

IMAGES
OF
THE
SPIRIT

IMAGES
OF
THE
SPIRIT

Meredith G. Kline

Wipf and Stock Publishers
EUGENE, OREGON

Wipf and Stock Publishers
199 West 8th Avenue, Suite 3
Eugene, Oregon 97401

Images of the Spirit
By Kline, Meredith G.
Copyright©1980 Kline, Meredith G.
ISBN: 1-57910-205-0
Publication date: January, 1999
Previously published by Baker Book House, 1980.

to the grace of murielangelo

Contents

Preface	9
Chapter One: The Glory-Spirit and His Human Image	13
The Glory-Spirit at the Creation	13
The Glory-Spirit as Archetype	20
Toward a Reconstruction of the Image-of-God Concept	26
Chapter Two: A Priestly Model of the Image of God	35
The Tabernacle—A Replica of the Glory-Spirit	35
Aaron’s Robes—A Replica of the Glory-Tabernacle .	42
Glory-Investiture in the New Testament	47
Image-Investiture and Covenant	50
Chapter Three: A Prophetic Model of the Image of God . .	57
The Prophet as Image of the Glory-Spirit	57
Mediators of the Prophetic Image in the Old Testament	64
Moses	64
The Angel of the Presence	70
The Angel and Deity	70
The Angel as a Prophet	75
The Angel as Mediator of the Image	79
Christ and the Prophetic Image	81
Jesus as Antitypical Moses-Prophet	81
Jesus, the Angel of the Lord Incarnate	82
The Prophetic Model in Messianic Re-creation of the Image of God	84
Chapter Four: The Spirit-Presence and His <i>Parousia</i>-Day . .	97
Primal <i>Parousia</i>	97
The Voice of Yahweh	98
The Spirit of the Day	102
The Day of the Spirit	106
The Primal <i>Parousia</i> and the Old Testament	115
The Primal <i>Parousia</i> and the New Testament	121
Index of Biblical References	133

Preface

Some of the central ideas of this monograph were originally developed in the course of writing another book, still forthcoming. Because they had a special importance of their own and invited treatment beyond what might be given to them in the other work, I wrote them up in the form of two articles, published in *The Westminster Theological Journal*: “Creation in the Image of the Glory-Spirit” (39 [1977]: 250–72) and “Investiture with the Image of God” (40 [1977]: 39–62). Following certain new exegetical paths that came into view in the process of writing those articles led to a third article in the series, “Primal Parousia” (40 [1978]: 245–80). Meanwhile, a fourth study was taking shape as I discovered the story of creation in the image of the Glory-Spirit emerging again in my analysis of the nature of the Old Testament prophets. That study of the prophetic embodiment of the *imago Dei* will be found in the present work as chapter three. By the kind permission of the editors of *The Westminster Theological Journal*, the three articles published there appear here, slightly revised, as chapters one, two, and four.

As it turned out, then, the findings reported in chapter 1 opened up and illuminated further unanticipated areas of exploration. Since the demonstration of such heuristic capability is a fair test of the validity of an interpretative model, the case for the soundness of the general exegesis and thesis offered in chapter 1 rests to a considerable extent on the cumulative force of the confirmatory evidence supplied by the studies in the subsequent chapters.

Among those engaged in biblical exegesis it is a familiar experience to find that one’s discoveries were discovered by others long ago—we have simply stumbled upon something that had been lost sight of for a while. How little serious attention has been given for quite

a long while to the subject of the cloud-theophany (referred to as "the Spirit" in the title of this book) is evident from the fact that a doctoral dissertation prepared at the Pontifical Biblical Institute (and recently published in the series *Analecta Biblica*) is allegedly the first extensive monograph ever produced on that subject. And it is a Spanish publication by a Basque Jesuit, J. Luzarraga.¹ His examination of discussions of the theme of the theophanic cloud in early postbiblical times discloses, however, that early interpreters within Judaism, and early Christian writers as well, were already making some of the same key connections as are proposed in the present work between certain of the relevant biblical ideas and texts.²

But what is thus lost by way of the supposed originality of one's insights is gained by way of support from antiquity for their substantiality. Besides, it would still appear that there is some breaking of fresh ground in the following pages, especially when it comes to the basic concept of the paradigm function of the theophanic Glory-cloud in the creation of the image of God and to the identification of the major symbolic models employed in Scripture to expound the nature of the divine image in man.

The theme of the *imago Dei* is not presented here in the manner of doctrines in a volume of systematic theology. These are exegetical studies of a biblico-theological character, which, as has been indicated, simply sprouted in unexpected directions in what was for me, at least, a process of discovery. It is hoped, however, that these studies will contribute to the development of the doctrine of the *imago Dei* in

1. *Las tradiciones de la nube en la biblia y en el judaismo primitivo* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1973). Curiously, at about the same time, a Th.M. dissertation on the subject of the Spirit and the cloud theophany was prepared by Meredith M. Kline at Westminster Theological Seminary. (On this, see below, chapter one, note 5.) Luzarraga's work came into my hands only a few days ago and I became aware of it belatedly only a few weeks ago through the review-summary of it by Leopold Sabourin, "The Biblical Cloud," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 4 (1974): 290-311.

2. The general neglect of these ancient exegetical suggestions has perhaps been due in part to the fact that they came at times in contexts informed by hermeneutical approaches of an allegorical or otherwise unacceptable sort. Moreover, the stark supernaturalism of the Shekinah phenomenon scares off the typical modern interpreter. Symptomatic of this, even Luzarraga, impressed though he is with the importance of his subject and concerned to rescue it from oblivion, avoids the question of what literal reality, if any, stood behind the biblical tradition of the miraculous cloud.

systematic theology, first, by adding (in effect) a considerable quantity of relevant data to the scriptural basis of our thinking on this subject and, second, by sketching in general outline a way the doctrine might be restructured so as to fit more squarely on this biblical base.

Overlooked though it has been, the idea of creation in the image of the Glory-Spirit is, in fact, a foundational and pervasive theme in the Scriptures. We come upon it in historical narration, symbolic representation in the cultus, didactic exposition, and eschatological expectation. The present work merely suggests selectively something of these biblical riches. Waiting to be pursued further also is the relationship of the *imago Dei* to certain other major biblical concepts. Once it is seen that God the Spirit in his theophanic Presence is the divine paradigm in the creation of the image of God, a conceptual overlap, if not synonymity, will be recognized between the *imago Dei* and concepts like messiahship and the Spirit's filling or baptism of God's people. And to perceive that it is the same Spirit by whose charismatic enduing the church is qualified to fulfill the great commission who also, as Paradigm-Creator of man in the image of God, endowed him to execute the cultural commission, is to possess a vital coherence factor for working out a unified world-and-life field theory, inclusive of creation and redemption and, within the area of the redemptive accomplishment of God's creation designs, comprehensive of both holy and common vocations.

Over and again in the following chapters, usually at a climactic point, attention turns to the Book of Revelation. From the way these studies evolved it will be obvious that I cannot claim that any semblance of a symphonic quality that might be produced by this recurrence of the Apocalypse theme is the premeditated product of conscious artistry. My constant returning to the Apocalypse is just a natural by-product of a love for this fascinating capstone of biblical revelation that goes back to student days.

I want to express my special gratitude to my son, Meredith M. Kline, and to his wife, Miriam—to Meredith for our continuing conversation over the years on the leading ideas of this work and to Miriam for her kindness in preparing the typescript for the publisher.

Chapter One

The Glory-Spirit and His Human Image

When defining the *imago Dei*, dogmatic theology has traditionally tended to engage in an analysis of what constitutes humanness. But to answer the general question “What is man?” is not the same thing as answering the precise question “What is the image of God?”. If our objective is to discern what the biblical idea of the image of God is, it would appear necessary to abandon the traditional dogmatic wineskins, go back to the beginning of Genesis, and start afresh.

In the present chapter we will engage in some exegetical exploration and then outline the approach to the *imago Dei* concept that is suggested by our exegetical findings. A new key element will emerge in the exegetical picture—such will be our claim—the discovery that the theophanic Glory was present at the creation and was the specific divine model or referent in view in the creating of man in the image of God.

The Glory-Spirit at the Creation

After the declaration of the creation of things invisible and visible in the beginning (Gen. 1:1),¹ the biblical record notes conditions in the visible world calling for divine action: the “earth” was in a state of unbounded deep-and-darkness (Gen. 1:2a). Then the presence of the Creator who would make light shine in the darkness and set bounds to

1. For the interpretation of “the heavens” of Genesis 1:1 as the invisible heavens and their hosts, see Nehemiah 9:5ff.; (cf. Ps. 103:19f.); Psalm 148:1–4; Colossians 1:16. Note also that as the Genesis 1 account continues, the visible heavens emerge as a derivative of what is called “the earth” in verses 1 and 2.

the waters is affirmed in the remarkable statement: "The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2b).

The verb used in verse 2b (*m^eraḥēpēt*) occurs again in the Pentateuch² only in Deuteronomy 32:11. There, by the use of this verb, the divine activity in leading Israel through "the waste howling wilderness" (v. 10) on the way to Canaan is likened to that of an eagle hovering protectively over its young, spreading out its wings to support them, and so guiding them on to maturity. In Exodus 19:4 God similarly describes himself as bearing Israel on eagles' wings.

It was actually by means of his Glory-Presence that God thus led his people at the time of the exodus. It was in the pillar of cloud and fire that he went before them in the way and afforded them overshadowing protection.³ To describe the action of the Glory-cloud by the figure of outspread wings was natural, not simply because of the overshadowing function it performed, but because of the composition of this theophanic cloud. For when prophetic vision penetrates the thick darkness, the cloud is seen to be alive with winged creatures, with cherubim and seraphim. The sound of its coming is, in the prophetic idiom, the sound of their wings.⁴

That Moses in his use of the verb *rhp* in Deuteronomy 32:11 is instituting a comparison between God's presence as Israel's divine aegis in the wilderness and God's presence over creation in Genesis 1:2b is put beyond doubt by the fact that he calls that wilderness a *tōhû* (Deut. 32:10). For this is the word he uses in Genesis 1:2a to describe the state of the earth over which the Spirit hovered at creation, and this noun *tōhû*, like the verb *rhp*, is used by Moses nowhere else. The comparison drawn in Deuteronomy 32:10f. between the exodus event and the creation is extensively elaborated in the Mosaic historiography. Within the broad parallelism that emerges we find that at the exodus reenactment of creation history the divine pillar of cloud and fire was present, like the Spirit of God at the beginning, to bring light into the

2. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, only in Jeremiah 23:9. In the Ugaritic epic of Aqhat it refers to the soaring of an eagle.

3. Cf. Isaiah 63:9.

4. Cf., e.g., Ezekiel 1:24; 10:5. In the symbolic conceptualization of the ancient Near East, sovereign divine glory was depicted by a winged disk, which represented the canopy of heaven with associated phenomena like (storm)-clouds.

darkness (and indeed to regulate the day-night sequence), to divide the waters and make dry land appear in the midst of the deep, and to lead on to the Sabbath in the holy paradise land.

In the light of Moses' own interpretive reuse of the unusual verbal imagery of Genesis 1:2b in Deuteronomy 32:11, the "Spirit of God" in the creation record is surely to be understood as a designation for the theophanic Glory-cloud. There is indeed a considerable amount of biblical data that identify the Glory-cloud as peculiarly a manifestation of the Spirit of God. Here we will cite only a few passages where the functions performed by the Glory-cloud are attributed to the Spirit—Nehemiah 9:19, 20; Isaiah 63:11–14; and Haggai 2:5—and mention the correspondence of the work of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to the functioning of the Glory-cloud at the exodus and at the erection of the tabernacle.⁵

Reflecting on Genesis 1:2, Psalm 104 envisages the Creator Spirit (*rû^{ah}*) as the one who makes the clouds his chariot and moves on the wings of the wind (*rû^{ah}*), making the winds his angel-messengers and flames his servants (vv. 3f.). When we recognize this theophanic cloud-and-wind form of the Spirit in Genesis 1:2, the literary connections between the original creation record and certain redemptive re-creation narratives become more luminous.⁶ The flood episode, like the exodus salvation, is portrayed on an elaborate scale as a re-creation event, and the decisive initiating moment is God's making a wind to move over the earth to subdue the waters (Gen. 8:1). In the exodus re-creation itself, the divine agency in dealing with the waters is denoted as a strong, east wind (Exod. 14:21) and, more poetically, as

5. For a more comprehensive account of the evidence, see Meredith M. Kline, "The Holy Spirit as Covenant Witness" (Th.M. dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1972). Cf. my *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975; hereafter, *SBA*), pp. 201f. J. Luzarraga, *Las tradiciones de la nube en la biblia y en el judaismo primitivo* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1973), pp. 234–45, cites evidence from the early Christian Fathers that they recognized the connection between the Holy Spirit and the cloud.

6. Also explained (as perversions of this feature in a pristine creation revelation) are similar representations in pagan creation traditions. In the *Enuma Elish*, the prelude to Marduk's "creative" structuring of the carcass of Tiamat is his approach in the terrifying glory of wind and storm. And in the similar encounter of Baal with Yamm, the Ugaritic epic parallels the soaring eagle figure of Genesis 1:2 in its use of the imagery of swooping falcons to describe Baal's powerful action.