Contents

THE IMAGE OF GOD IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS—
A STUDY OF TERMINOLOGY[1]

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THE basic facts about the phrase " image of God " in the Hebrew Bible are sufficiently familiar, and need be only briefly recapitulated here. The phrase is found only in the book of Genesis, and therein only in three places. At Genesis i. 26 God says, " let us make man in our image, like our likeness ". (The nouns are *ṣelem* and *d'mut* respectively. The translation is of a somewhat literal type, and throughout this lecture, for the benefit of those who do not have Hebrew, constant translation equivalences will be used, e.g. *ṣelem* will as far as possible be consistently rendered " image "). The next verse, i. 27, goes on to say that God created man in his image ; in the image of God he created him. This is the first, and the most notable and striking, place where the " image " terminology appears. Secondly, in Genesis v. 1 the text reads somewhat as follows : " in the day when God created man, in the likeness of God he made him " (here again I use consistent renderings of *bara* as " create " and *'aśa* as " make "), and then it goes on to tell that Adam, the first man, was 130 years old and " he begat a son in his likeness, like his image, and called his name Seth ". Thirdly, in Genesis ix. 6, after permission has been given for man to kill animals for food, God forbids the killing of man and, in a poetically compressed phrase, goes on :

He who sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed ; for in the image of God he made man.

These are all the passages which use the phrase " image of God ". There is indeed the place Psalms viii. 6f. :

What is man, that thou rememberest him, or the son of man, that thou attendest to him ?
Thou makest him a little deficient in comparison with the divine (angelic) beings, and thou crownest him with honour and glory ;

Thou makest him rule over the works of thy hand; thou hast put everything under
    his feet . . .

This poetical passage is customarily associated with Genesis i,
and indeed it has close similarities with the thought of the latter;
it is likely to represent an earlier stage of the same tradition which
has come to later expression in Genesis.   Nevertheless, and indeed
for this very reason, it is also important to observe that it does
not use the term " image of God ", or any other term in the
semantic field of " image, likeness, similarity ", but remains
within the semantic fields of " honour " and of " glory, beauty ".
Thus the image terminology remains peculiar to the Genesis
passages, and all of these, according to the generally accepted
source analysis, belong to the same source (" P "), which may be
dated after 500 B.C.   By contrast, the older (" J ") story of the
origin of man (Gen. ii. 7) uses no image terms at all and says
nothing about what man was *like*.   It tells rather *of what* he was
made, i.e. dust from the earth, and it adds that God breathed
into this man of dust the breath of life, so that he became a
living being, *nepeš ḥayya*.

In the past a very great amount of exegetical energy has been
devoted to the understanding of the idea " image of God ".
The isolation of the phrase, combined with its highly strategic
position, makes it a very debatable subject and yet at the same
time one upon which serious consequences depend.   In general,
much of the traditional exegesis seems to have sought a *referential*
meaning for the phrase, and one which could moreover be defined
or stated in terms other than those which the Genesis writer
himself used.   It has operated as if there must be some identifi-
able entity or relation which could be otherwise stated, and that
entity or relation is the reference of the phrase " image of God ",
the thing to which the phrase refers.   The exegetical operation
then tries to identify this entity.   From this operation, which
from its effects in this instance might be termed the blood-out-of-
a-stone process, it comes to be decided that the image of God in
man consists in his reason and intellectual capacity, or in his
upright physical posture (these two are the extreme positions, the
ultimate spiritual and the ultimate physical interpretations), or in
his ability to rule and dominate, or in his bisexual nature as man

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and woman, and so forth.   To these profound questions this lecture will supply no answer, because there is no answer to be found, and the putting of the question in this form arises from a misunderstanding of the literary characteristics and the spiritual situation of the P writer.   There is no reason to believe that this writer had in his mind any definite idea about the content or the location of the image of God.   There were reasons in the past development of Israelite thinking about the relation between God and man, and in the particular kind of literary work upon which P was engaged, which made it important for him to express the existence of a likeness between man and God ; but there were also, in the same development and especially in the whole delicacy and questionability, according to Israelite thought, of any idea of analogies to God and representations of God in the world, very powerful reasons why the subject could not be more narrowly or more exactly expressed without the danger that the whole attempt might be ruined.

In trying to explore more fully the phrase " image of God ", therefore, we shall not try to define an entity to which the phrase referred, and there are two other modes of exploration to which we can give attention.   One of these is to consider the past development of Israelite thinking, already mentioned above, about the whole problem of likenesses, similarities, analogies and representations applicable to God.   If we do this we may see some of the forces which led the P writer to express himself in the way in which he did.   I have tried to work this out in greater detail elsewhere,[1] and shall give only a brief resumé here.   I suggest that the P writer, in his development of the " image of God " terminology, was much influenced by the work of Deutero-Isaiah, whom I take to have been somewhat earlier, or alternatively to have been more or less contemporary with the circles in which this aspect of the P tradition originated.   There are deep similarities between Deutero-Isaiah and P : the emphasis on creation, the universality of vision, the emphatic monotheism, the assurance of the incomparability and uniqueness of the God

[1] In my " The Image of God in Genesis—some Linguistic and Historical Considerations ", to be published in the Proceedings of the Tenth Meeting (1967) of Die Ou-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika.

of Israel.   P would also have shared his hostility to all worship of graven images.   But the great prophet of the exile pressed this hostility so zealously, and denied so emphatically any analogy to God from the side of the world (" to whom will you liken God, and what likeness will you set against him ? "), as to leave it possible that nothing existed in the world which had any relation or analogy to God.   He thus posed a question which he himself did nothing to answer ; and he himself did not require to answer it because, being a prophet, he was by no means trying to give an ordered or reasoned account of the world, of man, or of the origin of man.   To give such an ordered or reasoned account was, however, just what the P document undertook to do, and in this context, where man as man was being described within an organized world, the question could not be avoided whether there was anything in this world—in this world which, it was granted, could not furnish out of itself any comparisons or analogies with God—which had any special or peculiar relation with God.   The placing of man in such a special position is the function of the term " image of God " ; if it were absent from the structure of Genesis i, the effect would be that man was only a dominant animal.   One way, then, in which we may try to state the " content " of the image of God is to examine the reasons in the history of Hebrew thought which made this affirmation, at this time, significant.   Another way is to consider its function in the structure of the creation story as a whole.   Thirdly, however, something may perhaps be done by a deeper examination of the terminology employed, which may help us to see why, out of a group of terms which overlap within roughly the same semantic field, the writer chose the particular ones which he did choose. This is what I shall now attempt.

We shall take, therefore, a group or bundle of Hebrew words which may be said to lie in the semantic field of " image, likeness, similarity " and which *prima facie* appear to be in some way relevant to the expression of relations between God and man. Rather than concentrating on the one word *ṣelem* " image " and trying to squeeze from it alone a decisive oracle about its meaning (an approach which is not greatly modified by our doing the same thing for *d'mut* " likeness " also), we look at a whole group of

words and hope that meaning may be indicated by the choice of one word rather than another within this group.   The basis for procedure, then, is an approach to meanings not as direct relations between one word and the referent which it indicates, but as functions of choices within the lexical stock of a given language at a given time ; it is the choice, rather than the word itself, which signifies.

Now in assembling a group of words which might form the set within which *selem* " image " stands, we have no absolutely objective criterion to guide us.   Semantic groupings of this kind are not formally dictated.   The group which I shall suggest for this examination is my own production, and I do not doubt that other sets might equally well be assembled.   The group I shall consider consists of eight words, which, with the standard renderings used, somewhat arbitrarily, in this lecture, are :

selem	" image "
d'mut	" likeness "
mar'e	" appearance "
t'muna	" shape "
tabnit	" design "
pesel	" graven idol "
masseka	" cast idol "
semel	" statue ".

Now to say just a little more about each of these.   I begin from the fact that *selem* " image " can be used for a physical representation, like a statue of a deity, and I therefore include three other words for such representations, *pesel, masseka* and *semel*.   There is an antecedent probability that the term " image of God " might suggest, and might therefore require some delimitation against, the then familiar use of images or idols of the divine ; moreover, as a matter of historical development, it is not unlikely that the appearance of the term " image of God " in the late source P was itself a reflex of the fact that idolatry had now been decisively expelled from the Israelite cult.   We take these terms, then, as part of our group.   That *d'mut* " likeness " must be added goes without saying, for the book of Genesis itself adds it. But if we include it we must also add *mar'e* " appearance ", a word

which appears in the roughly contemporary source Ezekiel and is used in his description of his vision of God; moreover, it is used in combination with *d'mut* and in connection with the place of the human form in the manifestation of the divine, e.g. Ezekiel i. 26:

w'' al d'mut ha-kisse d'mut k'mar'e 'adam
and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness like the appearance of man.

We must add *t'muna* " shape " because it is on the one hand closely associated with *pesel* in prohibitions and on the other hand appears in passages concerning the seeing of God (Num. xii. 8, where Moses sees uniquely the *t'muna* of God, or Ps. xvii. 15); it is also found of what we would call a ghost or apparition (Job iv. 16, " there is a shape before my eyes ").

Finally we add *tabnit*, which means a " design, model, pattern ", and in particular the plan of a building, from which the builder works, so that he produces an actual building corresponding to the plan. Apart from its own general importance, there is a special reason for the consideration of this word. There is only one place, apart from the phrase about the image of God, in which the P source states an analogy positively affirmed between something on earth and something divine, and this is the construction of the tabernacle. According to Exodus xxv. 40, the tabernacle was built in accordance with (Hebrew simply *b'* " in ") a *tabnit* which had been shown to Moses in the mountain. The P source had two great events in which something was made in an express analogy: firstly, man himself, created in the image of God, and, secondly, the tabernacle, built by men after a pattern revealed by God. The likelihood of the connection here is strengthened when we consider the familiar tendency of the P source to use serial runs of major events, such as the series of divine revelations or covenants (Noah, Abraham and Moses) and the series of divine names (Elohim, El Shaddai, Yahweh). Moreover, there is a detailed but very important linguistic fact which provides further confirmation: I suggest that the term " in ", as used in " in the image of God ", is exactly the same phenomenon as the " in " used of the *tabnit* or design of the tabernacle at Exodus xxv. 40: *b'tabnitam '*ser 'atta mor'a ba-har*, " according to the design of them, which you were shown in the

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mountain ". This is no novel interpretation of my own, but was in many classic works, though in recent years it has often been displaced in favour of the explanation through the so-called *beth essentiae*. This latter interpretation would suggest a meaning which we might represent by saying that man was created ~~as the image of God, i.e. to be the image of God~~. The use of " in " with this sense, close to " as ", is found in sentences like " The God of my father is my help " (Exod. xviii. 4, with " in " preceding " my help "). But I think it unlikely for our Genesis passage (*a*) because it seems to be absent from the style of P and (*b*) because *b* " in ", when used in this way, seems to indicate a property of the subject, and not of the object, of the verb (if there is one, as in most good cases there is not).[1] The interpretation after the *b* " in " of a model or pattern seems therefore to be better, and this if true confirms the relevance of the *tabnit* or design to our study.

Having assembled our group of words, we shall now look at some characteristics of them. One interesting way in which words can be classified is by considering whether they are transparent or opaque.[2] Transparency, very roughly, means that the user feels not only that the word has a meaning but that you can see through it to some kind of reason why it has that meaning. When this condition is absent, the word is opaque. English *glove* is opaque; the speaker knows what it is, but not why. German *Handschuh* is transparent because it is made up from elements which appear to explain *why* it is called *what* it is called. A sort of derivational transparency is important in several of our Hebrew words. *Pesel* not only means " graven image " (of a god) but can be seen to mean it because it suggests the verb *pasal* " cut or carve stone ". *Masseka* means " statue made by casting " and is transparently connected with the verb *nasak* " pour "; the connection is somewhat like that of *giessen, Guss* in German. This is not an etymological or historical method; I am not talking about what was there before something else, but only saying that one form appeared to derive transparency

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[1] See in more detail my paper cited above.

[2] See S. Ullmann, *Semantics* (Oxford, 1964), esp. chapter 4.

from reference to the other ; the other is commonly in the case of Hebrew (a) a verb, (b) more common in actual usage, (c) more general in its use and range of meaning. Again, I am not speaking about the sense of the " root " of the word ; the question is not what is meant by the root, but what is meant by the words in actual usage which suggest themselves as sources of derivational transparency. Thus, to continue with our series, d'mut is transparently connected with dama " be like ", mar'e with ra'a " see ", and tabnit with bana " build ". In fact, of our eight words, the five just mentioned have a high degree of trans- parency, and only three are relatively opaque : semel, t'muna, and the major word itself, i.e. selem " image ". ·

It is true that suggestions about selem have sometimes been made which, if true, might make this word rather less opaque. Our dictionaries sometimes tell us that it is derived from a verb which (if it existed in Hebrew, as it does not) would be salam " cut " and would give us a derivation analogous to that of the transparent pesel, i.e. " something cut out ", so that, as Nöldeke put it, a selem is ein Schnitzbild. But the basis for this explanation is thin. The Arabic verb cited is said to mean " cut off " or rather " pluck out ", with the usual object an ear or nose, and it is quite uncertain whether this would have been significant for our purposes. Moreover, Arabic itself formed no word " image " from this root, but used sanam, which can be plausibly explained as an adoption of the Aramaic word, cognate with the Hebrew. It is, in fact, whatever we may surmise about ultimate etymo- logical origins, most unlikely that any word existed in Hebrew and the closely neighbouring Semitic languages in such a way as to provide derivational transparency to selem. The probability is that the past history of selem is a noun history, and such verbs as came into existence from this root, e.g. Syr. sallem " to form ", Jewish Aramaic sallem " provide with sculpture " (Dalman, Handwörterbuch, p. 363b) and later Hebrew sillem " depict, photograph " came into existence later and are dependent on selem for their transparency, rather than the reverse. Thus selem was opaque and lacked reference to any verb in common use.

This is important, because certain of the words in our group may well have been unacceptable to the Genesis writer precisely

because of these associations with verbs. *D'mut*, the one easily transparent word which he did use, was related to the straight-forward verb *dama* " be like " and created no serious obstacle. But *mar'e* was unsuitable because it clearly suggested that God might be *seen*—not an absolutely impossible assertion at all times in ancient Israel, but unthinkable for the careful and explicit P writer. *Tabnit* was also unusable because, if consulted for its transparency, it suggested the human activity of building. Moreover, although I have emphasized the relation between the image of God in man and the design for the building of the tabernacle, this relation was far from an identity : men built the tabernacle after a design previously revealed, but God created man directly and not on the basis of an intervening revealed pattern.

Not all the nouns which were unusable by the writer, however, were so on the grounds of difficulty with the verbs they suggested. In *pesel* and *masseka* the associated verbs were in fact neutral or indeed more favourable, in relation to the religious structure of the time, than were the nouns themselves. The verb *pasal* " cut stone " was used in so favourable a connection as the manu-facture by Moses of the tables of the law, and *nasak* " pour " as a verb was also often favourable.   It is when we review our group by another standard that we see why certain words were unsuitable. *Pesel* and *masseka* were both the normal designation for an object always evil, explicitly forbidden by the ancient laws.   *Semel* also is invariably negative.   Some of the other words were in this respect neutral : *mar'e* and *d'mut* were not used in the ancient laws against idolatry.   Some words, though not always negative and sometimes religiously positive, were nevertheless used nega-tively a good deal. This is true of *t'muna* " shape ".   This word is opaque; even if it could somehow be associated with *min* " kind, species " (a word much used by the P writer), which is doubtful, this would not provide any transparency for the sense.   There is no verb related to it.   But *by collocation* this word is very closely connected with the idea of *seeing*, and this might put it in the same class as *mar'e*, though for a different reason.   Its most positive occurrences are connected, as we have said above, with the seeing of God ; while, negatively, an

emphatic sentence in Deuteronomy insists (iv. 12, 15) that at the holy mountain the Israelites heard a voice but saw no *t'muna*, and this leads straight on to a strict insistence, thrice repeated (iv. 16, 23, 25), that they must fabricate no graven image which would be a *t'muna* of anything. Indeed, the word occurs in the strict prohibition of the Decalogue in both its forms (Exodus xx. 4, Deut. v. 8). Thus, though the word had occurred in favourable contexts, these extremely unfavourable ones, along with the history of connection with the idea of seeing, may have made its use more difficult. *Tabnit* " design ", though used very positively by P of the tabernacle, also had a negative past history, having been repeatedly used by Deuteronomy in these same prohibitions (five times in Deut. iv. 16-18), specifying a design male or female, an animal design, a bird design, a reptile design, or a fish design. By the criterion of religious positivity or negativity, then, these words were ambivalent.

By the same criterion *ṣelem* " image " seems also to have been somewhat ambivalent. It is used, but not very frequently, of the idolatrous images which Israel was commanded to ignore or to destroy, seven times perhaps in the whole Hebrew Bible. So for instance Numbers xxxiii. 52, you must destroy the *ṣalme massekotam* " the images of their cast idols ", and Amos v. 26. Moreover, Numbers xxxiii is, by the customary analysis, a P passage, and if this is true it means that *ṣelem* does not appear in a single one of the pre-P laws against idolatry—a very striking fact, considering the way in which these laws tend to heap up together a number of the words within our group, e.g. Deuteronomy iv. 16, " a graven idol, the shape of any statue, a design male or female ". Even in Numbers xxxiii. 52 it does not occur alone but in combination with the invariably negative *masseka*. These facts may be thrown further into relief by a consideration of Canaanite and Aramaic usage, to which we shall shortly come. Meanwhile, in an earlier source in Hebrew at I Samuel vi. 5, *ṣelem* is used of propitiatory models of tumours which had been inflicted by a plague, and, while these objects are made by Philistines (and therefore doubtless by idolaters), the tradition does not look unfavourably upon this incident, which is indeed a part of the due repentance of the Philistines and of their restitution of

stolen property. Moreover, the objects are not images of the divine, nor are they objects of worship. Thus ṣelem, though unquestionably usable as the name of a physical imitation of something, did not therefore necessarily and simply designate it as idolatrous and evil.

The ambivalence of ṣelem is increased by the two instances in the Psalms (xxxix. 7, lxxiii. 20), neither of which refer to a visible or physical "image" or representation at all. In the former, "indeed man walks in ṣelem", there appears to be a certain parallel with hebel "futility"; and in the latter the context appears to suggest the hazy vision retained on waking from a dream. Now there are two ways of explaining this usage in the Psalms, apparently aberrant. One is to say that this is our same word ṣelem "image", and that it has been extended by a path which involves the opposition of "image" against "substance" or "reality". This is the line followed by some major works of reference.[1] The alternative line is to say that this is a quite different word, which in Hebrew has become homonymous, but which has its cognate in Arabic ẓalama and the corresponding Ethiopic word "be dark", from which we have also in Hebrew ṣalmawet, traditionally taken as "shadow of death" but now generally held to be "darkness, obscurity". I myself am inclined to favour the latter as the historical view of the development of this ṣelem, mainly because we do not have much analogy in Hebrew for a semantic development from "image" into "mere image", i.e. "image devoid of reality, mere semblance". In any case, whether it was a semantic development of "one word" or a coalescence of two words, originally distinct, into homonyms, it is likely that the semantic content came to overlap, the component "image" and the component "dark, obscure reality" coming to penetrate one another. Thus, whatever the historical origin of the ṣelem of the Psalms, it furnished a component which was in no way linked to the matter of idols and idolatry, which thereby reduced the statistical degree to which ṣelem suggested these undesirable entities, and which thereby possibly made it

[1] BDB, p. 854a: "figuratively = mere, empty, image, semblance"; so also GB. KB may have intended a separation between two words ṣelem, but did not carry it out.

more suitable as a term to indicate the relation between God and man.

If these considerations are valid, they indicate some aspects of the motivation which may have inclined the P writer to express himself in just the way he did, and to choose the item *ṣelem* " image " out of the group of words which had been made available to him by the antecedent tradition of religious assertion on related themes. In putting it in this way I do not aver that the writer had no choice but to use a term from the group thus made available to him by past history. I do not suppose that an existing lexical stock has so deterministic a control over the expression of new ideas. But this writer was a somewhat traditionalist writer, and probably tried to express himself in ways which had continuity with what had been said before his time. Though he created, as we see it today, substantial new departures in religious tradition, nothing was probably farther from his mind than the idea that he was an innovator. In this kind of religious tradition new ideas were espoused, but espoused only by putting them through a process which represented them as traditional. The symbol of this kind of tradition is the person of Moses the law-giver : the more the Israelite law was adapted to fit changed circumstances and to allow for developments in religious thought, the more assuredly and emphatically it was ascribed to a Mosaic origin. What I suggest is that, given this traditionalist approach, the choice of *ṣelem* as the major word for the relation between God and man becomes intelligible, even at a stage at which we have still not determined what entity constituted the image of God in man, and even granting the possibility that the P writer himself did not know.

We should add at this point an interesting contrast between *ṣelem* " image " and *semel*, which we rendered as " statue ". If we leave the Bible itself for the moment and look at its cultural environment, one of our sources is the Canaanite and Aramaic incriptions, and many of these inscriptions come from statues, reliefs and other artistic representations. In these inscriptions it is naturally not uncommon to meet phraseology such as " this statue ". Now in the Canaanite group of languages (which include Phoenician and the later Punic as well as Hebrew) the

characteristic word used in this phrase is *sml*, the same as our
Hebrew *semel*.   In the Aramaic inscriptions, on the other hand,
ṣalmā, cognate with our Hebrew word " image ", is very common.[1]
Precisely in accord with this, the Aramaic part of Daniel uses the
same word repeatedly with the sense " statue ".   Now the point
of this is as follows.   While in Aramaic this word was statistically
very strongly associated with the particular sense " statue ", for
which physical object it was the absolutely normal designation,
this was not the case in Hebrew or other Canaanite dialects (so
far as we can be sure from the inscriptions at present extant).
While in Hebrew the word could indeed, as we have seen, be
applied to the images used in worship in Canaanite religions, it
was not the normal designation for them and its use may therefore
not have suggested them so inevitably.   The case of *semel* is the
converse.   Though a normal word in other Canaanite dialects,
indeed *because* it was such a word and with this meaning, in
Hebrew this was invariably taken in a negative and unfavourable
sense.   The origin of this *semel* seems not to be clearly known.
In the Hebrew Bible it occurs only five times : once in the strict
prohibition of Deuteronomy iv. 16, twice in the phrase literally
" the statue of jealousy " (Ezek. viii. 3, 5) and twice in Chronicles
(II Chron. xxxiii. 7, 15).   It is very probable that in Chronicles
it was used as a substitute for the name of the horrible idol Ashera ;
this word itself is found in the duplicate text, II Kings xxi. 7.
Chronicles was not unwilling to use the word Ashera so long as
the reference was to the removal or the destruction of these
objects, or so long as it could be construed as Asherim in other
places such as idolatrous country shrines ; but this particular
Ashera was explicitly stated to have been placed in the Jerusalem
temple, and this was too much for the Chronicler (*a*) because the
very idea was offensive and (*b*) because Manasseh, in his view,
was later to repent.[2]   The Ezekiel passages may well refer to an

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[1] See for example C.-F. Jean and J. Hoftijzer, *Dictionnaire des inscriptions
sémitiques de l'ouest*, s.vv., and H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und
aramäische Inschriften*, glossary, s.vv.

[2] For another example of the Chronicler's dislike of the Ashera, see my article
" Seeing the Wood for the Trees ?—An Enigmatic Ancient Translation ", in
Journal of Semitic Studies, xiii (1968), 11-20.

Ashera also.   In any case it is clear that the use of *semel* in biblical Hebrew carried with it an overwhelmingly negative impression. The adoption of *selem* " image " as a positive theological term was relatively free from the same kind of negative heritage ; had the Genesis writer been writing in Aramaic, it is possible that he would have had to choose a different term.

In conclusion we have to say something about the use of the other term, *d'mut* " likeness ". Of the various words in our group, this one stood, in point of usability, fairly close to *selem*. Yet few would question that, although our writer uses both words, it is *selem* rather than *d'mut* which takes the major place.   One possible reason is the following.   In Hebrew theological usage, the word *d'mut* had been used mainly in a rather specialized stream, namely the theophanic tradition, and particularly in Ezekiel's contribution to it.   These Ezekiel passages concern the manifestation of God ; they answer the question, " What is it like when God is manifested in the world ? ". But the question in Genesis is probably not " What is God like ? " but " What is man like ? "   He is saying not primarily that God's likeness is man, but that man is in a relation of likeness to God.   Though Genesis generally uses both words together, when the writer does use one only it is usually *selem* (thrice) and only once *d'mut* (Gen. v. 1, in a passage of less prominence and lower intrinsic importance than, say, ix. 6). *The second to stress the 1st*

Why then were the two words used, and not one only ? The probability is that, though *selem* is the more important word, it is also the more novel and the more ambiguous.   *D'mut is* added in order to define and limit its meaning, by indicating that the sense intended for *selem* must lie within that part of its range which overlaps with the range of *d'mut*.   This purpose having been accomplished when both words are used together at the first mention, it now becomes possible to use one of the two alone subsequently without risk of confusion.   In later exegesis, the loss of sense for this literary device caused interpreters to suppose that the " image " might be one thing and the " likeness " some quite other thing.

Why is it that, having placed " image " first and " likeness " after it, the writer later varies the word order and puts *d'mut*

" likeness " first (v. 3) ?   One reason might be that he is here
no longer talking about the image of God, but about the likeness
and image of Adam in his son Seth ; the considerations about the
theophanic tradition, which affected priorities in the matter of the
image of God, here no longer apply.   Another reason may be
that the writer, unlike many of his later interpreters, is anxious
to avoid the hardening and systematization of the language he
uses.   He was a careful writer, but not a woodenly unchanging
one.   One of his stylistic characteristics is his habit of alter-
nating a major and a minor word which have roughly the same
function in his scheme.   The best illustration is in the verbs
" create " and " make ", *bara* and *'aśa*, in the same passage.   The
major word is *bara*, and the writer sets it down in his very first
sentence.   Thereafter he rings the changes.   God " created "
the heavens and the earth, but he " made " the firmament ; later
he " made " also the heavenly bodies.   He " created " the *tan-
ninim* or sea-monsters and all the watery beings (i. 21) but he
" made " the land animals (i. 25).   He said that man should
now be " made ", and then he " created " him.   In the end, on
the first Sabbath, he rested from all the work which he " created
to make ", *bara la'aśot* (ii. 3).   Again, at v. 1, in the day when
God " created " man, in the likeness of God he " made " him ;
male and female he " created " them.

This instance confirms the limitations which must attach to a
referential theory of meaning, when it is applied to the exegesis
of literary texts of this kind.   It is impossible to maintain that the
action designated by the word " create " is a different action from
that designated by the word " make ".   The referent, the actual
entity being referred to, is the same for both ; what is different is
what is being said about that referent.   The reasons why the
writer varies between " create " and " make " must be left aside
for the present ; let it suffice that they present a good, though
not a complete, analogy to his treatment of the terms " image "
and " likeness ".

The image of God and its terminology, if the approach of
this lecture is right, provide a good example of a biblical concept
which cannot be lifted out of the literary context in which it
stands, that is, the creation story of the P writer, and, more widely,

his whole presentation of the early history up to the time of Moses. His terminology, when seen within the context of his situation and his literary work, had been moulded by questions and concerns different in character from the problems which have generally been in the minds of those who have sought to identify the content and location of the image of God in man.

* Ibid. p. 293.