

# The *imago Dei Weltanschauung* as narrative motif within the Corinthian correspondence

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This article reflects on the doctrine of humanity to explore that God created humankind in his image and likeness, and this means that all human beings have an inherent capacity to know the difference between good and bad, and between right and wrong. Thus, all human beings have an innate ability to be ethical, as the God who created them is good, and so becomes the source of their ethics. This article title highlights the interrelationships between identity, ethics, and ethos. These three related analytical categories, within the New Testament, show the necessity for an interdisciplinary approach in treating questions of the origin of humanity. This article incorporates reflections in the studies of anthropology, philosophy, and theology and draws from the writings of Apostle Paul, in his Corinthian Correspondence, as he instructed them on how they ought to relate, and what would be their roles within the broader scope of God's original intention for humanity. In this attempt, he made reference to the anthropological identity of the *imago Dei*, and he shows that the perfect expression of the *imago Dei* is Christ Jesus; thus, this is the image they ought to emulate. Therefore, this article investigates 'The *imago Dei weltanschauung* as narrative motif within the Corinthian correspondence'.

**Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications:** This research gives the perspective of the presupposition of the *imago Dei* as presented in the New Testament as the framework of understanding ethics, as it appears within the formation of an anthropological horizon. In relation to accepting the message of the New Testament, this article shows how the *imago Dei* worldview underpins Pauline ethics and can serve as a framework of understanding an anthropological ethical paradigm.

## Introduction

It is suggested that the diversity within the congregation of Corinth resulted in conflict situations within the congregation; as Kok (2012:1) comments within the Corinthian congregational context there existed several conflict situations (cf. 1 Cor 1:10 and *σχίσματα* [divisions]), and that much of it was a result of diversity within the congregation. Perhaps, in them attempting to resolve some of the matters in the church, they resorted to worldly standards instead of seeking guidance from the apostles' doctrine (Ac 2:42).

Kok (2012) also notes that:

the Corinthian congregation formed as a newly created group, a collection of people from different socio-economic, religious, and even ethnic contexts which resulted in the storming phase (of group formation)<sup>1</sup> where conflict and schism became a reality that Paul ethically had to address at that stage. (p. 3)

In doing so, Kok (2012:1–2)<sup>2</sup> also suggests that there was a dynamic between identity and ethos that occurred within this congregation, as the identity of the Christ-follower affects their everyday ethos:

Paul is convinced that Christians were different since they have a new identity that is reshaped by their faith. Their behaviour should reflect their new identity. Their new identity is primarily defined in terms of their new relations with God and Jesus. They are in Christ, in the Lord, and could now be called God's friends and even God's children. God's Spirit now dwells in them, making authentic Christian living possible. (Van der Watt 2006:619)<sup>3</sup>

In his correspondence with the Corinthians, in instructing them on how they ought to relate and what would be their roles within the broader scope of God's original intention for humanity, Paul

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1. See Kok (2012) for a discussion of the well-known phases of Tuckman, namely, forming, norming, storming, performing.

2. Kok is making reference to Wolter (2006:203–215) where he distinguishes between three different contexts in which the conflict occurred, which were: intra-congregational social life, extra-congregational social life and extra-congregational private life.

3. According to Van Der Watt (2006:611–632), the identity of Christ defines the moral space for New Testament believers; thus, Christian ethics are Christologically determined.

made reference to the anthropological identity of the *imago Dei*, and he shows that the perfect expression of the *imago Dei* is Jesus Christ. Therefore, according to Van der Watt (2006), if God's will is expressed in Christ:

This makes Jesus the interpretive centre of conduct for believers. Their lives should be modelled on his. His words, actions, conduct, and attitudes form the matrix within which followers of Jesus find themselves, and according to which they determine and evaluate their attitudes and behaviour in light of Scripture. (p. 615)

It is interesting to notice how Steyn (2006:135–161), in his reflections on the ethics of the Acts of the Apostles, also draws his readers' attention to the significance of the identity of Jesus to be modelled by the first followers of Jesus; as he comments that the actions and behaviour of the apostles and the believers as portrayed in Acts are determined by their new identity in Christ, as the name of Jesus is the ground of identity for members of this new community. Therefore, their identity in Christ became the (socio-cognitive [so to speak]) framework from which they formed their ethics.

In 2 Corinthians 4:4: ἐν οἷς ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἐτύφλωσεν τὰ νοήματα τῶν ἀπίστων εἰς τὸ μὴ αὐγάσαι τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ<sup>4</sup> [New International Version {NIV}: The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God], Paul connects the identity of God and Christ in saying that Christ is the image of God; Utley (2002:n.p.) remarks that to see Jesus is to see the Father (cf. Jn 1:18; 14:8, 9; Php 2:6; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3).

So for humanity to be reformed into the image of God they must be formed into the image of Christ. To be able to understand this text (2 Cor 4:4), we have to firstly survey Paul's relationship with the Corinthian church; Loubser (2006:219) suggests that all of the Pauline letters are engaged literature that conforms to first century rhetorical culture; moreover, as one reads through Paul's letters, there is little abstract argumentation and the communication is mostly direct and concrete. So Paul's letters to Corinth were intended to inform, influence, and persuade the recipients ethically.

Loubser (2006:219) further on comments that all aspects of Paul's discourses – paraenesis, ecclesiology, soteriology, Christology, eschatology – are integrated and focused toward an ethical end. Belief is intended to lead to behaviour. So this reason is what partly underpins Paul's correspondence with the Corinthians. The letters of Paul's Corinthian correspondence are significant in one's study of ethics because, as Green (1982:9–10) remarks, there are many advantages in studying a substantial and homogeneous collection of writings such as the Corinthian correspondence. Paul spent about 18 months in Corinth during his second missionary trip (Ac 15:36–21:16 – Athens-Corinth-Ephesus).<sup>5</sup>

4.The text has reference to the word εἰκὼν.

5.Stalker (1983) dedicates a whole chapter to Paul's Missionary travels; see chapter 6 (Pages 66–88).

Corinth was an influential city, destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C., but rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C.<sup>6</sup> The relation of Paul and the Corinthian church is referred to as the Corinthian correspondence. Paul actually wrote four letters to the Corinthian church, the most troubled and demanding of his congregations.<sup>7</sup> The church at Corinth was a vexing problem to Paul because of its instability; its religious and moral antecedents were the exact opposite of Christian principle. The first letter is the lost letter; the second letter is 1 Corinthians; the third letter is the sorrowful letter; and the fourth letter is 2 Corinthians<sup>8</sup>. In 2 Corinthians Paul is responding to the good news he has heard about the improved attitude of the Corinthians towards him.<sup>9</sup> However, as he penned this epistle, he was under furious attack in Corinth.<sup>10</sup> In dealing with moral matters of the church and the significance of the gospel of Jesus in the context of character formation, and in making a defence for his apostleship, he draws on Old Testament images such as the one of the *imago Dei*. As Ridderbos (1997:68) comments, much of Paul's Christology finds its point of departure in Christ's death and resurrection which he sees as a unity, as Kok (2016:273) also argues – which has direct implication for Christian identity and ethos. Thus, the concept of the *imago Dei* is alluded to within Paul's Corinthian correspondence through the explanation of the seamless identity of Jesus Christ as God, whose identity is the full embodiment of the Father.

## The concept of the image

There are a few passages in 1 Corinthians where the apostle makes fairly direct use of the Old Testament in his ethical teaching. The Genesis text about man and woman becoming 'one flesh', in Genesis 2:24, which reads: ἔνεκεν τούτου καταλείπει ἄνθρωπος τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν (Anonymous 1979:n.n.), is quoted exactly in 1 Corinthians 6:16, '[ἡ] οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ὁ κολλώμενος τῇ πόρνη ἐν σῶμά ἐστιν; Ἔσονται γάρ, φησὶν, οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν' (Aland *et al.* 2006:n.n.) in order to refute the notion evidently held by the Corinthian 'spiritists' that what one does with his body has no bearing on his relationship to Christ (Furnish 2009:32).<sup>11</sup>

Reference to the concept of *image* within the Corinthian correspondence appears in four verses. Firstly, the notion is used in 1 Corinthians 11:7 in the context of Paul's instruction about Christian Order, as he notes that 'For a man indeed

6.Corinth was an international metropolis, as Reicke (1968:232–236) elaborates that it was famous for commerce, industry, luxury, and immorality.

7.See Utley's (2002:3) outline of a tentative proposal of Paul's Contacts with the Corinthian Church.

8.For more background of Paul's Correspondence with the Corinthian church see Tenny (1985:296–305).

9.For a detailed description of Corinth, with an analysis of how the letters Paul wrote to the church in Corinth gives us a window into the personality of Paul, see Bornkamm (1982:68–77).

10.Sampley (2000:12–19) discusses at length Paul's opponents at Corinth, through explaining the two stages of opposition, certain indices of opponents, plausible indices of opponents, and unclear indices of opponents.

11.The Old Testament quotations are quoted from the Septuagint so that the reader may easily compare with the Greek New Testament texts.

ought not to cover *his* head, forasmuch as he is the *image* and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man' [Ἀνὴρ μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ὀφείλει κατακαλύπτεσθαι τὴν κεφαλὴν εἰκὼν καὶ δόξα θεοῦ ὑπάρχων ἢ γυνὴ δὲ δόξα ἀνδρός ἐστίν]. The second time the apostle uses this notion is in 1 Corinthians 15:49, in the midst of his discussion about the resurrection, as he further on notes that, 'And as we have borne the *image* of the earthy, we shall also bear the *image* of the heavenly'.<sup>12</sup>

It is significant to notice that in both the verses above there is a reference to human beings' calling to bear the image of their creator, which is the image that is embodied fully by Christ in all its glory; thus, in the context of 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul makes an invitation to the Corinthian believers that they must be imitators of Paul as he is also an imitator of Christ. The third place where Paul makes a reference to the notion of image within the Corinthian correspondence is 2 Corinthians 3:18 where Paul writes that:

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same *image* from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The fourth place Paul uses this term is 2 Corinthians 4:4, which reads:

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

## Defining image

The term image is the translation of the Greek word εἰκὼν.<sup>13</sup> The term εἰκὼν had different connotations in the Old Testament. For instance, it was used in reference to the prohibition of images, as in the third commandment (Ex 20:4) God told the children of Israel: לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה-לְךָ פֶסֶל וְכָל-תְּמוּנָה אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בַּאֲרָץ: 14

The Septuagint version reads: οὐ ποιήσεις σεαυτῷ εἰδωλὸν οὐδὲ παντὸς ὁμοίωμα, ὅσα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἄνω καὶ ὅσα ἐν τῇ γῆ κάτω καὶ ὅσα ἐν τοῖς ὕδασιν ὑποκάτω τῆς γῆς (Anonymous 1979:n.n.).<sup>15</sup> However, the word 'image' as used in the Old Testament also represents an idol which has dyslogistic undercurrents, as used in Exodus 20 verse 4. Thus, Clines (1996:498–500) remarked that the term denotes a material representation, usually of a deity. Unlike the term 'idol', which has a pejorative overtone, 'image' is objectively descriptive.<sup>16</sup>

12. Emphasis to the notion of *image* – as written in italics – in the passages quoted in this section of the paper is mine.

13. I have preferred to use both the Greek word εἰκὼν and the transliterated word: *eikōn* to explain the concept and context of the *imago Dei* within the Corinthian correspondence.

14. Anonymous (2006). *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: with Werkgroep Informatica, Vrije Universiteit Morphology; Bible. O.T. Hebrew. Werkgroep Informatica, Vrije Universiteit.*, Logos Bible Software. Translation (NIV): 'You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below'.

15. The Hebrew word used here for graven image is (pesel), which is a reference to an idol, and also refers to something that is cut into shape; hew out stone tablets; building-stones. An idol, image — idol, as likeness of man or animal; of metal; of wood (see Whitaker *et al.* 1996: 820).

16. Theriomorphic is when a being or a deity has an animal form; for instance, one could say that 'the gods depicted in theriomorphic form'.

## Image in Old Testament perspective

Kittel (1964:383) summarises the three practical implications of this ancient prohibition (Ex 20:4; Lv 26:1; Dt 4:16; 5:8; 27:15) which are: firstly, the avoidance and so far as possible the removal of cultic images of alien gods; secondly, the lack of images in the native cultus; and thirdly, the avoidance of representations of men and, partially at least, of other living creatures.<sup>17</sup> The Old Testament also gives expressions of the idea of the deity taking or appearing in a visible form to man; however, the Old Testament only expresses a part of this idea, for it mostly revealed an understanding that it is not possible, or rather God wouldn't reveal himself in a form that is open to human perception.

So part of this expression could also be through *theophanies*.<sup>18</sup> There are many other descriptions of the concept of image in the Old Testament.<sup>19</sup>

## Image in New Testament perspective

Even in the New Testament the Jews seem to have found it offensive to worship or show allegiance to any graven image representing any authoritative figure; however, hypocritically, some wanted to own a denarius, but on the other hand they used it to test Jesus (cf. Mk 12:15; Lk 20:24). So even in the New Testament there are different connotations to the use of the word εἰκὼν but the dominant use of the Greek term meant 'to be similar' or 'to be like', or 'to appear'; and in the strict sense an image of someone would be seen as an artistic representation (e.g. a painting or statue) or a natural reflection or apparition (Kittel 1964:388).

Louw and Nida (1996:64–65) show how the word is used in the New Testament, in its denotative, associative, and connotative contexts, through noting that the term εἰκὼν is that which has been formed to resemble a person, god, animal, et cetera – 'likeness, image'. They also give the examples of Matthew 22:20 which reads: εἰκόνα: τίνος ἢ εἰκὼν αὐτῆ; and Romans 1:23 which reads: εἰκόνας φθοροῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πετεινῶν. Acts 7:43 says: τύπος: τοὺς τύπους οὓς ἐποίησατε προσκυθεῖν αὐτοῖς; and Acts 17:29 says: χάραγμα: οὐκ ὀφείλομεν νομίζειν χρυσῷ ἢ ἀργύρῳ ἢ λίθῳ, χάραγματι τέχνης καὶ ἐνθυμήσεως ἀνθρώπου, τὸ θεῖον εἶναι ὁμοίον.

In certain contexts the referents of the words εἰκόνα, τύπος, and χάραγμα may have special religious significance in that they may refer to idols, but the focal component for the translator is that of a likeness or resemblance. The New

17. For a lengthy explanation of these three practical implications of this ancient prohibition of the use of graven images please see Kittel (1964:383–388).

18. Kittel (1967:749) suggests that in the Old Testament there are many references to God as being which, like man, has a face, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, lips, tongue, arms, fingers, back, clothes, shoes, staff etc.; but this is so obviously figurative that the LXX corrections were not necessary to maintain the purity of the concept of God. In none of the many OT *theophanies* or *angelophanies* is there a manifestation in full human form of the supraterrrestrial beings, and nowhere is there a depiction of the divine form which is seen. In the OT the theomorphic understanding of man is more important than the anthropomorphic view of God.

19. David Clines (1996:500) also provides three ways the concept of image was used in the Old Testament.



Testament also has a central meaning of any reference to a living image as being ‘a likeness’, ‘an embodiment’, and ‘a manifestation’.

The writer of Colossians 1:15 draws us to this understanding by describing Christ as: ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου; given the initial Old Testament connotation this expression of Colossians 1:15 may seemingly create a contradiction, but Kleinknecht *et al.* (1965) helps us in differentiating between the use of εἰκὼν in the Old Testament sense of the prohibition of the use of the images and the New Testament use of εἰκὼν as representing a likeness and an embodiment of the living image. He notes that:

Image is not to be understood as a magnitude which is alien to the reality and present only in the consciousness. It has a share in the reality. Indeed, it is the reality. Thus εἰκὼν does not imply a weakening or a feeble copy of something. It implies the illumination of its inner core and essence. (p. 389)

Grogan (2007:111–112) suggests that the expression of ‘the image of God’ in 2 Corinthians 4:4 reminds us of Genesis 1:26, 27. It is possible that Paul knew the thought of Philo, the Alexandrian Jew who was his older contemporary, who was very much influenced by the philosophy of Plato who taught that the earthly things which are all imperfect have their perfect counterparts in another world.

Moreover, Philo interpreted the Old Testament very largely in Platonic terms, and taught that when God made man on earth in his own image, he also made a perfect image of himself in the heavenly realms. Hence, throughout human history, Philo held that the perfect image of God remained in heaven. However, Grogan (2007:111–112) adds that this kind of thinking is not biblical, as Paul and other New Testament writers taught that there is a perfect image of God and this image is no less than the eternal Christ, and this is confirmed by Colossians 1:15, John 1:18, and Hebrews 1:3. Perhaps this is the understanding that most New Testament writers had when thinking of man as being created in the image of God. Peter alludes to this when he writes that believers are given great promises so that through them they may participate in the divine nature (2 Pt 1:3–4).

Even so Paul, in 2 Corinthians 4:4, sees Christ as that very likeness and embodiment of the image of God. This verse is particularly significant here in the context of Paul’s delineation of the gospel to the Corinthian believers. We understand that one of the serious problems that Paul had to deal with in Corinth was the issue of morality; so reflection on the *imago Dei* was a model which the Corinthian congregation had to adopt:

So Christ’s revelation of God is gospel, wonderfully good news, for it shows that God cares for his imperfect world, for men and women in whom his image is so sadly marred as to be at times almost unrecognizable. Ever since the fall, the world had been bereft of this perfect revelation in a human being, but in Christ that revelation has come into visibility. (Grogan 2007:112)

## Image and the glory of God

The use of the term εἰκὼν in 2 Corinthians 4:4 is used alongside glory, and both these terms were used extensively in the Old Testament. Hence, ‘The employment of Old Testament materials in the ethical teaching is a prominent feature in the Corinthian correspondence, addressed to a congregation in particular need of concrete moral instruction’ (Furnish 2009:30–31). Therefore:

In the context of 2 Corinthians 4:4 Paul speaks of his gospel as an irradiation of the divine glory. He motivates this by calling Christ, whose glory is seen in the gospel, the image of God, and then speaks further of this glory as the light that God, who through the word of his power once brought light out of darkness, has made to shine in the hearts of the church. (Ridderbos 1997:70)

In 2 Corinthians Paul writes of the nature of Christian ministry, and he gives a demonstration of this by giving his autobiography as a Christian minister. He writes to them about the true character of the Christian ministry. He, particularly, deals with this aspect of the character of the Christian ministry between 2 Corinthians 3:1–7:16, where he discusses different elements of ministry. He considers the ministry as in the service of the new covenant (ch. 3), the tremendous responsibilities of the ministry (4:1–15), the ministry must be carried out through Christ (4:16–6:2), the hardships and suffering in the ministry (6:3–13), the necessity of purity and righteousness in the ministry (6:14–7:1), and the repentance brought about by the ministry (7:2–16).

This article will restrict its discussion to 2 Corinthians 4:4, which is part of the pericope: 2 Corinthians 4:1–6. This pericope starts with the preposition διὰ τοῦτο: διὰ taking an accusative (τοῦτο) and demarcates a new section with a causal relationship with the preceding followed by a referent with participle clause (cf. ἔχοντες ...). 2 Corinthians 4:6 starts with the subordinating conjunction ὅτι, indicating the continuation of the argument and thus forms a unit if taken together with 2 Corinthians 4:5’s οὐ γὰρ: the conjunction γὰρ with negative particle οὐ followed by the ὅτι of 1 Corinthians 4:6 (also supported by Guthrie 2015:ad loc). This is also the demarcation indicated by: *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (edited by Aland *et al.* 2006), which demarcates these verses in one pericope under the heading: *Treasure in Earthen Vessels*.<sup>20</sup>

## The context of the image

In considering the tremendous responsibilities of the ministry (4:1–15) the beginning of chapter 4 clearly shows us that Paul is attempting to conclude a subject he has been writing about in the previous chapter; that is why the beginning word of the chapter is: Διὰ, which is a preposition denoting the channel of an act. This word expresses the idea of an outcome on the ground or reason by which something is or is not

<sup>20</sup>Most commentators consider these verses (2 Cor 4:1–6) in one pericope; for instance, Barnett (1997), Harris (2013), and Martin (1986) also discuss these verses as one pericope. Both the processes of exegesis and exposition done in discussing this pericope will be employed simultaneously throughout the discussion of this text.

done; because of the discussion of the previous chapter (3) this should then be the consequence.

Hence, Martin (1986:75) remarks that the link between 2:14–17 and 4:1–6 suggests that Paul is using a literary device known as ‘ring-composition’, as his thoughts revert to his earlier statements and complete the circle of ideas; however, Harris (2013:320–321) observes that the ‘ring-composition’ Paul is using involves three passages: 2:14–17 and 3:7–18, which have verbal and conceptual links with 4:1–6. Therefore:

4:1–6 resumes themes found in 2:14–17 and 3:7–18, so that *διὰ τοῦτο* looks back to these passages in general and to 3:18 in particular. It was because Paul (and his fellow ministers) were God’s honored agents in spreading the knowledge of God and in calling people to turn to the Lord of the glorious new covenant, and in particular because of the Spirit’s liberating and transforming work. (Harris 2013:322)

Barnett (1997:211), in making reference to the word *διὰ*, confirms that the initial ‘Therefore’ with which both the opening sentence and the whole passage (2 Cor 4:1–6) begin ties what follows with what has just been stated. Indeed, each word or affirmation of verse 1 has an antecedent in the previous chapter. Oepke (1964:67) notes that the usage of this word is usually causal and means ‘on account of’, or ‘for the sake of’. Now, Paul gets into the major theme of this passage, which is this ministry: *διακονίαν*. ‘This ministry’ that is, the ministry of the ‘new covenant’ (2 Cor 3:6), as Barnett (1997:212) further on explains, brings the Spirit of righteousness (3:8, 9, 17–18), and is from God. According to Louw and Nida (1996:460), this word refers to the role or position of serving – task of ministry and according to Breed (2014:1–8) also relates to the domain of being sent/a representative (see Collins 1990; Gooder 2006:33–56; For John’s Gospel see Kok 2015:1–9).<sup>21</sup>

We are granted the ministry of the Spirit because we have received mercy. The word used here is *ἐλεέω*, which means to show kindness or concern for someone in serious need – ‘to show mercy, to be merciful toward, to have mercy on’ (Louw & Nida 1996:750). *ἐλεέω* is the emotion roused by contact with an affliction which comes undeservedly on someone else. This emotion includes the elements of both awe and mercy. The Greeks considered the deity to be the subject of *ἐλεέω*; thus, God’s *ἐλεέω* is displayed in regeneration. Within this community, it was typical that the emotion of *ἐλεέω* played a great part in the administration of justice; the accused were to arouse the *ἐλεέω* of the judge so that they may get justice.

Therefore, the spirit enables us to fulfil this ministry, as we have received mercy; thus we do not loose heart, or we do not faint. The Greek word used here is *ἐγκακέω*, which means to lose one’s motivation to accomplish some valid goal – ‘to become discouraged, to lose heart, to give up’ (Louw & Nida

21. Both Breed (2014:1–8) and Kok (2015:1–9) point out that a very important dimension of the *daikon* word-group is associated with the plenipotentiary idea. See also the important work of Collins (1990) and later that of Gooder (2006) who engages critically with the work of Collins. In others words, from a ‘pictorial’ theological point of view one has to include the missionary dimension (plenipotentiary/representative) when speaking of *diakonia* and vice versa.

1996:318). It is not positive, in the sense that it is an incapacity or weakness that has more than purely moral significance. It also means morally bad, wicked. Grudmann (1965:470) adds that:

The question of lack or incapacity, which in the most varied forms affects all spheres of life in terms of *kakos*, has always been particularly significant in relation to life and religion. It provokes a question of supreme significance, namely, that of the origin and purpose of evil, of the meaning of the world, of the plan and purpose of God. This is the problem of theodicy, and it involves the moral question of the overcoming of evil.

Paul uses this term here: 2 Corinthians 4:1, in combination with its preposition *ἐν*, as the word was initially used, where it denoted weakness and incapacity; so Paul explains that because of this ministry, the ministry of the Spirit, we do not experience incapacitation, neither do we become morally bad – the Spirit enables us to live righteously and faithfully. That is why in the next verse he writes that, on account of the ministry we have received, we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, *ἀλλὰ ἀπειπάμεθα τὰ κρυπτά τῆς αἰσχύνης, μὴ περιπατοῦντες ἐν πανουργίᾳ μηδὲ δολοῦντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τῇ φανερώσει τῆς ἀληθείας συνιστάμενοι ἑαυτοὺς πρὸς πᾶσαν συνείδησιν ἀνθρώπων ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ* (v.2).

Stegman (2009:98–99) comments that in this passage Paul insists that he is not discouraged, because the God of all encouragement (2 Cor 1:3) has bestowed on him this ministry, that is, the ministry of the new covenant. Martin (1986:76) adds that this ministry is that of the new covenant outlined in chapter 3, notably at 3:6, 8 where ministry of the Spirit looks on to 3:18. So it is just possible that there is latent contact between 3:18 and 4:1; but it is latent.

Therefore, Martin (1986:76) further on noted that the upshot of Paul’s confidence (stated in 3:4, 12) in his ministry as given him by God is that ‘we are not discouraged’, and this is a verb that can have several shades of meaning extending from ‘we do not get tired’, or ‘we do not neglect our tasks’, or ‘we do not despair’, or ‘we do not act in a cowardly way’, which is being ashamed of the gospel, as according to Romans 1:16. Now, Paul has just declared his refutations of the old covenant, as believed by the Jews in the church at Corinth, he refuses the basic premise of the Judaizers (2 Cor 3:1–6); and the conflict between him and his opponents comes into clear focus. Hence in the first part of verse 2 (2 Cor 4:2) he stated that, *ἀλλὰ ἀπειπάμεθα τὰ κρυπτά τῆς αἰσχύνης, μὴ περιπατοῦντες ἐν πανουργίᾳ μηδὲ δολοῦντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ*, in defending himself against his opponents. Harris (2013:324) comments that Paul is either defending himself against the malicious charges of some Corinthian opponents (cf. 7:2; 12:16) or attacking those whose ways of acting were secretive and shameful.

According to Hughes (2006:81), the deception referred to here is Machiavellian cunning in which ‘the end justifies the means’ regardless of the means used.<sup>22</sup> Thus, such cunning will stop at nothing in order to fulfil its lusts, as Paul’s

22. In 2 Corinthians 11:3 Paul makes another reference to the word ‘cunning’ or ‘deception’, but in this regard he describes Satan’s work saying that ‘Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning’.

opponents were attempting to cover up their true motives with a veneer of apparent piety and counterfeit spiritual power (Hafemann 2000:175–176).

But not so with Paul, and his fellow workers, as on the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly, they do not distort the word of God and they commend themselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. Therefore, Barnett (1997:214) explains the contrasts between these two groups of ministers by noting that because of echoes of 2:17, it is possible that this verse (2 Cor 4:2) is obliquely polemical as well as more directly apologetic. Both texts (2:17 and 4:2) refer to an inappropriate ministry of the word of God ('peddling the word of God'; 'corrupting the word of God'), and they speak of ministry in the sight of God. It would appear that Paul is here contrasting his ministry with that of the 'peddlers' so that his words are also an indirect criticism of them. Hence, Paul commended himself, not by self-vindication, but simply by the open declaration of the truth – which was the gospel and its implications (Harris 1976:340). For Paul, the εἰκὼν, which he had adopted as part of his identity, is characterised by διακονία and mission, as mentioned above (cf. also Breed 2014).

## The content of the image

Dunn (1991:34) suggests that Paul's basic concern is to attract the Spirit-people to his side, and to achieve this he developed a subtle two-pronged attack. Paul (2 Cor 4:4) writes that, ἐν οἷς ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἐτύφλωσεν τὰ νοήματα τῶν ἀπίστων, however this veil or blindness can be removed by that very 'light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ' (2 Cor 4:4); so, in verses 3–4 Paul continues his (now very long) sentence by explaining how 'the perishing' come to be 'veiled'. It is because the 'god of this age', Satan, has 'blinded ... unbelievers' to prevent them from 'seeing the light'. Three genitives qualify that 'light'; it is 'the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ'. 'Christ' is declared to be 'the image of God' (Barnett 1997:218). So Paul makes it clear that the reason for the 'veiledness' of the gospel in the case of those who are perishing (v.3) is not the gospel itself – as the gospel, according to verse 4b, brings enlightenment – but it is the activity of Satan which blinds the minds of unbelievers to the truth of the gospel (Harris 2013:326). Thus, this blindness results εἰς τὸ μὴ ἀγάσαι τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ (2 Cor 4:4).

So when considering this second part of verse 4 in comparison with its first part (v.4a), Barnett (1997:219) suggests that the two constituent parts of this verse, when taken together, are a paradox. Whereas in the first the 'god of this age' blinds unbelievers so that they cannot see, the second states that 'light' is to be seen, that is, 'the light of the gospel', which, however, unbelievers do not see. This light comes from the 'glory' radiated by Christ, who is 'the image of God'. It will be remembered that those who turn to the Lord (3:16) see the 'glory of the Lord' and are transformed into 'the same image' (see 3:18). The gospel, therefore, is the basis of the new covenant which enables all those who receive the new

covenant to be continually transformed into that very image of God – which is perfectly displayed in Christ.

Hence, 'The awareness of the great privilege involved caused the apostle not to lose heart, despite the many difficulties and sufferings he experienced in the carrying out of that ministry' (Kruse 1989:102). This was possible because of the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Cor 4:4).

Barnett (1997:218) comments that the Exodus narrative forms the background to this passage. In response to Moses' request God revealed his glory to him, but he was not permitted to see the face of God (Ex 32:18–23; cf. v.6). On the Damascus Road, Paul, too, saw the glory of God. But there was a shape to it. Paul beheld 'the image (*eikori*) of God', the glorified Christ. In the heavenly Christ the invisible God, who cannot be seen, has perfectly and fully revealed himself (cf. Col 1:15). The glorified Christ is the ultimate and eschatological revelation of God.

There is nothing more that can or will be seen of God. Therefore, 'God's revelatory "image," the heavenly Christ, shown to the apostle, becomes the revelation of God for those who hear and receive the gospel' (Barnett 1997:219–220). What Paul saw with his eyes in that unique moment he now 'sets forth' by means of 'the truth' of the gospel (v.2) addressed to the ears of his hearers (cf. Gl 3:2, 5), by means of which the light of God comes into darkened hearts (v.6). Light from the glorified Christ streams into the heart through hearing the gospel.

Harris (2013:330–331) also comments that when Paul affirms that Christ is εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ, he is not saying only that Christ 'subsists in the form of God' – as according to Philippians 2:6 which says of Christ ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων – having the nature and attributes of God, or only that he is the 'glory of God', and being the outshining of deity. Thus, Christ, as God's εἰκὼν, shares and expresses God's nature. According to Colossians 1:15, he is the precise and visible representation of the invisible God. So an εἰκὼν is a likeness and the visible expression of the invisible God:

The degree of resemblance between the original and the copy must be assessed by the word's context, but it could vary from a partial or superficial resemblance to a complete or essential likeness. Given passages such as Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:19; 2:9, we may safely assume that for Paul εἰκὼν here, as in Col. 1:15, signifies that Christ is an exact representation as well as a visible expression of God. ἐστὶν is a timeless present, indicating that Christ is eternally the perfect reflection of God or at least that in his glorified corporeality Christ remains forever God's visible expression. (Harris 2013:331)

Through this expression we also realise that 'Christ is the embodiment of God's own character, the prototype and representation of what all those who see God's glory will become (3:18)' (Hafemann 2000:176). Hence, Hafemann (2000:176), in explaining how Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν as the εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ is the bedrock of the redemption of all humanity, continues to note that the entire history of redemption is encapsulated in 4:4.



## Identity shaped by the image

Adam was created in the glorious image of God, but fell from it. God consequently barred Adam and Eve from his presence, and even Israel encountered the glory of God on Mount Sinai, but fell from it. Nevertheless, the new Adam, Christ, did not fall, but he is the revelation of the glory of God to his people. So Paul encountered the glory of God in Christ on the road to Damascus and was converted. As a result, he mediates the glory of God in Christ, and, therefore, his experience and ministry are part of the 'second exodus' and 'new creation' brought about by Christ as the 'second Adam'.

According to Paul, given the nature of Christ as the εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ, our ministry, according to verse 5, is about Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον, ἑαυτοὺς δὲ δούλους ὑμῶν διὰ Ἰησοῦν. So if our preaching and serving is about Christ Jesus alone, then our goal is to grow into the same εἰκὼν, as ὅτι οὐκ προέγνων, καὶ προώρισεν συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνος τοῦ υἱοῦ (Rm 8:29).

In reflecting on the first six verses of chapter 4, Barnett (1997:226) asks: what application, then, do these words have for others? In summarising his comments on 4:1–6 he notes that significant for such ministry is Paul's statement that God has 'shone in' his heart (4:6). This is deliberately representational. God shines into the hearts of all so that they may be able to respond to the gospel, to 'see the light of the glory of God' (4:4). – They are able to respond *because* God shone into their (newly created) hearts (cf. 4:6) – a reality Paul experienced from both externally and internally as something that happened *to him* and compels him to share with others [mission] (Schnelle 2009:240). Relating to ministers under the continuing new covenant, missionaries and pastors – and all believers – themselves need to have 'seen' that 'light' from the gospel, and, on that basis, so to preach the gospel that God will shine his light into the hearts of others. Acceptance of and involvement in new covenant ministry as a life calling require the same ethical qualities as those stated by the apostle in verse 2 – determined perseverance, and a renunciation of the shamefully secretive and of craftiness (especially in matters relating to money).

Therefore, those whom Jesus has shone in their hearts will be committed to preaching the gospel of Jesus and serving him with their whole hearts. It is these enlightened human hearts which will continue to display the image of God in their quest to being formed into Christ-likeness. God has deposited inside believers a deposit of that gospel of grace, as Paul continues to explain this in 2 Corinthians 4:7–10.

## Image in an anthropological perspective

Paul is encouraging the believers to value the gospel more than any gift; for all that makes the difference is not the worldly wisdom, or treasures of this world, but rather the gospel of Jesus Christ – which is a priceless treasure. Therefore, for followers of Christ the spirit of resurrection is already at work as Romans 8:11 states that, 'And if the Spirit

of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you'. Therefore, the call to be transformed into the image of Christ is the call to the resurrection life as we grow into the identity of the *imago Dei*.

It is evident, as Kittel (1964:396) comments, that man can attain the image of God; as there is no speculation that Genesis 1:27, behind the thought of Paul, is the image the Corinthian believers are called to attain. Thus, from the fact that in 1 Corinthians 11:7 he can unhesitatingly apply the same passage to man, or more precisely to the male, whereas in 1 Corinthians 15:54 it would seem that Genesis 2:7 alone applies to man. So in 1 Corinthians 11:7 Paul had been able to deduce from man's divine likeness certain practical consequences in terms of the concrete life of his day; but only in 1 Corinthians 15:49 he can regard this expression as deduced from Genesis 5:3, which is determinative of earthly existence. Further on, Kittel (1964:396; cf. Schnelle 2009:315) writes that the main emphasis in Pauline anthropology is on this being of man as εἰκὼν which is still to be established, or better restored (see the high Christology of Antonius Thysius (A.D. 1565–1640) in Te Velde 2014:317).<sup>23</sup> This will be done by connection with the being of Christ as εἰκὼν and via participation:

Here εἰκὼν appears as a category of participation: the Son participates in the δόξα of the Father; in him the true nature of God becomes visible because he is the image of God who is compassionately concerned for humanity. All the statements about the relation of believers to the image of Christ are based on the concept of Christ as the image of God. (Schnelle 2009:315)

In Romans 8:29, ὅτι οὐκ προέγνων, καὶ προώρισεν συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνος τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς,<sup>24</sup> there is no tautology in μορφή and εἰκὼν. Thus, the general statement that the Christian is to be conformed, or to become a brother of the Firstborn, is given its distinctive emphasis by the fact that a Christian will participate in the divine likeness manifested in Christ. The man who is an image of Christ is an image in the specific sense which the true and original sense for those familiar with the Bible, namely, the sense of Genesis 1:27.

Kittel (1964:396) further on concludes that this likeness is the goal of the divine προώρισεν and the divine εἰς. Drawing on Paul's few passages – 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Corinthians 15:54; Colossians 3:10, Kittel (1964:397) suggests that through these passages we have an answer to the question when the restoration of the εἰκὼν takes place.

23. Antonius Thysius in his *Disputatio XIII [De Homine ad imaginem Dei creato]* (in Te Velde 2014:317) already argued: ... consequens est, ut purro de homine ad imaginem Dei creato agamus. Et sane homo est inferioris naturae consummation et finis, superioris congener, totius compendium et vinculum, quo coelestia terrenis conjunguntur [Translation: Consequently, it is about man created in the image of God. Man is the high point and goal of the lower order of nature, but he also belongs to the higher order, he is the 'sum' of everything and the bond that links heavenly and earthly things].

24. Aland et al. (2006). *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (with Morphology), Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

Therefore, there is an eschatological future in 1 Corinthians 15:49b; it is also true that Romans 8:29 points us in the same direction. Nevertheless, in this passage, and even more so in 2 Corinthians 3:18, the eschatological statement is linked to an event which is already present for the Christian. And in Corinthians 3:10 the restoration of the εικόν posits a goal of ethical action in this aeon.

## Conclusion and summary

As a result of the aim of this restoration, the Christian worldview provides a comprehensive definition for man and is adequate to make a holistic case for humanity in his beauty and glory:

- Christ-followers, following a biblical belief and Christian worldview, believe (cf. Wright 1992:45) that humans are made in the image of the Creator.
- As a consequence they are entrusted with the task of exercising wise responsibility within the created order.
- Naturally then, when Paul had to deal with difficult situations which had an ethical bearing, he resorted back to the creation story in Genesis, as the creation narrative in Genesis provides the ‘first principles’ of all doctrines (Henry 1973:339). Consequently, we could agree with Wright (2013:71) that Paul is nothing less than a *creational* theologian. This is seen in his deep structural and thematic reliance on Genesis throughout.
- For Paul it was not enough for a theological meaning to float in the air over historical events, intersecting with them for a brief moment only and then leaving again in a hurry for fear of contamination. However, Paul sees the theological meaning as continually shaped by the historical events, and theology playing a significant role in shaping history – even here there is an ongoing dialectical process that shapes both the worlds of theology and history.
- Hays (1996:16) describes Paul as an organiser of far-flung little communities around the Mediterranean that unite clusters of disparate people in the startling confession that God had raised a crucified man, Jesus, from the dead and thus initiated a new age in which the whole world was to be transformed. If man is created in the image of God and God is revealed in Christ, then the perfect image of humanity is reflected through the person of Jesus. Man’s image was originally created to be like that of Christ; however, through the fall God’s image in man was distorted.
- Thus, this, essentially, is the affront which fallen man is to God. He takes all that God has lavished upon him to enable him to live in free and joyful obedience, and he transforms it into a weapon by which he can oppose his maker. The very breath which God gives him thousands of times each day he abuses by his sin (Ferguson 1989:13). However, God in his love and compassion already had made a plan to restore man from his sin; he chooses to work with him to restore his image and likeness in man, he does this through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Jesus as the perfect reflection of God’s image came to live among men, ‘and men beheld his glory’ (Jn 1:14).

- Now man had the opportunity to see the nature and practice of the image of God, which he was to reflect initially; the mercy and grace of God saves him and restores to him what he lost (see also Anthonius Thysius, *Disputatio* XIII.xlii in Te Velde 2014:330).<sup>25</sup>
- Calvin (cited by Ferguson 1989:13), as already mentioned above, compellingly argues that this restoration points to the truth that Adam was created in the image of God, so that he might reflect, as in a mirror, the righteousness of God. But that image, having been wiped out or distorted by sin, must now be *restored* in Christ. The regeneration of the godly is indeed, as is said in 2 Cor. 3:18, nothing else than the reformation of the image of God in them.
- But there is a far more rich and powerful grace of God in this second creation than in the first. Adam lost the image which he had originally received; therefore it is necessary that it shall be restored to us by Christ. Therefore he teaches that the design in regeneration is to lead us back from error to that end for which we were created: the *imago Dei!* Together with Anthonius Thysius (*Disputatio* XII. Liv) we could say that the goal and profit of (re) creation should culminate in the glory of God (*Deique gloriam*).

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25. See Anthonius Thysius, *Disputatio* XIII.xlii in Te Velde (2014:330): *Atque Apostolus consentienter Dei imaginem ab anteriori collocat in spientia, sanctitate et iusticia; ut etiam ex ejus contrario, amissa Dei imagine, et restauratione intelligi potest, 2 Cor. 3,18. Eph. 4, 22. 23.24. Col. 3, 9,10. Atque hinc consequitur et accessus ad Deum propior, dum homo Deo conformis, Deo unitur et adhaeret, quem actum etiam imago Dei infert et comprehendit* (Translation [Ed by Te Velde 2014:331]: ‘The apostle places the image of God, viewed from its beginning, in wisdom, holiness, and justice; this could/can be gathered also from its opposite, after the image of God has been lost, and from its restoration...’ ‘And from here comes the closer access to God, since man conforms to God and is united with and clings to Him. This act, too, is expressed and embraced by the image of God’).



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