an expression of a form,” from εἶκω “to yield to,” “as an impression,” e.g., of a seal on clay). The expression *image of God* occurs only four times in the Old Testament (three times in Gen. 1:26-27 and once in 9:6) and three times in the New Testament (1 Cor. 11:7; 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15). *Tselem* refers mostly to images of idols (e.g., Num. 33:52; 2 Kings 11:18; Ezek. 7:20). Twice in Psalms the word *tselem* is parallel to *vapor* (39:6) and *dream* (73:20). This may be pejorative, “conveying the

idea of emptiness, unreality, unsubstantiality” (Hamilton 135), but also may indicate that an image is an outward semblance or an empty shell of a particular reality. Without the reality of humanity having the content of God, the *tselem* is empty, vain, like a vapor or a dream. For example, idols are often referred to as vanities (*habalim*, Deut. 32:21; 1 Kings 16:13; 2 Kings 17:15; Psa. 31:6; Jer. 8:19; 14:22). Isaiah mocks the futility of bowing down to an image (*pesel*) made of the same wood that burns in a fire and becomes ashes (Isa. 44:14-20).

The true content for humanity created in God's image is actually Christ, the embodiment of God (Col. 2:8). God, who is invisible (ἀόρατος, 1 Tim. 1:17), has a form (μορφή, an outward expression of an inward reality, Phil. 2:9) and an image (εἰκών, an expression of that form, Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4), which is Christ. Into this same image the believers are being transformed from one degree of glory (the expression of God) to another (3:18).

Likeness (*demut*, “likeness, similitude, of external appearance,” from *damah* “to be like,” “resemble”) refers to the outward appearance or similarity to others with the same characteristics. Human beings are created according to the likeness of God, which was seen in the Old Testament on numerous occasions when God appeared as a man (Gen. 18:1; 32:24-30), and Moses beheld the form of Jehovah (*temunah*, Num. 12:8), although on other occasions no form of God could be seen (Deut. 4:12). The Hebrew word *demut* is translated by a number of Greek synonyms: ὁμοίωσις (indicating the process of being made like or becoming like, Gen. 1:26; James 3:9), εἰκών (“image,” Gen. 5:1), εἰδέα (“external appearance,” “the look of a thing,” from ἰδεῖν, “to see,” v. 3), and ὁμοίωμα (the result of being made like something, Ezek. 1:5). The word ὁμοίωμα is also used in the New Testament to refer to Christ becoming in the likeness of men and being sent in the likeness of the flesh of sin (Phil. 2:7; Rom 8:3) and is used of humans changing the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image (εἰκών) of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and reptiles (1:23).

Although creation expresses God's eternal power and divine characteristics (v. 20), humanity, as expressed individually in Christ and corporately in the church, His Body, gives a fuller and richer expression of God, since

humanity was created according to God's kind (as indicated by the words *image* and *likeness*) and not like the rest of creation—according to its own kind (cf. Gen. 1:21, 25; 6:20; 7:14).

Humankind was also created to have dominion (*radah*, or “rule, dominate,” translated κατακυριεύω, “exercise dominion, lord over, subdue”) over the things on the earth and to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it (*kabash*, “tread down, make a path,” translated ἄρχω, “rule,” 1:26, 28). These two notions of dominion and fruitfulness actually echo the beginning of Genesis 1.

One could consider the six-day account of creation as imaging God quite explicitly under the two aspects of (1) dominion—subduing the forces of chaos and creating an orderly world in days 1-3; and (2) generation—bringing forth life to inhabit the world in days 4-6. (Niskanen 432)

God exercised His dominion to restore the earth from its state of chaos, waste, emptiness, darkness, and a watery deep in verse 2 by causing light to be and the earth to arise from the waters. Then He caused the earth to bring forth life, plants, lower and higher kinds of animals, and then humankind as the consummation of creation.

The actions of exercising dominion and subduing the earth are to be exercised collectively by corporate humanity: let them have dominion and subdue the earth. The verb *radah*, “to have dominion,” which occurs over twenty times in the Old Testament, is mostly exercised in the realm of a kingdom (e.g., Solomon's, 1 Kings 4:24), and is especially related to the Messiah, who will have dominion from sea (Dead) to sea (Mediterranean) and from the River (Euphrates) to the ends of the earth (Psa. 72:8; cf. Zech. 9:10, which uses the noun *mashal*, “dominion”). The Messiah will rule in the midst of His enemies at His return (Psa. 110:2), along with the restored Israelites over those who oppressed them (Isa. 14:2). *Radah* is also used metaphorically for treading a winepress when Jehovah and His mighty ones descend to the earth to deal with the nations gathered in the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:13).

The verb *kabash* “to subdue” occurs about sixteen times. It is also used of humanity collectively, for example, of the Israelites subduing the land of Canaan (Num. 32:22, 29; Josh. 18:1) and trampling the sling stones of their attackers (Zech. 9:15). *Kabash* is related to the feet, which are symbolic of the subjection or subduing an enemy (cf. “tread our iniquities under foot,” Micah 7:19, and the noun *kebish* “footstool” from the same root, 2 Chron. 9:18). The notion of putting things under the feet is also used corporately, with reference to the nations under the feet of the children of Israel (Psa. 47:3) and with reference to the wicked under the feet of those who

fear the name of Jehovah at His coming (Mal. 4:3). Psalm 8:4-8 talks about God putting all things under the feet of humanity, an echo of Genesis 1:26-28. The reality of this humanity is the corporate Christ, the Head with His Body, with the feet being the lowest part of the body, indicating total subjection to the person. God subjected (ὑποτάσσω) all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22; cf. Heb. 2:8-10; 1 Cor. 15:25-28). The church is the one new man, who functions as a warrior, putting on the whole armor of God to deal with God's enemy (Eph. 2:15; 4:24; 6:10-18). This is the fulfilment of the promise spoken by God to Eve concerning the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head under his feet (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 16:20).

The Fall of Man— Leading to Self-expression and Rebellion (Enmity)

While the account of the fall of man in Genesis 3 may seem childlike in its simplicity (with a talking serpent and forbidden fruit), it is striking in its significance. Satan embodied as a crafty, devious, or subtle (Heb. *'arum*) serpent¹ begins by questioning God's intention and word, causing Eve to doubt God's heart as being anything less than beneficial to humanity. The question in verse 1, “Did God really say, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?” is a mischaracterization, but it draws Eve into the conversation, to correct the serpent's question.² However, she adds, “Nor shall you touch it” (v. 3). This twists “the command into a legalism, to an almost unreasonable demand,” making God stricter than He Himself stated (Bratcher). Next, the serpent lies, contradicting and opposing God's word, saying, “You shall not surely die!” (v. 4; cf. John 8:44).³ Then the serpent subtly distorts God's intention to make humanity the same as God in life and nature but not in the Godhead by sending humanity on a pathway of seeking to be God-like in a way that was independent from God, saying, “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). By eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,⁴ humanity is misdirected to taking the way of knowing good and evil, that is, to know and act in a God-like way but independent of God as the source of life. Although the result was death, this death was related to being constituted with the nature of sin and death (Rom. 5:12). The element that caused death was imparted immediately into humanity, but God did not immediately demand retribution and recompense, leaving time for redemption and repentance.⁵

Satan's Rebellion and Fall

Satan's temptation of Eve to be like God echoes his fall from heaven as the Daystar, or Lucifer, when he voiced his ambition to be like God in Isaiah 14:12-17; he said in

his heart five times, “I will,” using future verb forms (italicized):

I will ascend to heaven; / Above the stars of God / *I will* exalt my throne. / And *I will* sit upon the mount of assembly / In the uttermost parts of the north. / *I will* ascend above the heights of the clouds; / *I will* make myself like the Most High. (vv. 13-14)

This account exposes Satan’s desire to be equal with God, to exalt himself above all other angels (stars of God), and to make himself like (from the Hebrew verb *damah*, which is from the same root as *demut*, “likeness,” Gen. 1:26) the Most High. This was an exercise of his self-will, independent of and in rebellion against God. Ezekiel 28 also refers to Satan as the anointed cherub covering the Ark in heaven who sinned (v. 14). Because of his beauty, his heart was lifted up, and he corrupted his wisdom by reason of his brightness; the cause of Satan’s rebellion was his pride (vv. 16-17; 1 Tim. 3:6; cf. 1 Pet. 5:5-6). Satan desired to express himself independently from God and overthrow God’s throne. His rebellion became one of the reasons that God created humanity—to deal with His enemy Satan and restore God’s dominion in the universe, especially on earth (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8; Rom. 16:20).

The Result of the Fall

The fall of mankind had many effects, as detailed in note 1, by Witness Lee, on Genesis 3:7 in the Recovery Version:

The dreadful result of man’s first fall was manifold. First, man transgressed God’s commandment (2:17; Rom. 5:14) and thus fell under God’s condemnation (Rom. 5:16) and came under a curse (Gen. 3:17-19). He also became estranged from God (v. 8) and alienated from the life of God (Eph. 4:18) in the tree of life (Gen. 3:23-24). Not only so, in the fall Satan’s evil thought, feeling, and will were injected into man’s mind, emotion, and will, thus contaminating man’s soul (vv. 1, 4-6). Through man’s eating of the tree of knowledge, Satan entered man’s body and became the very sin within man (cf. Rom. 7:8, 11, 17, 20 and note 8¹). Thus the human body, which was created pure and sinless, was transmuted into the flesh of sin (Rom. 7:18a and note 2). As a consequence of the fall man’s spirit was deadened (cf. Eph. 2:1, 5 and note 1²), becoming insulated from God and losing its function toward God. Hence, each of man’s three parts—his body, his soul, and his spirit—was damaged by the fall. Furthermore, fallen man was constituted a sinner (Rom. 5:19) and became a victim of death (Rom. 5:12b, 14a;

1 Cor. 15:22a). Consequently, man was spoiled from fulfilling God’s purpose, which is to express God in His image and represent God with His dominion (Gen. 1:26). Finally, because of man’s fall all the creation is subjected to vanity and the slavery of corruption (Rom. 8:20-21).

The fall affected the entire tripartite being of created humanity. The body became the flesh of sin, the soul became the self with the soul-life, and the spirit was deadened, losing its function to contact God. As far as God’s image is concerned, the soul that was created to express God no longer expresses God but rather expresses Satan’s independence from God. The self is intimately related to the first sin and all the following sins.

Our self is the root of all sins...The tree of the knowledge of good and evil signifies *independence*...Is it really a sin to have the knowledge of good and evil? God also knows good and evil (Gen. 3:5, 22)! Is it a sin to be like God? Is it not good to pursue the knowledge of good and evil? Is it not good to pursue being like God?...Truly this is the best

kind of pursuit,...but...Adam was trying to gain this knowledge *apart from God and by his own self-effort*. Therefore it was a sin...All independent acts are sins...In God’s eyes, all activities apart from Him are sins. (Nee 26-28).

Sin is not necessarily doing something evil or wicked but means to miss the mark. Both

the Hebrew root for sin *ht’* and the Greek word ἀμαρτία have the sense of missing the mark, a synonym to the word *misaim* (cf. ἀ-στοχέω) used by Paul to indicate misaiming from a pure heart, a good conscience, and unfeigned faith (1 Tim. 1:5-6), the faith (6:21), and the truth (2 Tim. 2:18).

The Development of the Fall in Three Further Stages

In Genesis 4 through 11 there is a further development of the seed of sin with the further falls of humanity. The first fall of Adam in Genesis 3 was from God’s presence to human conscience, from divine government to self-government. In chapter 4 we see the second fall, that of Cain.

Genesis 4 reveals that Cain was not shameful for lying and for murdering his brother, Abel. His lying to God about Abel’s death was an open manifestation of his breaking of his conscience. He was arrogant and not at all ashamed about his sin. Since man violated his conscience, violence filled the earth before the time of the flood (6:11). (Lee, *Life-study* 485)⁶

The fall relates to the three parts of humanity:

The element that caused death was imparted immediately into humanity, but God did not immediately demand retribution and recompense, leaving time for redemption and repentance.

Firstly, man neglected the spirit; secondly, he acted by the soul; and thirdly, he lived and walked absolutely according to the flesh. So by the time of Genesis 6 man had become flesh (6:3). God could no longer tolerate this fallen flesh and He sent the flood as His judgment upon it. (488)

The third fall recorded in chapter 6 was from conscience to human government (cf. 3:7-10; 9:5-6). Humanity became a crooked and perverse generation, being totally corrupted to become flesh before the flood (6:3). After the flood God set up human government as indicated by the sentence, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, / By man shall his blood be shed” (9:6). Then the Bible reiterates Genesis 1:27, “For in the image of God He made man,” followed by the charge, “Be fruitful and multiply; / Abound on the earth and multiply in it” (vv. 6-7).

Chapter 11 reveals the fourth fall, from human government to Satan’s instigation (vv. 1-9). At Babel man was under Satan’s instigation to rebel collectively against God, denying God’s right and declaring that he was absolutely free from God’s authority. They built a city and a tower whose top was in the heavens to renounce God and make a name for themselves, thus denying God’s name, not caring for God at all (v. 4). Mankind, created to exercise God’s dominion corporately, was scattered and divided into nations and languages, thus unable to represent God by exercising dominion on earth and dealing with His enemy (vv. 8-9).

The Believers’ Experience

The struggle and temptation of our forefathers in the garden of Eden have been internalized in humanity, and Paul describes this even in the believers’ experience in Romans 8. The mind, the leading part of the soul, which is our personality, our person, is our representative, choosing between the fallen body, the flesh, and our regenerated, mingled spirit. We can walk or live according to either the flesh or the spirit (vv. 4, 12-13), have our being according to either the flesh or the spirit (v. 5), and set our mind on either the flesh or the spirit (vv. 6-7).

There is a twofold issue, both positive and negative, of these actions. The mind set on the flesh (lit., the mind of the flesh) is death and is enmity against God, not being subject and unable to be subject to the law of God (vv. 6-7). “If the mind attaches itself to the flesh and acts independently, it will bring us into the flesh, causing us to be at enmity with God and to be unable to please Him (vv. 7-8)” (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 6, note 1).

When our mind is set on the flesh and the things of the flesh, the result is death, which causes us to feel separated from the enjoyment of God. We feel uneasy and deadened instead of peaceful and living. When we are minding the flesh and setting our mind on the things of the flesh, the

sense of death should serve as a warning to us, urging us to be delivered from the flesh and to live in the spirit. (v. 6, note 2)

The mind set on the flesh of sin activates the spontaneous operation of the law of sin and of death, causing us to express sin and death, rather than God. The law of sin causes us to express sin and to be controlled and manipulated by sin, making us strong to do many things against our will (7:17, 19-20). Death comes from sin (6:23; 8:10). The law of sin and of death causes us to express death and to become weak and unable to do what we should do (Matt. 26:41; Rom. 5:6; 8:3, 26). It also brings decay and death to every part of man. Our spirit is deadened (cf. Eph. 2:5), our soul, represented by the mind, can be death (Rom. 8:6), and our body is dead because of sin, being corrupted, mortal, and destined to die (vv. 10-11, 13). Our body is even called the body of this death (7:24). Death also desensitizes us, making us insensitive when we commits sins.

Another result of the fall is enmity (ἔχθρα), a result of being united with God’s enemy through the impartation of the sinful nature. Human beings, rather than representing God with dominion to deal with God’s enemy, have enmity against God (8:7) and even enmity among themselves, based on the dividing wall of different cultures (Eph. 2:14). Enmity causes division and conflict and frustrates the proper exercise of God’s dominion, which is a realm of peace representing the rule of the God of peace (Rom. 16:20; Phil. 4:9). Conversely, the mind set on the spirit is life and peace (Rom. 8:6). Life overcomes and swallows up death, and peace is the removal of the enmity between God and man (v. 7) and among mankind (Eph. 2:14).

Conclusion

After partaking of the tree of knowledge, humanity, which was created in the image of God to contain God as life and to have dominion over the earth, fell. The element of sin that entered into humanity through the fall caused humanity to miss the mark of God’s economy. Rather than expressing God, humans express the self, sin, and death. Rather than representing God to have dominion over the earth and to deal with God’s enemy, fallen humanity is united to God’s enemy, Satan. Fallen corporate humanity has been corrupted by Satan to rebel against God and to reject God, and fallen corporate humanity is scattered and divided into nations that are unable to coordinate together to exercise God’s dominion on earth. This sets the stage to explore the development of sin and its synonyms—*iniquity*, *transgression*, and *trespassing*—which present a black background for God to be revealed as Redeemer and Savior. We will explore this in the upcoming issue of *Affirmation & Critique*.

by Roger Good

Notes

¹Satan, the devil, is first portrayed in the Bible as a serpent (cf. 2 Cor. 11:3), but by the end of the Bible this serpent has developed into a dragon (Rev. 12:9). As the result of his interaction with Eve, he is also called the liar (or false one, ψεύστης, John 8:44), the deceiver (or one leading astray, ὁ πλανῶν, Rev. 12:9; cf. 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14; 2 John 7), and the tempter (or tester, πειράζων, Matt. 4:3; 1 Thes. 3:5). In Genesis 4 Cain, after slaying his brother Abel, is also called the evil one (πονηρός, 1 John 3:12; Matt. 5:37; 6:13; John 17:15; 1 John 5:19), and a murderer (Gen. 4:8; John 8:44). As the devil (διάβολος, Matt. 4:1), he is the slanderer (or blasphemer, one speaking harmful, diabolical things), and as Satan (*ha-satan*, Job 1:6; 1 Chron. 21:1; Matt. 4:10; Rev. 12:9), he is the enemy (ἐχθρός, Luke 10:19; Matt. 13:39) or adversary of God (Zech. 3:1; ἀντίδικος, 1 Pet. 5:8), and the accuser of the brothers (κατήγορος, Rev. 12:10).

²Hamilton translates the opening words of the serpent as “a feigned expression of surprise” rather than a question: “Indeed! To think that God said you are not allowed to eat of any tree of the garden!” (186).

³There has been some debate as to whether it was God who “lied” rather than the serpent, when on face value what God said would happen—“in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17)—seemingly did not transpire, and what the serpent said seemed to (cf. Barr and Moberly). Barr’s solution is to see that after the fall “a new situation has now been created, . . . new conditions for the life of the snake, woman, and man are set out” and that “if . . . immediate death . . . had taken place, . . . there would be no further story. There would be no human race, no Abraham or Moses, no people of Israel, no Jesus Christ” (22). However, meaning can have more than one sense, a literal sense and a deeper sense; as Moberly states, “One is led to wonder whether there might be a meaning in God’s words other than that which they initially appeared to have (36). As soon as the fruit of the tree entered the bodies of Adam and Eve, death was interred into them through the element of sin, and they began to die. Eventually, more than nine hundred years later, Adam did die (Gen. 5:5).

⁴The tree of knowledge was good for food (physically appealing), a delight to the eyes (pleasant to the sight), and desirable to make oneself wise (Gen. 3:6; 2:9). These three aspects correspond to 1 John 2:16: “Because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father but is of the world.”

The lust of the flesh is the passionate desire of the body; the lust of the eyes is the passionate desire of the soul through the eyes; and the vainglory of life is the empty pride, boast, and display of material things, of the present

life. These are the components of the world. (Lee, Recovery Version, note 1)

⁵The elemental aspect of sin in our nature is called by many “original sin,” as opposed to the deeds we commit, “sins.” The sinful nature is the source of the sinful deeds. The notion of the sin nature and original sin is strengthened in the New Testament: “Therefore just as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin, death; and thus death passed on to all men because all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

⁶Genesis 5:3 says, “Adam . . . begot a son in his likeness according to his image, and he called his name Seth.” Sawyer emphatically states that “the divine image was not destroyed by the sin of Adam and Eve, or by the guilt of Cain or the violent death of Abel, but was passed on from Adam to his son, and so on to the rest of the human race” (421-422). However, this image was just an empty shell, lacking the reality of God, and was in need of redemption and salvation to be restored to the purpose for which God intended in His creation of mankind in His image.

*The struggle and temptation
of our forefathers in the
garden of Eden have been internalized
in humanity, and Paul describes
this even in the believers’
experience in Romans 8.*

Works Cited

- Barr, James. “Is God a Liar? (Genesis 2—3)—and Related Matters.” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 57:1 (2006): 1-22. JSTOR. Web. 22 Aug. 2016.
- Bratcher, Dennis. “The ‘Fall’—A Second Look: A Literary Analysis of Genesis 2:4—3:24.” *Biblical Resources for Holiness Preaching: From Text to Sermon*. Ed. H. Ray Dunning. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1993. 317-332. crivoice.org. Web. 1 Aug. 2016.
- Hamilton, Victor P. *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1—17*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990. Print. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament.
- Lee, Witness. Footnotes. Recovery Version of the Bible. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 2003. Print.
- . *Life-study of Genesis*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1975. Print.
- Moberly, R. W. L. “Did the Interpreters Get It Right? Genesis 2—3 Reconsidered.” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 59.1 (2008): 22-40. JSTOR. Web. 22 Aug. 2016.
- Nee, Watchman. *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*. Vol. 8. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1992. Print.
- Niskanen, Paul. “Poetics of Adam: the Creation of אָדָם in the Image of אֱלֹהִים.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128:3 (2009): 417-436. JSTOR. Web. 22 Aug. 2016.
- Sawyer, John F. A. “The Meaning of אֱלֹהִים בְּצַלְמֵם (‘In the Image of God’) in Genesis I—XI.” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 25.2 (1974): 418-426. JSTOR. Web. 22 Aug. 2016.