



Clement and Gregory on the correspondence of the human image with the Divine

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I. Immediacy of the Image

1) ὁ γὰρ ποιήσωμεν κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν εἰπών, καὶ διὰ τῆς πληθυντικῆς σημασίας τὴν ἁγίαν Τριάδα δηλώσας, οὐκ ἂν τῆς εἰκόνος μοναδικῶς ἐπεμνήσθη, εἶπερ ἀνομοίως εἶχε πρὸς ἄλληλα τὰ ἀρχέτυπα· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἦν δυνατόν τῶν ἀλλήλοις μὴ συμβαινόντων ἐν ἀναδειχθῆναι ὁμοίωμα· ἀλλ' εἰ διάφοροι ἦσαν αἱ φύσεις, διαφοροῦς ἂν πάντως καὶ τὰς εἰκόνας αὐτῶν ἐνεστήσατο, τὴν κατάλληλον ἐκάστη δημιουργήσας· ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ μία μὲν ἡ εἰκὼν, οὐχ ἓν δὲ τὸ τῆς εἰκόνος ἀρχέτυπον· τίς οὕτως ἔξω διανοίας ἐστὶν ὡς ἀγνοεῖν, ὅτι τὰ τῶ ἐνὶ ὁμοιούμενα, καὶ πρὸς ἄλληλα πάντως ὁμοίως ἔχει; (**Gregory of Nyssa**, *Op. hom.* 6, 3; ed. G. H. Forbes, pp. 132-4)

He who said: “Let us make after our image”, and by the plural signification revealed the Holy Trinity, would not, if the archetypes were unlike one another, have mentioned the image in the singular: for it would be impossible that there should be one likeness displayed of things which do not agree with one another: if the natures were different he would assuredly have begun their images also differently, making the appropriate image for each: but since the image is one, while the archetype is not one, who is so far beyond the range of understanding as not to know that the things which are like the same thing, surely resemble one another? (trans. H. A. Wilson)

2) οὗτος ὁ τῶ ὄντι μονογενῆς, ὁ τῆς τοῦ παμβασιλέως καὶ παντοκράτορος πατρὸς δόξης χαρακτήρ, ἐναποσφραγιζόμενος τῶ γνωστικῶ τὴν τελείαν θεωρίαν κατ' εἰκόνα τὴν ἑαυτοῦ, ὡς εἶναι τρίτην ἤδη τὴν θεϊαν εἰκόνα τὴν ὅση δύναμις ἐξομοιουμένην πρὸς τὸ δεύτερον αἷτιον, πρὸς τὴν ὄντως ζωὴν, δι' ἣν ζῶμεν τὴν ἀληθῆ ζωὴν. (**Clement of Alexandria**, *Stromata* VII, iii, 16, 6; ed. O. Stählin, t. III, p. 12)

He is the true Only-begotten, the express image of the glory of the universal king and almighty Father, who impresses on the gnostic the seal of the perfect contemplation, according to his own image; so that there is now a third divine image, made as far as possible like the second cause, the essential life, through which we live the true life. (trans. W. Wilson)

3) πολλοῦ γε δεῖ ἄμοιρον εἶναι θείας ἐννοίας τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ὅς γε καὶ τοῦ ἐμφυσηματος ἐν τῇ γενέσει μεταλαβεῖν ἀναγέγραπται, καθαρωτέρας οὐσίας παρὰ τὰ ἄλλα ζῶα μετασχών. ἐντεῦθεν οἱ ἀμφὶ τὸν Πυθαγόραν θεία μοῖρα τὸν νοῦν εἰς ἀνθρώπους ἤκειν φασί, καθάπερ Πλάτων καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης ὁμολογοῦσιν. ἀλλ' ἡμεῖς μὲν τῶ πεπιστευκῶτι προσεπιπνεῖσθαι τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμά φαμεν, οἱ δὲ ἀμφὶ τὸν Πλάτωνα νοῦν μὲν ἐν ψυχῇ θείας μοίρας ἀπόρροιαν ὑπάρχοντα, ψυχὴν δὲ ἐν σώματι κατοικίζουσιν. [...] ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς μέρος θεοῦ ἐν ἐκάστῳ ἡμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα. (**Clement of Alexandria**, *Stromata* V, xiii, 87.4 - 88.3; ed. O. Stählin, t. II, pp. 383-4)

The human being is far from destitute of a divine conception, who, it is written in Genesis, partook of inspiration, being endowed with a purer essence than the other animate creatures. Hence the Pythagoreans say that the intellect comes to man through a divine portion, as Plato and Aristotle concur; but we assert that the Holy Spirit inspires him who has believed. The Platonists hold that the intellect is an effluence of the divine portion in the soul, and they place the soul in the body. [...] But it is not as a part of God that the Spirit is in each of us. (trans. W. Wilson, with changes)



4) Ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν θεοειδῆ τινὰ χάριν τῷ πλάσματι ἡμῶν ὁ ποιήσας δεδώρηται, τῶν ἰδίων ἀγαθῶν ἐνθεῖς τῇ εἰκόνι τὰς ὁμοιότητας· διὰ τοῦτο τὰ μὲν λοιπὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἔδωκεν ἐκ φιλοτιμίας τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει· νοῦ δὲ καὶ φρονήσεως οὐκ ἔστι κυρίως εἰπεῖν ὅτι δέδωκεν ἀλλ' ὅτι μετέδωκε, τὸν ἴδιον αὐτοῦ τῆς φύσεως κόσμον ἐπιβαλὼν τῇ εἰκόνι. (**Gregory of Nyssa**, *Op. hom.* 9, 1; ed. G. H. Forbes, p. 148)

Now since our Maker has bestowed upon our formation a certain godlike grace, by implanting in his image the likeness of his own excellences, for this reason he gave, of his bounty, his other good gifts to human nature; but intellect and thought we cannot strictly say that he gave, but that he imparted them, adding to the image the proper adornment of his own nature. (trans. H. A. Wilson, with changes)

II. Precision of the Image

5) ἡ γὰρ εἰκὼν ἕως ἄν ἐν μηδενὶ λείπηται τῶν κατὰ τὸ ἀρχέτυπον νοουμένων, κυρίως ἐστὶν εἰκὼν· καθ' ὃ δ' ἄν διαπέση τῆς πρὸς τὸ πρωτότυπον ὁμοιότητος, κατ' ἐκεῖνο τὸ μέρος εἰκὼν οὐκ ἔστιν· (**Gregory of Nyssa**, *Op. hom.* 11, 3; ed. G. H. Forbes, p. 158)

The image is properly an image so long as it fails in none of those attributes which we perceive in the archetype; but where it falls from its resemblance to the prototype it ceases in that respect to be an image. (trans. H. A. Wilson, with slight changes)

6) ἀτεχνῶς οὖν ἐπίγειος εἰκὼν θείας δυνάμεως ἢ γνωστικῆ ψυχῆ, τελεία ἀρετῆ κεκοσμημένη, ἐκ πάντων ἅμα τούτων, φύσεως, ἀσκήσεως, λόγου, συνηυξημένη. (**Clement of Alexandria**, *Stromata* VII, xi, 64, 6; ed. O. Stählin, t. III, p. 46)

Certainly, then, the gnostic soul, once adorned with perfect virtue, is plainly an earthly image of the divine power; its development being the joint result of nature, training and reason, all together. (trans. W. Wilson, with changes)

7) Μόνος ὁ τῶν ὅλων δημιουργός, ὁ «ἀριστοτέχνας πατήρ,» τοιοῦτον ἄγαλμα ἔμψυχον ἡμᾶς τὸν ἀνθρώπον ἐπλασεν· ὁ δὲ Ὀλύμπιος ὑμῶν, εἰκόνας εἰκὼν, πολὺ τι τῆς ἀληθείας ἀπάδων, ἔργον ἐστὶ κωφὸν χειρῶν Ἀττικῶν. (**Clement of Alexandria**, *Protrepticus* X, 98, 3; ed. O. Stählin, t. I, p. 71)

None but the demiurge of the universe, the “Father, the supreme artist”, fashioned such a living statue, the human being; but your Olympian [Zeus], an image of an image, far removed from the truth, is a dumb lifeless work of Attic hands. (trans. G. W. Butterworth, with changes)

III. Unity of the Image

8) μυστικῶς οὖν ἐφ' ἡμῶν καὶ τὸ Πυθαγόρειον ἐλέγετο «ἕνα γενέσθαι καὶ τὸν ἀνθρώπον δεῖν», ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς εἷς, ἑνὸς ὄντος τοῦ θεοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἀμετάτρεπτον τοῦ ἀεὶ θεῖν τὰ ἀγαθὰ ἕξιν. αὐτίκα ὁ σωτὴρ διὰ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας συνανήρει καὶ τὸν θυμόν, τιμωρίας ὄντα ἐπιθυμίαν· καθόλου γὰρ τὸ παθητικὸν ** παντὶ γένει ἐπιθυμίας, εἰς δὲ τὴν ἀπάθειαν θεοῦμενος ἀνθρώπος ἀχράντως μοναδικὸς γίνεται. (**Clement of Alexandria**, *Stromata* IV, xxiii, 151, 3; ed. O. Stählin, t. II, p. 315)



Accordingly, that Pythagorean saying was mystically uttered respecting us: “That human being ought to become one”, for the high priest himself is one, God being one in the immutable state of the perpetual flow of good things. Now the Saviour has taken away wrath in and with lust, wrath being lust of vengeance. For universally liability to feelings belongs to every kind of desire; and the human being, when deified purely into a passionless state, becomes a unit. (trans. W. Wilson, with slight changes)

9) μάλλον δὲ μὴ τοῦτο νομίσωμεν συμβουλεύειν τὸν λόγον, τὸ ἐν δυάδι νοεῖσθαι τῶν κατωρθωκότων τὸν βίον· ἀλλ’ ἐπειδὴν ἐξαιρεθῆ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν φραγμοῦ τὸ τῆς κακίας μεσότοιχον, εἷς οἱ δύο τῆ πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον ἀνακράσει συμφυέντες γίνονται. ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν ἀπλοῦν τὸ θεῖον καὶ ἀσύνθετον καὶ ἀσχημάτιστον εἶναι πεπίστευται, ὅταν καὶ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον διὰ τῆς τοιαύτης εἰρηνοποιῆας ἔξω τῆς κατὰ τὴν διπλὴν συνθέσεως γένηται καὶ ἀκριβῶς εἰς τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐπανέλθῃ, ἀπλοῦν τε καὶ ἀσχημάτιστον καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἐν γενόμενον, ὡς ταῦτόν εἶναι τῷ κρυπτῷ τὸ φαινόμενον, καὶ τῷ φαινομένῳ τὸ κεκρυμμένον (**Gregory of Nyssa**, *Beat.* VII, GNO VII/2, pp. 160.17 - 161.1)

Better still, let us reckon that the Word recommends that our life should not be regarded in a duality of efforts towards rectitude, but when once the middle wall of vice which divides us inside has been removed, the two [flesh and spirit] grow together and become one by integration with the superior. Since therefore the Divinity is believed to be simple, uncompounded and without configuration, when humanity also by such peacemaking is freed from its dual composition and returns rightfully to the Good, it becomes simple, without configuration and genuinely one, so that the apparent is the same as the hidden and the hidden the same as the apparent. (trans. S. G. Hall, with slight changes)

IV. Fullness of the Image

10) Θεὸς τῆ ἑαυτοῦ φύσει πᾶν ὅτι πέρ ἐστι κατ’ ἔννοιαν λαβεῖν ἀγαθόν, ἐκεῖνό ἐστι μάλλον δὲ, παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ νοουμένου τε καὶ καταλαμβανομένου ἐπέκεινα ὦν, οὐ δὲ ἄλλο τι κτίζει τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ζωὴν ἢ διὰ τὸ ἀγαθὸς εἶναι· τοιοῦτος δὲ ὦν, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πρὸς τὴν δημιουργίαν τῆς ἡμετέρας φύσεως ὀρμήσας, οὐκ ἂν ἡμιτελῆ τὴν τῆς ἀγαθότητος ἐνεδείξατο δύναμιν, τὸ μὲν τι δοὺς ἐκ τῶν προσόντων αὐτῷ, τοῦ δὲ φθορήσας τῆς μετουσίας· [...] Διὰ τοῦτο περιληπτικῆ τῆ φωνῆ ἅπαντα συλλαβῶν ὁ λόγος ἐσήμανεν, ἐν τῷ εἰπεῖν, κατ’ εἰκόνα Θεοῦ γεγενῆσθαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον. XVI, 10-11 (ed. Forbes, p. 202): “ἴσον γὰρ ἐστι τοῦτο τῷ εἰπεῖν, ὅτι παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ μέτοχον τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν ἐποίησεν· εἰ γὰρ πλήρωμα μὲν ἀγαθῶν τὸ Θεῖον, ἐκεῖνου δὲ τοῦτο εἰκῶν· ἄρα ἐν τῷ πλήρης εἶναι παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ, πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον ἢ εἰκῶν ἔχει τὴν ὁμοιότητα (**Gregory of Nyssa**, *Op. hom.* 16, 10; ed. G. H. Forbes, p. 202)

God is in his own nature all that which our mind can conceive of good; rather, transcending all good that we can conceive or comprehend. He creates humankind for no reason other than that he is good; and being such, and having this as his reason for entering upon the creation of our nature, he would not exhibit the power of his goodness imperfectly, giving our nature some one of the things at his disposal, and grudging it a share of another [...]. The language of Scripture therefore expresses all concisely by a comprehensive phrase, in saying that humankind was made “in the image of God”: for this is the same as to say that he made human nature participant in all good; for if the Deity is the fullness of good, and this is his image, then the image finds its resemblance to the archetype in being filled with all good. (trans. H. A. Wilson with changes)



11) Ὅτι λόγῳ λύεται τὸ πρὸς τῶν αἰρετικῶν ἀπορούμενον ἡμῖν, πότερον τέλειος ἐπλάσθη ὁ Ἀδὰμ ἢ ἀτελής· ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν ἀτελής, πῶς τελείου θεοῦ ἀτελές τὸ ἔργον καὶ μάλιστα ἄνθρωπος; εἰ δὲ τέλειος, πῶς παραβαίνει τὰς ἐντολάς; ἀκούσονται γὰρ καὶ παρ' ἡμῶν ὅτι τέλειος κατὰ τὴν κατασκευὴν οὐκ ἐγένετο, πρὸς δὲ τὸ ἀναδέξασθαι τὴν ἀρετὴν ἐπιτήδειος· διαφέρει γὰρ δὴ πού ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν γεγονέναι ἐπιτήδειον πρὸς τὴν κτῆσιν αὐτῆς· ἡμᾶς δὲ ἐξ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν βούλεται σῶζεσθαι. αὕτη οὖν φύσις ψυχῆς ἐξ ἑαυτῆς ὁρμᾶν [...]. ἀλλ', ὡς ἔοικεν, «οὐκ ἔγνωσαν μυστήρια θεοῦ, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἔκτισεν τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐπὶ ἀφθαρσία καὶ εἰκόνα τῆς ἰδίας ιδιότητος ἐποίησεν αὐτόν», καθ' ἣν ιδιότητα τοῦ πάντα εἰδότης ὁ γνωστικὸς καὶ «δίκαιος καὶ ὅσιος μετὰ φρονήσεως» εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τελείας ἀφικνεῖσθαι σπεύδει. (**Clement of Alexandria**, *Stromata* VI, xii, 96.1 - 97.1; ed. O. Stählin, t. II, p. 480)

By which consideration is solved the question propounded to us by the heretics: whether Adam was created perfect or imperfect. Well, if imperfect, how could the work of a perfect God –above all, that work being humanity– be imperfect? And if perfect, how did he transgress the commandments? For they shall hear from us that he was not perfect in his creation, but adapted to the reception of virtue. For it is of great importance in regard to virtue to be made fit for its attainment. And it is intended that we should be saved by ourselves. This, then, is the nature of the soul, to move of itself. [...] But, as it seems, “They know not the mysteries of God; for God created human beings for immortality, and made them an image of his own identity”, according to which identity –of the One who knows all– the Gnostic, “righteous and holy with prudence”, hastes to reach the measure of perfect manhood. (trans. W. Wilson, with slight changes)

12) Καὶ ὡσπερ τὸν ἐπὶ τοῦ χαλκοῦ χαρακτῆρα Καίσαρος εἰκόνα λέγει τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, δι' οὗ μανθάνομεν κατὰ μὲν τὸ πρόσχημα τὴν ὁμοίωσιν εἶναι τοῦ μεμορφωμένου πρὸς Καίσαρα, ἐν δὲ τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ τὴν διαφορὰν ἔχειν· οὕτω καὶ κατὰ τὸν παρόντα λόγον, ἀντὶ χαρακτῆρων τὰ ἐπιθεωρούμενα τῇ τε θεῖα φύσει καὶ τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ κατανοήσαντες ἐν οἷς ἡ ὁμοιότης ἐστίν· ἐν τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ τὴν διαφορὰν ἐξευρίσκομεν, ἥτις ἐν τῷ ἀκτίστῳ καὶ τῷ κτιστῷ καθορᾶται (**Gregory of Nyssa**, *Op. hom.* 16, 13; ed. G. H. Forbes, p. 204)

As the Gospel calls the stamp upon the coin the image of Caesar, whereby we learn that in that which was fashioned to resemble Caesar there was resemblance as to outward look, but difference as to the substratum, so also in the present saying, when we consider the attributes contemplated both in the divine and human natures, in which the likeness consists, to be in the place of the features, we find the difference in the substratum, which we behold in the uncreated and the created. (trans. H. A. Wilson, with changes)

13) «τὸ δὲ σκᾶνος τοῖς λοιποῖς ὅμοιον, οἷα γεγονὸς ἐκ τᾶς αὐτᾶς ὕλας, ὑπὸ τεχνίτα δὲ εἰργασμένον λῶστω, ὃς ἐτεχνίτευσεν αὐτὸ ἀρχετύπῳ χρώμενος ἑαυτῷ». καὶ ὅλως ὁ Πυθαγόρας καὶ οἱ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ σὺν καὶ Πλάτῳ μάλιστα τῶν ἄλλων φιλοσόφων σφόδρα τῷ νομοθέτῃ ὠμίλησαν, ὡς ἐστὶν ἐξ αὐτῶν συμβαλέσθαι τῶν δογμάτων. (**Clement of Alexandria**, *Stromata* V, v, 29, 2-3; ed. O. Stählin, t. II, p. 344)

“And the bodily tent is similar to the other things, as being made of the same matter, and fashioned by the best artificer, who wrought it taking himself as the archetype”. And generally, Pythagoras and his followers along with Plato were much better acquainted with the Lawgiver than the other philosophers, as may be concluded from their doctrines. (trans. W. Wilson, with slight changes)