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ABSTRACT: This article aims to bring together the discussions surrounding creation and humanity in Isaiah 40-55 and Genesis 1:26. The article demonstrates that Deutero-Isaiah’s view of humanity is incompatible with that of the P narrative, rendering attempts to cite it in support of Genesis 1 ineffective. It argues that the application of the terms in Genesis 1:26 to Seth alone of Adam’s sons in Genesis 5, suggests a program of election, or selection, necessary to counter the theological difficulties raised by potentially stating that Israel’s enemies were also made in the image of God. The theological implications for understanding humanity’s position in the cosmos are evident. The inclusiveness with which theologians have tended to read Gen 1:26-27 (as applicable to all humanity) is called into question.

Key words: Kingship, Creation, Election, Deutero-Isaiah and Pentateuchal Narratives

Debate has continued for centuries over the meaning of Genesis 1:26-27. The implications of the verses for theological interpretation are self-evident and the discussion has been approached from a number of directions. 1 Although


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debate around the formation of the Pentateuch continues to this day, this article holds the view widely espoused elsewhere that Genesis 1,1-2,4 should be ascribed to the Priestly code, or P, while 2,5-3,24 is usually ascribed to the Yahwist, or J. The P narrative takes בראש as its verb of choice to describe creation, while J takes יצור/עשה. This article argues that despite the high number of occurrences of בראש in Deutero-Isaiah, when Deutero-Isaiah speaks specifically of the creation of humanity, the terms יצור/עשה are predominantly used. Thus linguistically, and ideologically (as will be seen further on), DI’s view of the creation of humanity is closer to the tradition behind the J narrative than that of P. We will first examine the interpretations of Genesis 1,26-27, before turning our attention to those of Deutero-Isaiah. This article aims to demonstrate strongly differing traditions behind the P and Isaiah/J narratives, and tension between them. Deutero-Isaiah will be suggested to have an earlier date than Genesis 1, which renders the efforts of some authors to cite Deutero-Isaiah in support of interpretation of Gen 1,26-27, ineffective. Noting the tension between the two ideas of humanity’s creation and role in the cosmos, we conclude that Deutero-Isaiah preceded the P narratives. Language and ideology of the genealogy in Genesis 5 is also analysed and from this it is concluded that the P author has an elective or selective ideology in mind when writing. While P appears more positive about the created state and purpose of humanity than DI, the authors seems to have an elective criteria that determines whether or not a human is created in the image and likeness of God. The theological implications for understanding humanity’s position in the cosmos, and created state in terms of image and likeness of God are evident. The inclusiveness with which theologians have tended to read Gen 1,26-27 is called into question, and the scope of the subject of Gen 1,26-27 is drawn considerably smaller.

3. – בראש43,1.7.12.
   – יצור43,1.7.10.21 ;44,2.21.24 ;45,9 (x2).11.
   –עשה45,9.12 ;51,13 ;54,5.
I. Genesis 1,26-27

Much of the interpretation of Gen 1,26-27 has been concerned with the question of what is meant by צלם/דמות. Crouch notes one of the older approaches to the terms צלם and דמות that sought to differentiate between them, espoused by theologians such as Martin Luther and Augustine. These approaches are seen to pursue “a natural likeness to God which is indicated by the term צלם and a supernatural likeness which is indicated by the term דמות.” Whilst noting their poetic qualities, Crouch highlights the lack of textual grounding of their linguistic analysis. In Paul Humbert’s work, "Études sur le recit..., L’imago Dei dans l’AT” he collected together all occurrences of the term צלם; “in all but two of its uses the word refers to something definitely physical, and the cognates in both Akkadian (ṣalmu) and Aramaic (צלמא) also overwhelmingly denote physical entities, most frequently referring to statues or idols.” Humbert’s work thus clearly demonstrates the physical aspect of the image in which God makes man in Genesis 1,26-27 with reference to the term צלם. The fact that man is presented as having a physical likeness to God was uncomfortable to some scholars and so the practice of attempting to modify the physicality of צלם with a more ethereal understanding of the term דמות began to take place. This practice and discussion is presented as effectively ended after the discovery and publication of a bilingual Aramaic-Akkadian inscribed statue, on which both the terms דמותא/צלמא appear in parallel referring to the physical object on which they are inscribed. The ancient Near Eastern parallels Crouch cites are of note to the discussion;

So, for example, in a letter to the Assyrian king Esarhaddon a writer declares that ‘the father of the king, my lord, was the very image [ṣalmu] of Bel, and the king, my lord, is likewise the very image [ṣalmu] of Bel.’... The same

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convergence of terminology occurs in Egyptian texts relating to the pharaohs, where the pharaoh is described as “the shining image of the lord of all and a creation of the Gods of Heliopolis … he has begotten him, in order to create a shining seed on earth, for salvation for men, as his living image.” The pharaoh is also called “a prince like Re, the child of Qeb, his heir, the image of Re” and described by the Gods as “my living image, creation of my members, whom Mut bare to me” and “my beloved son, who came forth from my members, my image, whom I have put on earth.”

Clearly, the comparison of Gen 1,26-27 with ancient near Eastern texts is favourable. Gen 1,26-27 seems to be drawing off ideas of likeness, image and creation that are clearly linked to kingship in the ancient near East. Commentators have seen these ideas also in the ideas of man being given dominion over the earth. From this evidence it seems that the P writer has appropriated language previously used to describe either a physical image used to signal presence of a God or king, or language used to directly describe the king’s relationship to God and his role in the human sphere. Here I suggest that this is best stated as having importance in 3 main areas; firstly, the relationship between king and God was a special one, and this should be expected to be carried over into P’s newly stated relationship between humanity and God. Secondly, that צלם was an indication of divinity or royal rule, which P states man has now become in order to reflect the ruling divinity of God on earth. Finally, that there is a suggestion of role in the ancient Near Eastern material, admittedly concerned with kings, but that may be seen to be democratized and applied to a wider sphere than one person in Gen 1,26-27. In the material cited above, the one who is in the “image” of the God is a ruler, and this is made clear in the statement in Gen 1 that man has “dominion” over the earth.

II. Genesis 5 and Sonship

There is one other important element contained in the king-God ancient Near Eastern material cited by Crouch and that is father-son relationship contained in the kingship paradigm. Crouch sees this also in Gen 5;

Specifically: the description of humans as in God’s צלם and דמות in the same terms used to describe Seth’s connection to Adam is an attempt to draw a parallel between the father-son relationship of 5,3, between Adam and Seth, and the divine–human relationship of 1,26–7 and 5,1. Before examining the technical and comparative arguments for using צלם and דמות in this manner, the instinctive appeal of the idea is worth noting. Even without knowledge of

genetics it takes minimal observational skills to note that children tend to look like one or both of their parents. Taken more broadly, children tend to look more like their parents than like any other adult in the community, other than perhaps other blood relatives.”

This provides us with our start-point for analysis of Gen 1,26-27 and 5,1-3. As others have recognised, Genesis 5 uses the same terms (צלם/דמות) to describe the birth of Seth as a son in the image and likeness of his father Adam. This has led to various interpretations of parentage/fatherhood, as well as procreation, being possible explanations of what it means to be in the image or likeness of God. Against these we note that the omission of any mention of Adam’s other children being in the image or likeness of Adam in any way is of great significance to the discussion. Simply put, the contention is thus: if the Yhwh-humans-image/likeness paradigm is comparable to the father-son-image/likeness paradigm, then Cain and Abel, or “Adam’s other children” (Gen 5,4b) should also be described as in the image and likeness of Adam. If all humanity is created in the image of Yhwh, and this is comparable to, or can describe to some effect, a relationship akin to that of a father and son we would expect that all the sons would be in the image of the father. Thus the description of Seth in Genesis 5 and the omission of Cain and Abel, or other children raises questions about who we should understand Genesis 1 as referring to. The P genealogies as a whole have their own individual agenda, but the language used in Gen 5,1-3 makes clear there is an elective ideology behind the text. P makes no mention of Abel and Cain at all, and one wonders if the P writer was even aware of them. This is a difficult question to answer, however, Gen 5,4 states that “he [Adam] had other sons and daughters”—of whom no mention is made of their likeness to their father. The genealogy of Gen 5 is only concerned with the descendants of Seth, and this highlighting of one son, and no mention of the others is notable.

In light of this it seems pertinent to question whether the same elective ideology is at work in, and applicable to, the statement of humanity’s created state in Genesis 1,26-27. We can ask whether P’s concern with transmitting the genealogy of Seth limits the extent to which we may ask whether his theology and language applied to the other children of Adam. That said, the writer could have stated that “he [Adam] had other sons and daughters in his image” without necessarily having to relate all of their genealogies. Differently put: does P selectively relate the genealogy of Seth because he (alone of Adam’s children) is in the image and likeness of Adam? Our contention is that the answer is yes—the fact that Seth was in the image and likeness of Adam gave him a criterion which, for the Priestly writer, marked him out to be the son whose line was worthy of succeeding Adam. The reader

will at this point note the return to kingship ideology. A ruling king often had many sons but only one could succeed him, and their line succeeded them. The other sons and their descendants remained as royalty but did not have the same titles and role as the new king. The royal children were not cast out of the divine plan or royal family, but simply never attained the titles and role of the king who would be described as “in the image and likeness of God.” It is this precisely that I suggest is the meaning behind Gen 1,26-27. Thus the creation of humans in the “image and likeness” of God in Gen 1,26-27 ideologically bestows in humans that which is necessary to take up dominion over the earth. However, it suggests that Genesis is aware of those who do not take up this purpose of dominion; Abel and Cain in 2-3, or Adam’s “other children” in 5,4b. Just as all the princes in the ancient Near Eastern court had the credentials to become king, only one could do so. P has democratized the royal material enough that all humanity, rather than just the royal family, may take up a ruling position and share in the special relationship with God that stemmed from it. However, he allows for the reality that not all will do so, necessarily, otherwise a theological problem would be raised by suggestions that Israel’s enemies could also be in the image and likeness of Yhwh. From this it seems plausible that Genesis 1,26-27 should be understood as an admission that the relationship between humanity and God has changed, and that to an extent all may share and reflect the image of God that was previously only seen in the king, but, that not all will do so. If this may be considered to be correct, then it seems that Genesis 1 speaks of the created potential of man to be in the “image and likeness” of God, rather than a prescription that all humanity is in the image and likeness of God.

III. Isaiah 40-55

Deutero-Isaiah is another text which is concerned in part with humanity, kingship, creation and incomparableness of Yhwh.\textsuperscript{14} Isaiah 40,12-17 is a

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series of rhetorical questions which build to the rhetorical climax in verse 18;
“To whom then, will you liken God, or with what likeness compare him?”
The term used in v18b for likeness, is דמות, and the verb in v18a is תדמיון -
from the root דמין, a noun translated as “likeness.”

40,19-20 then compare Yhwh to an idol (פסל), made by humans and requiring a chain to hold it in
place, with no power of its own. 40,12-20 is aimed at highlighting this foolishness of the human idol-makers. Verses 12-17 demonstrate the incomparability of Yhwh, and how ultimately different he is to humans,
while verses 18-20 convey the impossibility and futility of attempting to
replicate the תדמיון of God in an idol.

The essential differences between God and man are given in 40,12-17.
40,12 speaks of divine acts definitively beyond human achievement.
“Weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance” is just one example. Verses 13-14 demonstrate Yhwh’s divine wisdom, knowledge and judgement, as seemingly inherent in his character - unlike humans he did not need to be taught anything; “Who has directed the spirit of the Lord, or as his counsellor has instructed him?” (40,13) There may also be a reflection of kingship in these verses, as counsellors and advisors in various capacities were a known feature of the royal courts, and here the assertion may be that Yhwh is capable of ruling alone. Some have seen a reference to a negation of Yhwh’s need for a divine council.16 Verses 15-17 speak of the size of God and his greatness in comparison to humanity—eventh the nations are “accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness” (40,17b). The strong implication of 40,12-17 then, is that God is far above all human ability and power. 40,18 says that God is also above all comparisons of likeness. In light of the rhetoric of verses 12-17 it may be tempting to interpret תדמיון here as a reference to non-physical similarities such as God’s power and greatness. It would then serve a double purpose, ruling out humans, and, implicitly other Gods, from ever being likened to him in terms of power, hence God is incomparable. However one cannot ignore the antecedent verse, where the immediate answer is rhetorically, and perhaps sarcastically, given—“An idol?” (40,19) As noted, the author points to the feebleness of the idol, in that it needs chains and a “skilled artisan to set up an image that will not topple” (40,20). Secondly we must note the expensive materials being used; gold, silver and mulberry wood are all ineffective in portraying anything of the likeness of God. Finally, and most importantly, we must note that the subject spoken of is a physical item. As Crouch and others have proven, תדמיון is

15. David J. A. Clines, (ed), The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, (Sheffield:
linked to physical likeness. However, the author of Isaiah 40 clearly states that no דמות can provide an effective comparison to God. 40,6-8 reads:

6 "A voice says, ‘call’, and I said what shall I call? All flesh is grass and his loyalty/devotion is like a flower on the open field. 7 The grass withers, the flower fades for the spirit of the Lord blows upon it. Surely the people are as grass. 8 The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will arise forever."

These verses have been traditionally interpreted as a proclamation of Israel’s ever wavering faith and devotion to Yhwh. However, in light of the emphasis of 40,12-20 on the incomparability of God, these verses suggest a different interpretation may be in order. Firstly, the “all flesh is grass” of v6 ties all of humanity together in this metaphor. Instead of naming a people, or stating direct application to Israel, the author says “all flesh,” i.e. all humanity. This may also serve a rhetorical function as it subverts any notion of a human king or ruler. If one takes an exile date for Deutero-Isaiah then this statement of the weakness of “all flesh” may well function to bring the Babylonian ruler down to size. This idea of all humanity being the same brings the conqueror down to the level of the conquered. Thus, all of humanity is depicted as being small, fragile and noticeably short-lived when compared with the ever-lasting word of the Lord (v8). The disparagement of the mortal condition is notable in the repetition of “the grass fades, the flower withers” in both v7 and v8. The image is repeated in 51,12 and makes clear the transience of man. Yhwh says that Israel should not fear “a mere mortal who must die, a human being who fades like grass.” Man’s mortality is one of the major differences between human and divine, and is another reason why nothing can be likened to God. Once more the author raises God over man in an incomparable way. As man is comparable to grass it is not surprising that he can never hope to achieve the divine acts of vv 12-17. It is

17. The text may not necessarily be subverting Babylonian kingship however, as we know from Ezekiel’s dating system that some exiles considered Jehoiachin to still retain some form of rightful kingship. If one does not subscribe to an exile dating, Deutero-Isaiah could well be subverting a Judahite kingship, or governorship, that he disagreed with. The statements of all flesh being grass could well be a rhetorical shot across the bows of Israel’s own upper classes and royal court as much as being aimed at Babylon.

18. The same idea can be found in Psalm 8,4 (5); 90,3; 103,14; 104,29; 146,4. Psalm 8 questions why Yhwh should care for them as they (humans) are so insignificant – “What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?” Psalm 90,3 is closely tied to the creation traditions and is noteworthy for our discussion—“You turn us back to dust and say, ‘Turn back, you mortals.’” And 90,5 states “You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning.”
also worth noting that as man is grass, he is not even considered as an answer to v18. Instead, the immediate suggestion is an idol; an item deliberately fashioned to be sacred, to be in the image of God, to be of the best materials, but still is not even close to being compared to the likeness of God. There is no suggestion of parenthood in the passage. The answer to “whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare him to?” is, very clearly, nothing and no-one. Which, if we accept the arguments cited above relating likeness to God and human kingship, this may add further weight to the suggestion of a rhetorical polemic against a king or ruling classes in some form. It might suggest that none of the kings around were deemed good enough to take on this mantle of likeness to God.

Perhaps in this same vein is Isaiah 46,3-4. This passage uses mother/midwife imagery to describe Yhwh bringing forth Israel from the womb, but does not allow Israel to enjoy their status as a child of Yhwh. As a child grew up it was eventually expected to take care of its parents, an idea which is still present in society today. The “child” Israel in 46,3-4 however is unable to fulfil this role of taking care of its parent—rather, Yhwh must bear Israel through its life to old age. The image is a disappointing one for Israel’s pride as it is unable to fulfil an essential role of sonship, but displays the care of Yhwh, willing to carry Israel throughout the years. 49,14-15 is similar again, and is cited by Crouch in support of her divine parentage interpretation of Genesis 1,26-27. In chapter 49, the surface metaphor is of a mother unable to forget her child, but the message moves beyond the metaphor to an assertion that Yhwh can never forget Israel. Although some wish to state this as an example of divine parenthood, the text does not make this claim; it claims only that Yhwh’s care for, and remembrance of, Israel extends beyond even the relationship between a mother and child. Although there is much parent-child language in Isaiah 49-55, it is almost exclusively regarding Zion’s children, i.e. between the exiles and the city of Jerusalem.

IV. Isaiah 40-55 and Genesis

As noted at the beginning of this article, the terms used to signal divine creation differ between the P and J creation narratives. בָּרָא is the term used in Genesis 1, whileעשה/יצר are preferred in Genesis 2-3. In DI, the breadth of usage is thus:

- בָּרָא - 43,1.7.12.
- יָצָר - 43,1.7.10.21; 44,2.21.24; 45,9 (x2).11.
-_quality - 45,9.12; 51,13; 54,5.19

It is evident that in Deutero-Isaiah the terms used correspond more to the J narrative than the P.20 The image in 45,9 is specifically that of Yhwh as the

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19. It should be noted, as stated previously, that these are the terms used when DI speaks specifically of the creation of humanity, rather than of creation in general. For literature on DI and the Psalms see Jerome Creach, “The Shape of Book Four of the Psalter and the Shape of Second Isaiah,” JSOT 80 (1998), pp. 63-76.
Deutero-Isaiah, J and P 305

potter, which is the verb from which יוצר stems. Westermann notes “it should be added that יוצר is the verb used specifically for the creation of humans; its use for the rest of creation is secondary.”

The idea of humans being made of clay can be seen elsewhere in Job 1:8; 4:19; Psalm 119,73, while that of humans being made from and returning to dust can be seen in Gen 3:19,23; Ps 90,3; 103,14; 104,29; 146,4. There seems to be a clear link between the J creation narrative, some of the Psalms, and Deutero-Isaiah in this respect which is supported by Shalom M. Paul; “there are thematic and literary sequences that appear both here (Isa 40,6-8) and in Ps 103,15-17, which indicate that Deutero-Isaiah was influenced by this particular psalm.”

V. Conclusions

The tradition seen in the Psalms, Deutero-Isaiah and J is clearly different to that seen in P, and, while these three traditions interlink with one another, the reader is hard pressed to find an inner-biblical tradition with which one could link Genesis 1,26-27. The clearest links for this P material is, as others have noted, royal and ancient Near Eastern kingship material. Thus those authors who have cited Deutero-Isaiah in attempt to support their interpretations of Genesis 1,26-27 would do better to look elsewhere. The emphasis in Deutero-Isaiah is of the incomparability of Yhwh. For the author, nothing and no-one can be likened to God, neither similarity of an “image” nor any possibility of human “likeness” is entertained. Instead, in line with the tradition seen in some psalms, humans are mere mortals who fade like grass which is compared to the creative power, kingship and immortality of Yhwh.

This tradition is very different to that seen in P, which is drawn from a tradition of the special relationship between kings and Gods, and the subsequent role of the human partner in that relationship. P has democratized the older tradition to the point where all humans, rather than just the king or royal family, have the potential to be in the image or likeness of God. However a note of election remains, as is seen in Gen 5,1-3, where Seth alone of Adam’s children is described as being in the image and likeness of Adam [and Adam of God] and only his lineage is recorded. This ideology of


election that underlies the seemingly broad language of Gen 1 is unsurprising, when one thinks of the theological issues that would stem from potentially suggesting that Israel’s enemies were also created in the image of God. Contrary to the inclusiveness that modern theologians have tended to take as a start point for analysis of the importance and meaning of Gen 1:26-27, the P narrative carries a clear note of election. Either some humans will be able to act in a way which means they will be recognised to be in the image and likeness of God, or, only those descended from men who were in the image and likeness of God can continue the tradition (i.e. direct lineal descent from Adam to Seth etc). This latter note would contribute to the importance of the genealogies in P, but also raises questions of why these individuals came to be in the image and likeness of God, while others around them, and their descendants, did not. Either way, selection or election is at work in P and with reference to modern theology, this may serve to limit the scope of to whom the statements in Gen 1:26-27 may apply.