

THE DOMINION OF ADAM
University of Nottingham, 2009
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‘God created the Adam in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’ (Gen. 1.27-8).

For centuries, ‘the dominion of Adam’ was a proud claim about the God-given role of human beings in the creation. They were the image of God, and so they had dominion. About forty years ago, this claim was turned into an accusation. The impending environmental crisis, said voices in the late 60s, was largely due to human beings having this view of their role in creation. They saw themselves as the rulers, and the earth’s resources were for them to use. Lynn White’s famous article in 1967 ‘The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis’¹ became a landmark. The Bible, he said, had given humans beings the idea that they could use the earth as they wished.

Ten years ago, Lynn Margoulis, expounding her theory of co-operation as a significant element in evolution, could say: ‘We need to be freed from our species-specific arrogance. No evidence exists that we are a ‘chosen’, a unique species for which all others were made. Nor are we the most important one because we are so powerful, so numerous and so dangerous. Our tenacious illusion of special dispensation belies our true status as upright mammalian weeds.’²

And there we have the contrast: the image of God or upright mammalian weeds.

In what follows, I shall explore the Adam figure in terms of what has come to be called ‘temple theology’ because it is becoming increasingly clear that this was the matrix of Christian theology. Temple theology has certain characteristics: literary styles as well as the temple and priestly setting and assumptions.

First I ask how much of this ‘dominion of man’ is fairly drawn from Genesis, and how much of it has been convenient *eisegesis*, just as apartheid was justified from a story in Genesis? What, for example, might the first Christians have understood by this description of Adam? They described Jesus as the second Adam, and so the Adam figure was a key part of their claim about Jesus.

The description of Adam as the image of God - subduing and ruling, multiplying and filling the earth - was a description of the unfallen Adam. Presumably this is what the Christians understood by Jesus being the new Adam. He would exemplify what it really meant to be the image of God. Paul could have been quoting an early Christian hymn when he wrote to the Colossians about Jesus as an Adam figure: ‘He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation (Col. 1.15). The passage continues ‘in him all things hold together.’ (Col.1.17). Holding all things together was a key concept in temple theology. It meant upholding the eternal covenant that bound all creation unto one system, and binding the whole system to the Creator. This ‘holding all things together’ will prove to be the key to Adam’s role in creation.

¹ Lynn White, ‘The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis’, *Science* 155.3767 (1967), pp.1203-7, criticised by J Barr, ‘Man and Nature- the Ecological Controversy and the Old Testament,’ *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 55.1 (1972).

² L Margulis, *The Symbiotic Planet. A New Look at Evolution*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998, p.19.

What, then, did the first Christians understand about the role of the original Adam and thus intended the role of human beings?

The biblical story says that the creation was entrusted to Adam *before he sinned* and lost his glory, and Adam losing his glory was reflected in the degradation of the earth. This is the key to the biblical story: the degradation of the earth is the direct result of the status of human beings; what they are or believe themselves to be, determines what the earth becomes. Everything that was intended for Adam, the words usually translated 'be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and **have dominion...**' (Gen.1.28) - applied to the original state. When sinful Adams did such things, the result was disaster.

'God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." (Gen.1.26). This is one of the most enigmatic lines in the Bible, and yet also one of the most important. It means that the human has to be like God in caring for the creation. One of Israel's ancient law codes, the Holiness Code (Lev.19-26), set out a complete pattern for life based on the injunction: 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy' (Lev.19.2). Jesus, when exhorting his followers to trust God, reminded them that the Creator cared for the lilies of the field and the birds of the air (Mt.6. 25-33; 10.29). This is how they thought of the Creator; not as a figure in the past who had completed the work and then left it; it was a picture of constant loving care. Adam, as the image of God, was expected to do this too.

Jewish tradition linked the days of creation, as described in Genesis 1, to the creation of the tabernacle and the temple. Each part of the tabernacle or temple represented one stage of the creation, and the final act - the creation of Adam- represented the making of the high priests. Adam was the original high priest. This role is clear in the Hebrew, but is lost in translation. Adam was set in Eden 'to till and to keep' (Gen.2.15), but no interpreter the time of Jesus understood this literally. Adam was not a gardener. The word 'till' is the same as the word for serving a temple liturgy, '*abad*, and the word keep is the same as the word for observing the law or preserving the tradition, *šamar*. The priestly service in the temple preserved the creation. Simon, high priest about 200BCE, taught: 'The world is sustained by three things, by the Law, by the temple service, and by deeds of loving kindness.'

Adam the high priest served in the temple of creation. Crispin Fletcher Louis, having studied the images in the Qumran hymns and compared them with texts in the Hebrew Scriptures concluded: 'In the priestly tabernacle, it is Aaron who bears God's image... and it is Aaron who plays God's part in the drama of creation.'³ Thus Adam was created as the image, *šelem*, of God, a word used elsewhere for forbidden religious mages: 'abominable images' (Ezek.7.20), or images in the temple of Baal (2 Kgs 11.18). Such images were offered food and often dressed in golden garments. Adam, which may explain why the high priest wore such elaborate garments.

Adam the image of God, the great high priest, wore as his vestment the garment of God's glory that symbolised Wisdom, but he lost it through sin. In the time of Jesus, the master copy of the Hebrew texts kept in the temple, later known as the scrolls of Rabbi Meir, said that God originally made for Adam and Eve 'garments of light', rather than garments of skin (Gen.3.21)⁴. In Hebrew, light is '*or*' and skin is '*or*', making the two words similar both in appearance and in sound. This was the garment of the glory of the Lord that Isaiah had seen filling the temple which represented the creation, when he heard the heavenly voices proclaiming that the whole world was full of his glory (Isa.6.1-3). Only when Adam lost the garment of glory through sin did the earth become a place of dust, thorns and thistles. Adam and Eve rejected the tree of life

³ C Fletcher Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, Leiden: Brill, 2002, p.71.

⁴ See J P Siegel, *The Severus Scroll*, Missoula: SBL 1974.

and chose the forbidden tree, and it was then, says the storyteller, that they knew they were naked (Gen. 3.7).

In Jewish tradition, all the Targums mention these garments of light, as does the *Apocalypse of Moses*: ‘Why’, said Adam to Satan, ‘have you done this to me, that I have been estranged from my glory with which I was clothed?’ In the Church, Ephrem taught that God clothed Adam in glory, *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* says that Adam and Eve were in Paradise, clothed in glory and shining with praise.⁵ An early Christian text found at Nag Hamadi had Wisdom speaking to her children about the high priestly vestment she would give them: ‘I am giving you a high-priestly garment woven from every kind of wisdom... Do not become desirous of gold or silver, which are without profit, but clothe yourself with Wisdom like a robe, put knowledge upon you like a crown and be seated upon the throne of perception. ...Return to your divine nature.’⁶

Adam, while he was still wearing the robe of glory and everything it represented, was told ‘be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth’. Since the Hebrew words for ‘be fruitful’, *parah*, and ‘be beautiful/glorified’, *pa’ar*, are similar⁷, and ‘multiply’, *rabah*, can also mean ‘be great’, the Hebrew wordplay characteristic of temple theology implies that the original Adam was created to be beautiful and great, and to fill the earth with glory.

In the time of Jesus, Adam was described exactly like this - very tall and beautiful, exactly the ‘other’ meanings implicit in the Hebrew text of Genesis. A Jewish text written at the end of the 1st century CE, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, recounted Abraham’s vision of the history of his people. In Eden, he saw ‘a man very great in height, and terrible in breadth, incomparable in aspect, entwined with a woman who was also equal to the man in aspect and size...’. This huge Adam was remembered by Jewish teachers well into the Christian era. Adam filled the world⁸. A Jewish oracle text from the late second temple period, the first Sibylline oracle, described his beauty: Adam was a ‘youthful man, beautiful, wonderful’.⁹ In the time of the Messiah, said Rabbi Samuel ben Nahman in the late third century CE, everything Adam had lost and had caused the earth to lose would be restored: his lustre, his life, his height, the fruit of the earth, the fruit of the trees, and the bright light of the heavenly luminaries.¹⁰

Now the Neofiti Targum, the oldest translation of Genesis used in Palestine, and probably known in the time of Jesus, avoided the expression ‘image’ of God, presumably because of its pagan associations, and instead it used, in the complex style of Targum texts, the word ‘likeness’: ‘And the LORD said: “Let us create man in our likeness, similar to ourselves.” And the Memra of the LORD created him in his own likeness, in a likeness from before the LORD he created him.’¹¹

The original cultural context of the Genesis story, which was written after the exile in Babylon where the people had seen great statues of gods, it probably did mean that Adam, the human being, was presented as the only legitimate representation of the LORD. Jesus’ teaching that the LORD was worshipped by offering food or garments to anyone in need - ‘as you did it to one of

⁵ Gen. R XX.12; Ap. Mos. 20.2; Ephrem On Gnesis 2; Cave1.

⁶ *Teaching of Silvanus* 89,91

⁷ With a derived word *p’er* meaning the turban of the high priest which was his glory.

⁸ *Apocalypse of Abraham* 23.5; *Genesis Rabbah* VIII.1

⁹ *Sibylline Oracles* I.23-4. He was a youth because some people read Gen.2.7 with different vowels: the LORD formed Adam as ‘oper, a young man, rather than ‘apar, dust.. *Genesis Rabbah* XIV.7

¹⁰ Rabbi Samuel b. Nahman, *Genesis Rabbah* XII.6; also Philo, *Creation* 145

¹¹ Targum *Neofiti* Gen.1.26-7

the least of these my brethren, you did it to me' (Mt 25.40) - is an echo of the older custom of feeding and clothing the pagan statues.

Genesis is careful to say that Adam was created 'as our image, according to our likeness', *b^{es}salmenu, cid^emutenu*, translating the Hebrew literally. 'Image' and 'likeness' are not synonyms; there is an important distinction between them.

The 'likeness', *d^emut*, [in Greek *homoiōsis*], is a word used by Ezekiel to describe his vision of Adam in glory, but the English translations do not make this clear. In his vision of the chariot and its wheels, the prophet saw a figure seated on a sapphire throne, 'the likeness, *d^emut*, as the appearance *c^emar'eh*, of Adam' (Ezek.1.26b, my translation), which was 'the appearance of the likeness, *d^emut*, of the glory of the LORD' (Ezek.1.28b). Ezekiel's consistent use of these two words - *d^emut* meaning 'likeness' and *mar'eh*, meaning 'appearance' - shows that 'appearance' was what Ezekiel saw in his vision, and 'likeness' was the heavenly reality it represented¹². The 'likeness as the appearance of Adam' meant the heavenly reality visible as Adam, and 'the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD' meant that this was how the reality of the LORD's glory was manifested. For Ezekiel, then, the glory of the LORD showed itself as the glory of the original Adam, enthroned.

In Genesis Adam was created 'in our image, after our likeness' - the usual translation - but Ezekiel's words show what the distinction entailed: Adam was created 'as our image', this being another meaning for the Hebrew *b^e*, as in: 'I appeared to them as El Shaddai (Exod.6.3); and Adam was 'the equivalent of our likeness' (translating Gen.1.26 literally)¹³. The *d^emut*, likeness, was the original invisible divine reality represented by Adam as its 'image'.

Sin, however, prevented man from seeing the heavenly *d^emut* and all that it represented. Sin prevented Adam seeing what he was created to be: Adam could not know the true nature of the human being, the full potential. A saying attributed to Rabbi Nathan in the second century CE [but recorded at a later date] was: 'Because of sin, it was not given for man to know the *d^emut* on high; were it not for this sin, all the keys would be given to him, and he would know how the heavens and the earth were created...'¹⁴

From this we conclude that knowing the 'likeness' and being the 'likeness' resulted in a certain knowledge. Satan had promised that when they ate the forbidden fruit their eyes would be opened, and they would see as God sees. That was the great deception, making the fruit of the forbidden tree seem exactly like the fruit of the tree of life. It was eating from the tree of life that opened human eyes, that is, gave spiritual vision, and this is why, when they had taken the forbidden fruit, the human pair knew they were naked. They had lost the garment of Wisdom.

This same sequence is implied in some Qumran texts. The world of invisible divine reality, then the visionary manifestation and finally the material object are implied in some Qumran texts. The process of creation seems to be first the form, *d^emut*, then the visionary appearance, *mar'eh*, and finally the material creation, *šelem*.¹⁵ Ezekiel identified what he saw as a manifestation of

¹² See my book *The Great High Priest*, London: T&T Clark, 2003, pp.178-84

¹³ In Gen 5.1, Adam was created 'as the *likeness* of God' (Gen.5.1). When Isaiah scorned those who made idols, he used the verbal form of 'likeness': 'To whom then will you *liken* God, or to what *likeness* compare him?' (Isa.40.18, also v.25). The craftsman made an idol, but it did not move. Another passage scorning idols asked: 'To whom will you *liken* me... and compare me that we may be *alike*?' (Isa.46.5). These are examples of the exilic polemic against idols that underlies the Genesis description of Adam. Translating *d^emut* by 'likeness', though, obscures an important element in its meaning, since *d^emut* and its related verb imply a thought or a concept preceding an action: 'As I have *planned*, so shall it be.' (Isa.14.24).

¹⁴ *Abot de Rabbi Nathan* A 39

¹⁵ See *The Great High Priest* pp.182-3

the divine reality, but what he saw was not a material object. Adam in Genesis was described as the *d'mut*, the form of God, and then as its material state, its *šelem*. The intermediate visionary manifestation, *mar'eh*, is not mentioned in Genesis¹⁶

Ezekiel also described how a heavenly being was driven from Eden. This must have been part of the Adam story as he knew it in the sixth century BCE. Ezekiel described the figure as a cherub, the seal of perfection, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty (Ezek.28.12), and it is interesting here to look at Philo's explanation of the word 'cherub'. It meant, he said, *epistēmē pollē*, full knowledge, and *epignōsis*, recognition, as in recognising and acknowledging God (Prov.2.5; Rom.1.28). There is nothing in the form of the Hebrew word to suggest this meaning, and so Philo probably had Ezekiel's cherub in mind. Here there is a complex pattern of wordplay again, and it becomes clear that Ezekiel's cherub was indeed the Adam figure before he was driven from Eden.

Ezekiel's mysterious cherub is described in the same way as Adam, but Adam's glorious role is distorted. The cherub had been created as the *seal* of proportion/pattern¹⁷ [holding all things together], the cherub was *filled* with wisdom and perfected in beauty (Ezek.28.12), but it was driven from Eden because it corrupted its great wisdom and splendour through pride, greed and violence. 'Your greatness in trading *filled* your midst with violence and you sinned, and I profaned/loosened you from the mountain of God and caused you to perish, guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire' (Ezek.28.16 translating the opaque Hebrew very literally).

This is fallen Adam:

his greatness - but here it was only in trade;
his filling [the earth] - but filling it with violence not glory;
and then being destroyed, *'bd*, instead of being the servant, *'bd*.

The cherub's heart became proud/ exalted through its beauty, its wisdom was corrupted for the sake of its splendour/shining beams of light. This is Adam again: the beautiful, exalted figure, the wisdom, the shining light, and then the corruption.

Ezekiel described the Adam cherub as the 'seal' who was – and here we encounter temple theology again – profaned or loosened as it was thrown down. The double meaning of the verb *hll* shows an important aspect of holiness: whoever did not uphold and maintain - 'seal' - the bonds was no longer holy. The cherub had abused its wisdom and was cut loose. Recall Paul's description of the role of the image of the invisible God; 'in him all things hold together.'

The punishment for the cherub hints at another part of the Adam story, not in the Old Testament, but known in the time of Jesus. According to this story, Adam was presented to the angels as their ruler, but Satan refused to worship him and so was thrown from heaven. He vowed revenge - and the familiar story of the fall was the result. Ezekiel's cherub too was thrown to the earth, in the presence of the kings, a word that is very similar to angels, so that they could gloat. The cherub was turned into ash, *'eper*, whereas Adam had been formed from dust, *'apar* (Ezek.28.17-18).

¹⁶ It was probably represented in the Targums by the Memra, often translated 'word', and represented in Greek by Logos. Philo, however, knew the Logos as the aspect of God that was *seen*, and so Logos=Word is not the best translation¹⁶. When he explained Genesis 9.6, 'God made man in his owni', he said, as have seen: 'Nothing mortal can be made in the likeness (the verb is from *eikōn*) of the Most High One and Father of the Universe, but only in that of the second God who is his Logos', a passage important for Christians since it was quoted by Eusebius.¹⁶ Philo also tried to explain this in terms of geometry: 1 was a point, 2 was a line, 3 was a surface, and 4 was a solid object. Thus, he said, the number 4 brought us from the realm of the invisible into 'the conception of a body of three dimensions, which by its nature first comes within the range of our senses.' Philo, *Creation*, 49

¹⁷ Proportion is *toknit*, pattern is *tabnit*, which look very similar in Hebrew.

The guardian cherub had been full of wisdom and was the seal of the covenant. Adam, according to the Qumran texts, was given understanding and knowledge, and it seems he had the same role as the cherub. When he sinned, he lost the garment of glory, described in the Apocalypse of Moses as his righteousness¹⁸, in other words, he lost his power to hold together the bonds of the covenant.

Adam's robe of glory represented righteousness, the wisdom to uphold the creation covenant. Thus clad, the image was commanded 'to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over other living creatures' (Gen.1.28). These words have caused many problems, and read out of context have seriously misrepresented what people believed in the time of Jesus. The words should be read in the light of Adam's status. As the image of the Creator, robed in glory and righteousness, what might those words have meant?

We have seen that 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth' were given additional meanings in the time of Jesus: Adam was beautiful and tall and his glory filled the earth. The same is true of 'subdue' the earth and 'have dominion' over other living creatures. 'Subdue', *kabaš*, usually means to enslave or subdue (e.g. Num.32.22; Jer.34.11), but Micah 7.18-9 suggests another context too, that of atonement, although the word itself does not appear. 'Who is a God like you, forgiving, iniquity? He does not retain his anger for ever, because he delights in steadfast love, *hesed*. He will again have compassion on us and will *kabaš*, our iniquities' (my translation). The atonement process was one of renewing the damaged bonds of the covenant, and so 'binding up' our iniquities, in the sense of restoring the creation seems to be the meaning here, in a context of forgiveness, *hesed* and compassion. This was part of what *kabaš* meant for the original Adam, in his role as the 'seal' of the covenant. The other aspect was 'binding' the rebel powers that threatened the creation, the role of the king in Psalm 2 and of the LORD when he sealed the powers with his Name.

Nor did 'have dominion' imply violence, as is often suggested. Adam was to have dominion, *radah*, the word used to describe Solomon's reign: he ruled, he had dominion, *radah*, and there was peace all around (1 Kgs 4.21, 24). Adam's dominion over the animals did not extend to killing them for food; Adam was only given plants and trees for food (Gen.1.29). In the Dead Sea Scrolls¹⁹, there was a different verb used to describe Adam's 'dominion'. Adam ruled, *mašal*, the word used in Psalm 8.6: 'Thou hast given him dominion...' Now *mašal* has a web of associations: it means 'rule' in the sense of determining how things shall be, and it implies maintaining the correspondence of heaven and earth.

The same word, *mašal*, also means a proverb or a parable. It imparted wisdom, which Solomon famously derived from observing the creation: 'He uttered three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall; he spoke also of beasts and of birds, and of reptiles and of fish. And men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon.' (1 Kgs 4.32-4). The wise ruler learned from the creation, recognised the patterns and upheld them.

Philo, explaining the significance of Adam being created after the other creatures, wrote: '[He was created last] so that suddenly appearing to the other animals he might produce consternation in them; for they were sure, as soon as they saw him, to be amazed and do homage to him as to a born ruler or master... For all things mortal in the three elements of land and water and air did

¹⁸ *Apocalypse of Moses* 20.1

¹⁹ In 1QS III.17 and 4Q 504.8 the word is clear: 'you made him rule'; but elsewhere e.g. 4Q381, the word might refer to the heavenly lights 'ruling' as in Gen.1.16-8.

he make subject to men...²⁰ He went on to explain that man was created ‘to drive and steer the things on earth’, to care for animals and plants ‘like a governor subordinate to the chief and great King.’²¹ Thus the two commands to Adam – *kabaš*, ‘subdue’, and *radah*, ‘have dominion’ - in their original context agree with Philo’s observation that the human was created as the image of the Logos, and was thus able to discern the Logos in the creation. *The Logos was the seal of the bonds.*

The human being the image of the Logos meant far more than the human capacity to reason, as is often said, for example: ‘[There is a] long standing view that the *imago Dei* designates the human capacity to reason - or, more accurately, to conform mentally to the patterns established by the divine Logos within creation - and hence to discern God albeit partially and imperfectly.’²² The image of the Logos had the capacity *to maintain the covenant* in accordance with the divine pattern, not simply to observe it. As John Zizioulas said of later developments in the Church Fathers: ‘*Logos* or rationality had a particular meaning at that time, and it had mainly to do with the capacity of the human being to collect what is diversified and even fragmented in this world and make a beautiful and harmonious world (*cosmos*) out of that. Rationality was not, as it came to be understood later, simply a capacity to reason with one’s mind. Instead, as the ancient Greeks thought of *logos*, it is man’s capacity to achieve the unity of the world and to make a *cosmos* out of it. Man has the capacity to unite the world.’²³

One part of Adam’s story is not told in the Bible, the part that shows what was meant by subduing the powers or upholding the bonds. Adam was created as the divine image, and the LORD God summoned all the angels - the powers of creation - to worship his image. Adam was the image of the LORD of Hosts, and so the hosts should serve him. Satan refused and was driven from heaven together with his angels. He vowed revenge. The story is the source of many later Adam legends: it was translated into several languages, was widely known in mediaeval Europe, and a version appears in several places in the Qur’an.

The *Life of Adam and Eve* tells how Satan met Adam and Eve by the river Tigris, and they asked why he was so hostile to them: ‘What have we done to you, that you should pursue us with deceit? Have we stolen your glory and made you to be without honour?’ Satan then told his story. When Adam was created, God breathed into him the breath of life and so his ‘countenance and likeness’ became the image of God. Michael presented Adam to the angels, and the LORD God declared him to be his image. Michael instructed the angels to worship the image, but Satan refused, saying that he was created before Adam, and so Adam should worship him. Satan’s angels also refused to worship Adam, and so the LORD God expelled them all from their glorious state in heaven. In revenge, Satan tempted Eve, and thus both Adam and Eve were also expelled from their state of bliss.²⁴ The Qur’an mentions this story many times. God commanded the angels to bow down to Adam but Iblis [Satan] refused because Adam was created from clay and he, Iblis, from fire.²⁵ Iblis took revenge by tempting Adam and his wife with the tree²⁶.

²⁰ Philo, *Creation* 83-4

²¹ Philo, *Creation* 88

²² A McGrath, *The Open Secret*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2008, p.190.

²³ Zizioulas, ‘Proprietors or Priests of Creation?’, www.rsesymposia.org

²⁴ *Life* 12-16

²⁵ Qur’an 7.11-25; 15.26-44; 18.50-53; 38.71-88.

²⁶ Qur’an 20.116-128.

Some of the story in the *Life of Adam and Eve* is like Genesis: Adam was formed from clay as the image of the LORD God²⁷; but there are other details, such as that Adam was originally clothed in glory and righteousness,²⁸ or that access to the tree of life would be restored at time of resurrection: ‘At the time of the resurrection, [the LORD] will raise you again, and then there shall be given to you from the tree of life and you shall be immortal for ever’²⁹. This was Jesus’ promise to the faithful Christian: ‘To him who conquers, I will grant to eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.’ (Rev.2.7). There is other evidence that Jesus knew this story. When he described his time in the wilderness (Mt.4.1-11; Mk 1.12-13; Lk. 4.1-12) he said the devil questioned his status: ‘If *you* are the Son of God...’ turn stones into bread and summon the angels to help you. In other words, the angels would serve the Son, and he would be able to undo the ancient curse on the ground, that it would only bring forth bread with toil and pain. These temptations have a specific context, and Jesus refused Satan’s challenges. Then the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and said: ‘All these I will give to you, if you will fall down and worship me.’ This was the ancient rivalry that had caused Satan’s expulsion from heaven, but Jesus refused to worship Satan. Mark’s brief summary of Jesus’ time in the wilderness also assumes knowledge of this story: ‘[He was] tempted by Satan... and the angels ministered to him’ (Mk 1.13). The angels served him, just as they had been commanded to serve Adam the image. Thus too Hebrews: ‘Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?’ (Heb.1.14). The familiar New Testament texts have been shaped by the story of Adam in Genesis but also by the story the fall of Satan. Jesus saw himself as the new Adam, just as Paul taught but he did not succumb to Satan.

Two key proof texts used by the early Christians were also based on this story. ‘For to what angel did God ever say, “Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee”?’ (Heb.1.5) quotes Psalm 2.7, which describes how the LORD set his human king on Zion, and established him as his son. The text at the end of this psalm is difficult, and the Authorised Version is closest to the Hebrew: ‘Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little.’ (Ps.2.10-12). This is the warning to the angels to pay homage to the Son, here transferred to the earth where the rulers have to acknowledge the LORD’s king in Zion. The second proof text is in the same collection in Hebrews: ‘And again, when he brings the Firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him”’ (Heb.1.6, quoting Deut.32.43). ‘Firstborn’ was a title for the Davidic king who called the LORD his father (Ps.89. 27), meaning that he was the human presence of the LORD. He, like Adam was the image. Jesus was ‘the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation’ (Col.1.15), in other words, he was the second Adam.

The proof text in Hebrews 1.6, however, has been found at Qumran in a significantly longer form than has survived in the current Hebrew³⁰, but very similar to the Old Greek translation. The shorter form lacks the lines used as the proof text, and so has nothing about the angels being called to worship. The longer [original] form in the Greek reads: ‘Rejoice with him, heavens, bow down to him, sons of God, rejoice with his people, nations, confirm him all you angels of God.’ (Deut.32.43 LXX). The rest of the verse follows the gist of the current Hebrew: the LORD comes to bring the judgement and to atone the land/soil of his people. In Hebrews, summoning the angels to worship the Firstborn was a proof text to identify Jesus; he was the image, the human presence of the LORD coming to make atonement. The detail of angel worship, however,

²⁷ *Life* 27.2; 14.1.

²⁸ *Ap. Moses* 20.1-2

²⁹ *Ap. Moses* 28.4

³⁰ The Masoretic Text.

is drawn from the story of the fall of Satan, and it was these lines that did not survive in the Hebrew text.

There are also two instances of the story in Revelation. When Kingdom of the LORD and his Anointed One was established on earth, John heard the heavenly voices declaring that the reign of the LORD God Almighty had begun, the time for ‘rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints, and all who fear thy name both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.’ (Rev.11.15-18). This was the renewal of the creation with the new regime. Then John saw a woman giving birth to the boy child who would fulfil Psalm 2, and the dragon, ‘who is called the devil and Satan’ trying to destroy the child as he was set on the throne of God. Michael and his angels then drove Satan and his angels from heaven (Rev.12.1-12). This is the fall of Satan after his challenge to the image enthroned. Then, in the description of the beasts, John described how their ‘image’ was made. John’s style - presumably the tradition of his community - was to present the evil as the exact counterpart to the good. Sometimes wordplay was involved, as in the description of the great harlot, the mother of harlots and abominations (Rev.17.5). In the underlying Hebrew, harlots would have been *q^edešim*, which was identical in its written form to *q^edošim*, holy ones; and abomination is *mšhyt*, very similar in written form to anointed one, *mšyh*. The harlot city was the counterpart of the true Jerusalem who was the mother of holy one and anointed ones. In the case of the beasts, the dragon gave his authority to the beast from the sea who had died and come to life again (Rev.13.3-4), and the beast’s agent made an image of the beast (Rev.13.14). ‘It was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast should even speak, and to cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.’ (Rev.13.15). This was the beast’s Adam. The contemporary interpretations of Genesis 2.7 - ‘the LORD God... breathed into his nostrils the breath of life’ - all say that this gave Adam the power of speech³¹, and the command to worship the image of the beast exactly parallels the command to worship Adam. The beast and his image were the counterpart of the LORD and his image, and Revelation describes the conflict between them.

The beast, as we have seen, had made commerce and deceit his hallmark, and this has also been the reason for the cherub’s fall from Eden: abundance of trade, violence, pride, corrupted wisdom. ‘By the multitude of your distortions, in the unrighteousness of your commerce, you made your holy places unholy; I brought forth fire from you midst and it consumed you, and I turned you to ashes on the earth...’ (Ezek.28.18, my translation). When Jesus came as the LORD to his temple and cleansed it, he used a ‘whip of cords’ (John 2.15), an interesting detail, because the instructions for cleansing the temple on the day of atonement were that the high priest sprinkled the blood ‘as though wielding a whip’³². Jesus drove out the traders – a conflict that persists: ‘Consumerism was the triumphant winner of the ideological wars of the 20th century, beating out both religion and politics as the path millions of Americans follow to find purpose, meaning, order and transcendent exaltation in their lives. Liberty in this market democracy has, for many, come to mean freedom to buy as much as you can of whatever you wish, endlessly reinventing and telegraphing your sense of self with each new purchase.’³³ The image of the beast.

There are other possible allusions to the story in the New Testament, especially in Paul: ‘Satan was angry and transformed himself into the brightness of angels’³⁴ is very similar to ‘For even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light’ (2 Cor.11.14); and ‘[The LORD said] “Take him up

³¹ All the Targums to Gen.2.7

³² Mishnah *Yoma* 5.4

³³ April Witt, ‘Acquiring Minds: Inside America’s All Consuming Passion’, Washington Post Magazine Dec 14th 2003, quoted in P Stiles, *Is the American Dream Killing You?*, New York: HarperCollins, 2006, p.110.

³⁴ *Life* 9.1

into Paradise, into the third heaven”³⁵ is what Paul described: ‘I was caught up to the third heaven.... Caught up into Paradise’ (2 Cor.12.2-3). Maybe Paul was alluding to the story when he said that covetousness was the origin of sin: ‘[Satan] sprinkled his evil poison on the fruit which he gave me to eat, which is his covetousness. For covetousness is the origin of every sin’³⁶ could have prompted ‘But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, wrought in me all kinds of covetousness...’ (Rom.7.8; and also James 1.13-15). The angels worshipping Adam the image is also clear in the vision of the enthroned Lamb who was worshipped by the host of heaven and all creation (Rev.5.11-14), and the Name-bearing Jesus who was acknowledged by all in heaven and earth, and recognised as the LORD (Phil.2.9-11). Philo, however, seems to deny the story of ruling the angels; Adam was to rule all living things but not the heavenly beings.³⁷

The end of this story appears in the Church’s understanding of the Ascension. When Jesus was taken up, this was understood as Adam restored to his intended place, enthroned again above the angels. Early representations of the Ascension show Jesus in the chariot that Ezekiel saw, the figure he described as the likeness of the glory of the LORD (Ezek.1.28).³⁸ Much earlier, it was the theme of John Chrysostom’s sermon for Ascension Day: the human who had been driven from Paradise ‘and condemned to so great a curse’ was now exalted to the height of heaven and enthroned, ‘made capable through Christ of being exalted to so great a degree of happiness and glory.’ The angels had guarded Paradise from human nature, and now it was restored to the highest place. Psalm 24 was fulfilled: ‘Lift up your heads, O gates... that the King of Glory may come in.’ (Ps.24.7, 9). ‘Now the angels have received what they used to long for, the archangels have seen what they have long desired. Today they have seen our nature on the throne of royal splendour, shining with glory and immortal beauty.’³⁹

The image of God worshipped by the angels, and that image restored to its intended place with the ascension of Jesus, describes in the vivid imagery of angels and cosmic worship the intended nature of Adam. The human was to be the seal of creation and uphold the bonds, and was to harness and master the powers of the creation. This was the command to Adam: *kabaš*, ‘subdue. It was the image in John’s vision and Paul’s hymn; all the powers of heaven and earth acknowledging that Jesus Christ is LORD.

The picture, though fragmented, is consistent. Adam was created glorious, to be the image of the Creator, his likeness made visible. He wore a garment of glory, and thus clad, Adam was set to uphold the creation and fill the earth with glory. But Adam was deceived by the promise of power and choice, the freedom to use knowledge for good or evil. As a result, Adam lost the garment of glory, and lost the Wisdom to uphold the creation, which became a place of thorns, thistles and dust. What Adam lost was restored in Christ, the second Adam.

³⁵ *Ap. Moses* 37.5.

³⁶ *Ap. Moses* 19.3

³⁷ Philo, *Creation* 83-4

³⁸ For example, the illustration in the 6th century Rabula Gospels reproduced in my book *An Extraordinary Gathering of Angels*, London: MQP, 2004, p.111.

³⁹ *Patrologia Graeca-Latina*, vol L, col. 448ff. The only English version I know is W Scott, *The Fourth Panegyric*, London: Crowder, 1775