

CHRISTIAN PATRISTIC AND MEDIAEVAL INTERPRETATION OF THE
PLURAL FORMS IN GENESIS 1.26, 3.5 AND 3.22 SITUATED
AGAINST THE CLASSIC JEWISH EXPOSITION

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Introduction

The plural forms in Gen. 1.26 (בדמותנו and בצלמנו, נעשה), 3.5 (ידעי) and 3.22 (כאחד ממנו), which might appertain to the Divine, were discussed by both Jewish expositors and by Christian theologians. In fact, the interpretation of these forms coincided with the process by which Christianity emerged from Judaism as a distinct theological phenomenon. It appears that while dissenting from the traditional Jewish explanation of the plural forms, early Christian thinkers, such as Justin, reworked and utilized some of the Jewish concepts with which they were acquainted. Although the Christian Scriptures put no trinitarian construction upon the plural forms, the interpretation of these forms in Gen. 1.26 and 3.22 became a litmus test of Christian orthodoxy and it was regarded as an integral part of the Christian identity in the ancient and mediaeval church.

In the narrative, Gen. 3.5 and Gen. 3.22 were interrelated because in the former passage the serpent enticed Eve to eat the fruit by saying that in consequence she and Adam would be like (כ) אלהים knowing (ידעי) good and evil, whereas in the latter passage God (י אלהים) concluded that human beings became 'like (כ) one (אחד) of us (ממנו)'. In both verses there are plural forms (ידעי) or phrases (כאחד ממנו) potentially pertinent to the Divine.

The literature on the Christian interpretation of the plural forms is vast¹ and the same is true of the historical-critical commentaries² on and studies³ of Gen. 1.26, 3.5 and 3.22. Furthermore, the topic of the plural forms and the understanding of the image in which human beings were created dovetailed together.⁴ The present paper focuses on the Christian trajectory of interpretation in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, while this trajectory is examined in the light of the classic Jewish exposition of the plural forms as recorded in the Targumim and in the Midrashic and Talmudic literature. The mediaeval Jewish interpretation of these phenomena rested on these early strata of the Jewish tradition.

1. Jules Lebreton, *Les origines du dogme de la Trinité* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1919), pp. 507-512; Robert McLachlan Wilson, 'The Early History of the Exegesis of Gen. 1:26', *StPatr* 1 (1957), pp. 420-37; Gregory T. Armstrong, *Die Genesis in der alten Kirche: Die drei Kirchenväter* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1962).

2. August Dillmann, *Genesis Critically and Exegetically Expounded* (trans. William Black Stevenson; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897), I, pp. 77-85 (Gen. 1.26-27), 151-52 (Gen. 3.5), 167-69 (Gen. 3.22); Samuel Rolles Driver, *The Book of Genesis with Introduction and Notes* (London: Methuen, 1904), pp. 14-15 (Gen. 1.26-27), 45 (Gen. 3.5), 50 (Gen. 3.22); Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch* (trans. James Martin; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), I, pp. 61-67 (Gen. 1.24-31), 94-96 (Gen. 3.1-8), 106-108 (Gen. 3.22); Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (trans. John H. Marks; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), pp. 55-59 (Gen. 1.26-28), 86-87 (Gen. 3.4-5), 94 (Gen. 3.22); Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC, 1; Dallas: Word Books, 1998), pp. 27-34 (Gen. 1.26-28), 73-75 (Gen. 3.5), 85 (Gen. 3.22); Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (trans. John J. Scullion; CC; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), pp. 142-61 (Gen. 1.26-28), 240-48 (Gen. 3.5), 272-73 (Gen. 3.22).

3. Jarl Fossum, 'Gen. 1:26 and 2:7 in Judaism, Samaritanism and Gnosticism', *JSJ* 16 (1985), pp. 202-239.

4. Gerald Bray, 'The Significance of God's Image in Man', *TynBul* 42 (1991), pp. 195-225; David J.A. Clines, 'The Image of God in Man', *TynBul* 19 (1968), pp. 53-103; Carly Lorraine Crouch, 'Genesis 1:26-7 as a Statement of Humanity's Divine Parentage', *JTS* 61 (2010), pp. 1-15; Paul Niskanen, 'The Poetics of Adam: The Creation of אדם in the Image of אלהים', *JBL* 128 (2009), pp. 417-36; Claudia Welz, 'Imago Dei: References to the Invisible', *ST* 65 (2011), pp. 74-91.

Ancient Jewish Translations

The Hebrew text of Gen. 1.26, 3.5 and 3.22 was uniform in the Masoretic version as far as the plural forms are concerned. From a literary perspective, in Gen. 1.26-27 singular and plural forms of both verbs (נעשה versus ויברא and ברא) and pronominal suffixes (בצלמנו and כדמותנו versus בצלמו) are used interchangeably. In view of parallelism, בצלמנו from Gen. 1.26 should be explicated in the light of בצלם אלהים from Gen. 1.27. Thus, ‘our image’, in which human beings were created, was that of אלהים. In the narrative there is also a natural transition from the singular to the plural concerning אדם that could denote either the individual person distinct from Eve and called Adam or both male (זכר) and female (נקבה) as indicated by Gen. 1.27. Therefore, in Gen. 1.26a God said ‘let us make אדם [...]’ but in Gen. 1.26b God said with reference to אדם ‘let them rule (וירדו) [...]’.

Targum Onkelos⁵ upheld the plural form of the verb in Gen. 1.26a, rendering Hebrew נעשה by means of Aramaic נעביד. Actually, in Hebrew the verbs עשה and עבד could be synonyms. Furthermore, in Targum Onkelos to Gen. 1.26 the plural pronominal suffixes on צלם and דמות were retained, while the Aramaic equivalents of both nouns were used with the same prepositions (ב and כ, respectively). Targum Pseudo-Jonathan⁶ followed the interpretation found in Targum Onkelos, yet it elucidated Gen. 1.26 in theological terms by adding that God said ‘let us make [...]’ to the angels that were created by him and that were ministering in front of him. Moreover, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan used the Aramaic noun (דיוקנא) of Greek origin (δύο + εἰκών)⁷ in place of דמות which could function both in Hebrew and in Aramaic and which

5. Abraham Berliner (ed.), *Targum Onkelos* (2 vols.; Berlin: Kauffmann, 1884), I, p. 2 (Gen. 1.26).

6. ‘Targum [Pseudo-]Jonathan’, in Brian Walton (ed.), *Biblia sacra polyglotta* (6 vols.; London: Roycroft, 1653–1657), IV, p. 3 (Gen. 1.26).

7. Nathan Jehiel, *Rabbinisch-aramäisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zur Kenntnis des Talmuds, der Targumim und Midraschim* (ed. Moses Israel Landau; 5 vols.; Prague: Scholl, 1819–1824), II, pp. 461-62 (s.v. דיוקן); Jacob Levy, *Chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Targumim und einen grossen Teil des rabbinischen Schrifttums* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Baumgärtner, 1867–1868), I, p. 170 (s.v. דיוקנא).

was employed by Targum Onkelos. Besides, the Targum to Ps 39.7a translated דיוקנא as צלם.⁸

Although no Jerusalem Targum to Gen. 1.26 is extant, the Jerusalem Targum to Gen. 1.27 casts light upon the preceding verse.⁹ Accordingly, the act of creating human beings was attributed to the Word of the LORD (מימרא דיי), while human beings were created in the likeness (דמות) of the Word of the LORD, namely, in the 'likeness from before the LORD'. Such an interpretation articulated that the LORD used his Word as the instrument mediating between the intangible and the tangible, while creating the world and while acting in the created realm. This approach coincided with the Philonic concept of *λόγος* and it could be traced back to the biblical literature (e.g. Jer. 10.12; Ps. 33.6; Prov. 3.19, ch. 8 or Job 28) which recorded the idea of God's Wisdom (חכמה, σοφία) or God's Word prominent in Hellenistic Judaism.

The Jerusalem Targum¹⁰ to Gen. 1.1 and the tractate Sanhedrin¹¹ maintained that God created the universe through (ב) the Wisdom (חכמה), whereas the grand Midrash on the Book of Genesis¹² (רבה בראשית) announced that while looking at the Torah (מביט בתורה), God created the universe because ראשית, by means of which (ב) God was said to create the world, was identified with the Torah. Similarly, the Pirke attributed to Rabbi Eliezer¹³ asserted that God said 'let us make [...]', conversing with the Torah about his anticipated act of creating human beings. Consequently, the divine Wisdom (identical with the Torah) was construed as the LORD's instrument (דקב"ה כלי), as the agency which emanated from God and which represented God, yet without being independent of God in ontological terms. The Yalkut

8. 'Targum', in Brian Walton (ed.), *Biblia sacra polyglotta* (6 vols.; London: Roycroft, 1653–1657), III, p. 144 (Ps. 39.7).

9. 'Targum Hierosolymitanum', in Brian Walton (ed.), *Biblia sacra polyglotta* (6 vols.; London: Roycroft, 1653–1657), IV, p. 3 (Gen. 1.27).

10. 'Targum Hierosolymitanum', p. 2 (Gen. 1.1). See the reference to Prov. 3.19: 'בראשית', in ספר מדרש תנחומא (Petrikau: צעדערבוים, 1913), p. 1 (Gen. 1.1).

11. 'סנהדרין', in תלמוד בבלי (Warsaw: Orgelbrand, 1862), XIII, p. 38r (No. 38a).

12. 'ספר בראשית', in מדרש רבה על התורה (Warsaw: Orgelbrand, 1890), p. 1r (I, 2 [Gen. 1.1]).

13. ספר פרקי רבי אליעזר (Vilnius: Romm, 1838), p. 15 (XI, 6).

Shimoni¹⁴ suggested that God might say ‘let us make [...]’ either to the Torah or to the angels serving in front of him.

The ancient Greek versions of Gen. 1.26 preserved all plural features of the Hebrew original.¹⁵ The Septuagint translated both prepositions (i.e. כ and ב) as κατά. It is notable that a parallelism found in the book of Sirach, which was a part of the Septuagint, illustrated how the image was understood in that Hellenistic Jewish text. In the light of Sir. 17.3,¹⁶ the statement that God created (ἐποίησεν) human beings according to his image (κατ’ εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ) meant that God clothed (ἐνέδυσεν), namely, endowed human beings with power (ἰσχύν) according to himself (καθ’ ἑαυτὸν). Thus, the creation in accordance with God’s image was the creation on the pattern of God himself, while this pattern conveyed a sense of divine power.

Targum Onkelos¹⁷ and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan¹⁸ reworked Gen. 3.5 in order to streamline the narrative from a theological point of view. The explicit statement that ‘God knows [...]’ (יָדַע אֱלֹהִים), which in the original was attributed to the serpent, was rephrased to ensure the serpent’s distance from God. Thus, the Targumim read that the serpent said to Eve: ‘it was evident in front of the LORD that [...]’. Moreover, according to Targum Onkelos, the serpent encouraged Eve to eat the fruit so that she and Adam would be like (כ) ‘the mighty’ (רַבְרַבִּין) who knew the difference between (בין) good and evil. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan coincided with the Targum Onkelos, yet specified that ‘the mighty’ (רַבְרַבִּין) were the mighty angels (מַלְאֲכִין) because the appellation רַבְרַבִּין was so generic that it might refer to any kind of human or angelic beings vested with authority and power. Additionally, both Targumim stated

14. ‘ילקוט בראשית’, in ספר ילקוט שמעוני (Vilnius: Romm, 1863), pp. 6r-6v (no. 12-14 [Gen. 1.26]).

15. Henry Barclay Swete (ed.), *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint* (3 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1887–1907), I, p. 2 (Gen. 1.26); Frederick Field (ed.), *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt: Sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1875), I, p. 10 (Gen. 1.26 [Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion]).

16. Robert Holmes and James Parsons, ed., *Vetus Testamentum Graecum cum variis lectionibus* (5 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1798–1827), V, [s.p.] (Sir. 17.3). καθ’ ἑαυτὸν is the only reasonable reading.

17. Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, p. 3 (Gen. 3.5).

18. ‘Targum [Pseudo-]Jonathan’, p. 5 (Gen. 3.5).

that ‘the mighty/angels’ knew the difference between (בין) good and evil instead of saying that they simply knew good and evil because the direct knowledge of good and evil was reserved for God.

The Septuagint¹⁹ translated Gen. 3.5 literally, asserting that by eating the fruit, Adam and Eve were supposed to be ‘like gods’ (ὡς θεοί) who knew (γινώσκοντες) good and evil. Consequently, it appears that the plural form of the participle (ידעי) in the Hebrew original of Gen. 3.5b impelled the LXX translators to parse אלהים in that verse as plural.

The Masoretic text of Gen. 3.22 and the Septuagint²⁰ dovetailed together. The LXX imitated literally both the plural phrasing (ὡς εἶξ ἕξ ἡμῶν) [כאחד ממנו] and the purpose clause (τοῦ γινώσκαι) [לדעת]. To the contrary, the LXX revision by Symmachus,²¹ Targum Onkelos,²² Targum Pseudo-Jonathan²³ and the Jerusalem Targum²⁴ proposed complex interpretations which can be visualized as follows:

Symmachus	Onkelos	Pseudo-Jonathan	Jerusalem
-	ואמר יי אלהים	ואמר יי אלהים	ואמר מימרא דיי אלהים
and God said	and the LORD God said	and the LORD God said	and the Word of the LORD-God said

19. Swete (ed.), *The Old Testament*, I, p. 4 (Gen. 3.5).

20. Swete (ed.), *The Old Testament*, I, p. 5 (Gen. 3.22).

21. Field (ed.), *Origenis Hexaplorum*, I, p. 17 (Gen. 3.22 [Symmachus]).

22. Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, p. 4 (Gen. 3.22).

23. ‘Targum [Pseudo-]Jonathan’, p. 7 (Gen. 3.22); ‘Targum of Palestine’, in *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch with the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum: Genesis and Exodus* (trans. John Wesley Etheridge; London: Longman, 1862), p. 168 (Gen. 3.22).

24. ‘Targum Hierosolymitanum’, p. 7 (Gen. 3.22); ‘Jerusalem’, in *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch with the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum: Genesis and Exodus* (trans. John Wesley Etheridge; London: Longman, 1862), p. 169 (Gen. 3.22).

-	-	למלאביא די משמשין קדמוי	-
-	-	to the angels minis- tering in front of him	-
ἴδε ὁ Ἄδὰμ γέγονεν	הא אדם הוה	הא אדם הוה	הא אדם דברית יתיה
Behold, Adam became	Behold, Adam became	Behold, Adam became	Behold, Adam whom I created
ὁμοῦ ἄφ' ἑαυτοῦ	יחידי בעלמא מיניה	יחידי בארעא היכמא	יחידי בגו עלמי היך מה
just by himself	unique in the world by himself/ on his own	unique on earth as	unique in my world just as
-	-	דאנא יחידי בשמי מרומא	דאנא יחידי בשמי מרומא
-	-	I am unique in the heaven above	I am unique in the heaven above
-	-	ועתידין	ועתידין
-	-	and in the future	and in the fu- ture
-	-	למיקום מניה	אומין סגיאין למקם מניה
-	-	arise from him	arise from him the

			numerous people
-	-	-	מניה תקום אומה
-	-	-	from him arise the people
γινώσκειν καλόν	למידע טב	דידעין למפרשא בין טב	דידעה למפרשא בין טב
to know good	to know good	those who know how to discern between good	who know how to discern between good
καὶ πονηρόν	וביש	לביש	לביש
and evil	and evil	and evil	and evil
-	-	'Had he kept the commandments which I appointed to him, he would have lived and subsisted as the tree of life forever [...]'	'And now it is good that we keep [דנטרוד] him from the garden of Eden [...]'

In principle, the interpretations cited above were seamless from a theological perspective because God did not say that Adam became *ממנו באחד* but rather depicted Adam as unique (יחיד) in the world due to his ability to discern between good and evil. From Gen. 3.5 it appears that Adam acquired this ability by eating the fruit. Consequently, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and the Jerusalem Targum compared this unique position of Adam in the world to God's unique position in the heaven.

It seems that all the Targumim relied on the same grammatical presuppositions concerning the original text of Gen. 3.22 which might be reconstructed as follows. First, אַחַד was construed as the absolute state and it was said to denote ‘unique’. Secondly, אַחַד was linked to the infinitive (לְדַעַת). Thus, Adam either individually (as Adam) or collectively (as Adam’s posterity)²⁵ became like the one who was to know good and evil. Thirdly, the preposition with the pronominal suffix (מִמֶּנּוּ) was parsed as singular (‘from him’, ‘on his own’, ‘by himself’)²⁶ and it modified either the infinitive (לְדַעַת) or the verb (הָיָה). Consequently, Adam became like the one who was to know good and evil, and either in this condition (הָיָה) or in this knowledge (לְדַעַת) Adam was self-reliant (מִמֶּנּוּ) in the world. In other words, either Adam became by himself like the one who was to know good and evil, or Adam became like the one who was to know by himself good and evil. It should be noted that in Symmachus’ revision (ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ) מִמֶּנּוּ was interpreted in the same way as in the Targumim, while the Greek ὁμοῦ might imply that Symmachus’ revision took כְּאַחַד for the adverbial phrase. Indeed, כְּאַחַד, if vocalized כְּאַחַדְךָ, not כְּאַחַד (as it was in the received Masoretic vocalization in Gen. 3.22), could act as the adverbial phrase denoting ‘together, totally or at once’ in the Tanakh (2 Chron. 5.13; Ezra 2.64; 3.9; 6.20; Neh. 7.66; Qoh. 11.6; Isa. 65.25) and this acceptance was mirrored in the Septuagint²⁷ and in the Targum.²⁸

Furthermore, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and the Jerusalem Targum mentioned that Adam as a prototype of humankind would originate countless future generations of human beings who could discern between good and evil. To emphasize that the direct knowledge of good and evil was reserved for God, both Targumim preferred to speak of ‘knowing how to discern between good and evil’ which indicated that human beings could discern between these two but not necessarily penetrate into them. Although the Jerusalem

25. This position additionally explicated מִמֶּנּוּ in terms of the source (‘from / out of Adam’).

26. Grammatically speaking, מִמֶּנּוּ could be parsed either as singular (‘from him’) or as plural (‘from us’), depending on the context.

27. Swete (ed.), *The Old Testament*, II, pp. 67 (2 Chron. 5.13), 165 (Ezra 2.64), 166 (Ezra 3.9), 172 (Ezra 6.20), 196 (Neh. 7.66), 503 (Qoh. 11.6); Swete (ed.), *The Old Testament*, III, p. 220 (Isa. 65.25).

28. ‘תרגום’, in *מקראות גדולות ספר דברי הימים* (Lublin: שניידמעסער, [s. a.]), p. 213 (2 Chron. 5.13); ‘Targum’, III, p. 424 (Qoh. 11.6); Paul de Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ chaldaice* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1872), p. 290 (Isa. 65.25).

Targum facilitated the exposition of Gen. 3.22, it also attributed a new plural form (נטרוד) to God who referred to his own action in the plural ('we keep/let us keep'). Given that this new plural form was not attested in the Hebrew original, it might be an imitation of נעשה from Gen. 1.26. Thus, in the act of creation God said 'let us make human [...]', while in response to Adam's action, God said 'let us keep human away from the garden [...]'.

Christian Interpretation in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages

The ancient Christian thinkers, who could be divided into the Latin²⁹ and

29. Tertullianus, 'Liber adversus Praxeam', in *PL*, II, pp. 191-92; *idem*, 'Adversus Marcionem', in *PL*, II, p. 520; *idem*, 'De resurrectione carnis', in *PL*, II, p. 848; Novatianus, 'Liber de Trinitate', in *PL*, III, pp. 945-46, 964-65; Marcellus, 'Epistola prima ad Salomonem episcopum', in *PL*, VII, p. 1087; Victorinus Afrus, 'Adversus Arium', in *PL*, VIII, pp. 1053-54; Hilarius, 'De Trinitate', in *PL*, X, pp. 110-13, 134-35; *idem*, 'Liber de synodis seu fide orientalium', in *PL*, X, pp. 510-11, 517; *idem*, 'Liber contra Constantium', in *PL*, X, p. 596; Philastrius, 'Liber de haeresibus', in *PL*, XII, p. 1227; Faustinus, 'De Trinitate', in *PL*, XIII, pp. 41-42; Ambrosius, 'Hexaameron', in *PL*, XIV, pp. 169, 257; *idem*, 'De fide', in *PL*, XVI, pp. 562-63, 577, 609; *idem*, 'De Spiritu sancto', in *PL*, XVI, pp. 773, 795-96; *idem*, 'Epistola XXI (37)', in *PL*, XVI, p. 1060; *idem*, 'De dignitate conditionis humanae', *PL*, XVII, p. 1015; Zacchaeus, 'Consultationum libri', in *PL*, XX, p. 1115; Rufinus, 'De fide', in *PL*, XXI, p. 1127; Hieronymus Stridonensis, 'Epistola XVIII', in *PL*, XXII, p. 374; Augustinus, 'Confessionum libri', in *PL*, XXXII, p. 858; *idem*, 'De Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber', in *PL*, XXXIV, pp. 241-44; *idem*, 'De Genesi ad litteram', in *PL*, XXXIV, pp. 291-92, 451; *idem*, 'Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti', in *PL*, XXXV, pp. 2246, 2273, 2295, 2319-2320; *idem*, 'Sermo I', in *PL*, XXXVIII, pp. 25-26; *idem*, 'Sermo LII', in *PL*, XXXVIII, pp. 361-62; *idem*, 'Sermo CXXXVI', in *PL*, XXXVIII, p. 703; *idem*, 'De cantico novo', in *PL*, XL, pp. 684-85; *idem*, 'Liber de fide ad Petrum', in *PL*, XL, p. 755; *idem*, 'Sermo XV', in *PL*, XL, pp. 1260-61; *idem*, 'De civitate Dei', in *PL*, XLI, pp. 484-85; *idem*, 'Contra sermonem Arianorum', in *PL*, XLII, p. 695; *idem*, 'Collatio cum Maximino Arianorum episcopo', in *PL*, XLII, p. 739; *idem*, 'Contra Maximinum Arianorum episcopum', in *PL*, XLII, pp. 804-805; *idem*, 'De Trinitate', in *PL*, XLII, pp. 829, 945-46, 1001-1002, 1055-56; *idem*, 'De essentia divinitatis', in *PL*, XLII, p. 1207.

Greek³⁰ fathers, unanimously put a trinitarian construction on the plural forms found in Gen. 1.26 and 3.22. Consequently, the church fathers alleged that in Gen. 1.26 God the Father said ‘let us make [...]’ either to the Son or both to the Son and to the Spirit as to the other person(s) of the Trinity coeternal with him (i.e. with the Father). Thus, in their opinion, by saying ‘let us make [...]’, the Father invited either the Son or the Son and the Spirit to join him in the work of creation and therefore, human beings were created in line with the image of God as the Father, the Son and the Spirit. The same approach was adopted by the Oriental Christian theologians in antiquity.³¹

30. [Pseudo-]Clemens, ‘Constitutiones apostolicae’, in *PG*, I, pp. 849-50; *idem*, ‘Recognitiones’, in *PG*, I, pp. 1266-69; *idem*, ‘Homilia XVI’, in *PG*, II, pp. 369-70, 373-78; Barnabas, ‘Epistola catholica’, in *PG*, II, pp. 735-36, 741-42; Ignatius, ‘Ad Antiochenos’, in *PG*, V, pp. 899-900; Irenaeus, ‘Adversus haereses’, in *PG*, VII/1, pp. 975, 1032; Origenes, ‘Contra Celsum’, in *PG*, XI, pp. 1239-40; *idem*, ‘Commentaria in Evangelium secundum Matthaeum’, in *PG*, XIII, pp. 979-80; Eusebius Caesariensis, ‘Historia ecclesiastica’, in *PG*, XX, pp. 55-56; *idem*, ‘Demonstratio evangelica’, in *PG*, XXII, pp. 379-80; Athanasius, ‘Epistola de synodis Arimini in Italia et Seleucia in Isauria celebratis’, in *PG*, XXVI, pp. 731-32, 737-38; *idem*, ‘De sancta Trinitate dialogus III’, in *PG*, XXVIII, pp. 1227-28, 1241-42; Basilius Caesariensis, ‘Homilia IX in Hexaemeron’, in *PG*, XXIX, pp. 203-206; Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, ‘Catechesis X’, in *PG*, XXXIII, pp. 667-68; Didymus, ‘De Trinitate’, in *PG*, XXXIX, pp. 565-66; Hieronymus Graecus, ‘Dialogus de sancta Trinitate inter Judaeum et Christianum’, in *PG*, XL, pp. 857-58; Epiphanius, ‘Adversus haereses’, in *PG*, XLII, pp. 25-28, 287-90, 329-30, 377-78, 427-28, 525-28, 553-54; Gregorius Nyssenus, ‘In Scripturae verba “Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostrum”’, in *PG*, XLIV, pp. 257-98; *idem*, ‘Testimonia adversus Judaeos’, in *PG*, XLVI, pp. 195-96; Chrysostomus, ‘Homilia VIII’, in *PG*, LIII, pp. 69-76 (Gen. 1.26); *idem*, ‘In Genesim sermo II’, in *PG*, LIV, pp. 585-90; *idem*, ‘De mundi creatione oratio IV’, in *PG*, LVI, pp. 465-66; *idem*, ‘Homilia XXXIII’, in *PG*, LIX, p. 190 (Jn 4.25); Socrates, ‘Historia ecclesiastica’, in *PG*, LXVII, pp. 281-84; Cyrillus Alexandrinus, ‘Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate’, in *PG*, LXXV, pp. 25-26, 85-86, 89-92, 259-60, 321-24, 433-36; *idem*, ‘De Trinitate dialogi VII’, in *PG*, LXXV, pp. 803-806, 881-82, 893-94; Theodoretus Cyrensis, ‘Quaestiones in Genesim’, in *PG*, LXXX, pp. 99-118; *idem*, ‘Graecarum affectionum curatio’, in *PG*, LXXXIII, pp. 843-48; Gelasius Cyzicenus, ‘Historia concilii Nicaeni’, in *PG*, LXXXV, pp. 1255-60.

31. Ephraem Syrus, ‘Explanatio in Genesim’, in *Opera omnia quae exstant Graece, Syriace, Latine: Syriace et Latine* (3 vols.; Rome: Salvioni, 1737–1743), I,

The ancient Christian theologians maintained that humankind was created in the image of the Godhead, which included the Son, who was said to preexist, namely, to exist prior to his incarnation (the concept of the preincarnate Logos). In their view, there was a particular connexion between the Son as one of the persons of the Trinity and humankind because God was said to create the world through the Son and human beings were created in the image of the Trinity inclusive of the Son who, according to the Christian Scriptures, was predestined to become a specific human being in due time. Thus, the ancient church fathers worked on the assumption that the image, in which human beings were created, was present within the Trinity in the sense that the Son was meant to become one of the creatures which were fashioned after his image.

Justin's³² treatment of the plural forms in Gen. 1.26 and 3.22 is an important testimony to the early Christian interpretation of these phenomena. Moreover, Justin's account is relevant because it accurately presented the mainstream Jewish positions circulating in the second century.³³ Consequently, Justin recapitulated and disapproved of several interpretations which did not support Christian claims.

Justin could not accept that God would say 'let us make [...]' to himself, while deliberating and getting down to work. The proposition, that God said 'let us make [...]' to the angels, engaging them in the work of creation as his agents, was also rebutted by Justin who asserted that even a human body could not be produced by the angels. Actually, the idea, that the angels, who were defined as God's proxies and who could be conceptualized as *λόγος*,

pp. 18 (Gen. 1.26), 38 (Gen. 3.22); *idem*, 'Adversus Judaeos sermo habitus die Dominico in Palmis', in *Opera omnia quae exstant Graece, Syriace, Latine: Syriace et Latine*, III, p. 214; Moses Bar-Cepha Syrus, 'De paradiso', in *PG*, CXI, pp. 537-38.

32. Justinus, 'Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo', in *PG*, VI, pp. 617-20, 777-78.

33. Bogdan G. Bucur, 'Justin Martyr's Exegesis of Biblical Theophanies and the Parting of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism', *TS* 75 (2014), pp. 34-51; Moriz Friedländer, 'Justins Dialog mit dem Juden Tryphon', in *Patristische und Talmudische Studien* (Vienna: Hölder, 1878), pp. 80-148; Erwin R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (Jena: Biedermann, 1923).

created the material world including human corporeality, would be acceptable to Philo and could be argued from his writings.³⁴

Furthermore, Justin fended off the interpretation according to which God addressed classical elements (στοιχεῖα), such as earth, out of which human body was created, when he said ‘let us make [...]’. This interpretation implied that God referred to the basic material elements, which had already been created by him, and that God used them to fashion the corporeal dimension of human beings.

Thus, Justin epitomized the fundamental Jewish interpretations which must be known and widespread in his lifetime. In fact, his own distinctively Christian exposition rested on the Jewish tradition though clearly contravened the tenets of Judaism. Justin exploited the concept of divine σοφία (as typified by the LXX version of Prov. 3.19) with which God conversed in the act of creation and through which God created the universe, according to the Jewish tradition. Contrary to the rabbinic consensus, Justin invested this divine σοφία with independent ontological status and claimed that σοφία manifested itself in and through Jesus to such an extent that God’s wisdom could be embodied in Jesus and identified with Jesus.

Actually, some ancient church fathers³⁵ and Byzantine mediaeval³⁶

34. Philo Alexandrinus, ‘De opificio mundi’, in Leopold Cohn and Paul Wendland (eds.), *Opera quae supersunt*, (7 vols.; Berlin: Reimer, 1896–1926), I, pp. 24-25, 46-47; *idem*, ‘Legum allegoriarum liber III’, in *Opera quae supersunt*, I, p. 134; *idem*, ‘De confusione linguarum’, in *Opera quae supersunt*, II, pp. 261, 263-264; *idem*, ‘Quis rerum divinarum heres sit’, in *Opera quae supersunt*, III, p. 38; *idem*, ‘De fuga et inventione’, in *Opera quae supersunt*, III, pp. 124-125; *idem*, ‘De mutatione nominum’, in *Opera quae supersunt*, III, pp. 161-163; *idem*, ‘De sominiis liber I’, in *Opera*, III, pp. 239-40; *idem*, ‘In Genesi: Sermo I’, in Joannes Baptista Aucher (ed.), *Paralipomena Armena* (Venice: Lazari, 1826), pp. 25-26, 36-37.

35. Hilarius, ‘De Trinitate’, pp. 110-13; *idem*, ‘Liber de synodis seu fide orientalium’, pp. 510-511, 517; Faustinus, ‘De Trinitate’, pp. 41-42; Athanasius, ‘Epistola de synodis Arimini in Italia’, pp. 737-38; Basilius Caesariensis, ‘Homilia IX in Hexaemeron’, pp. 203-206; Gregorius Nyssenus, ‘In Scripturae verba “Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostrum”’, pp. 261-62; Socrates, ‘Historia ecclesiastica’, pp. 281-84; Theodoretus Cyrensis, ‘Quaestiones in Genesim’, pp. 99-118; Procopius Gazaecus, ‘Commentarius in Genesim’, in *PG*, LXXXVII/1, pp. 107-108 (Gen. 1.26).

36. In the case of Byzantine theology, a distinction between late antiquity and the Middle Ages is hardly applicable.

theologians³⁷ epitomized non-trinitarian interpretations of the plural forms in Gen. 1.26 and 3.22. Naturally, they labelled such interpretations as Jewish and refuted them accordingly. As regards Gen. 1.26, Christian thinkers mentioned and rejected the explanation according to which God was speaking to himself about his plan to create humankind (self-deliberation) when he declared ‘let us make [...]’. From the patristic point of view, in Gen. 1.26 God neither envisaged himself creating human beings nor resorted to the plural of majesty typical of earthly rulers because such actions would be unworthy of the almighty Creator of the universe and in God’s case, they would also be completely unnecessary, redundant and inexplicable.

Furthermore, the ancient³⁸ and mediaeval³⁹ Christian theologians denied that God could say ‘let us make [...]’ to his angels for two principal reasons.

37. Euthymius Zigabenus, ‘Panoplia dogmatica’, in *PG*, CXXX, pp. 259-62; Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus, ‘Ecclesiasticae historiae libri’, in *PG*, CXLVI, pp. 345-46.

38. Tertullianus, ‘Liber adversus Praxeam’, pp. 191-92; Justinus, ‘Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo’, pp. 617-20; Philastrius, ‘Liber de haeresibus’, p. 1227; Ambrosius, ‘Hexaameron’, p. 257; Eusebius Caesariensis, ‘Demonstratio evangelica’, pp. 379-80; Basilius Caesariensis, ‘Homilia IX in Hexaameron’, pp. 203-206; Didymus, ‘De Trinitate’, pp. 565-66; Augustinus, ‘Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti’, pp. 2246, 2273, 2295, 2319-20; *idem*, ‘De civitate Dei’, pp. 484-85; Eucherius, ‘Commentarii in Genesim’, in *PL*, L, p. 900 (Gen. 1.26); Chrysostomus, ‘Homilia VIII’, pp. 69-76 (Gen. 1.26); *idem*, ‘In Genesim sermo II’, 585-90; *idem*, ‘De mundi creatione oratio IV’, pp. 465-66; *idem*, ‘Homilia XXXIII’, p. 190 (Jn 4.25); Vigilius Tapsensis, ‘De Trinitate’, in *PL*, LXII, pp. 256-57; Theodoretus Cyrensis, ‘Quaestiones in Genesim’, pp. 99-118; Procopius Gazaetus, ‘Commentarius in Genesim’, pp. 113-14 (Gen. 1.26); Anastasius Sinaita, ‘Disputatio adversus Judaeos’, in *PG*, LXXXIX, pp. 1205-1208.

39. Beda Venarabilis, ‘Hexaameron’, in *PL*, XCI, pp. 29-30 (Gen. 1.26); Paulus Alvarus Cordubensis, ‘Epistolae’, in *PL*, CXXI, p. 499; Guillelmus de Campellis, ‘Dialogus inter Christianum et Judaeum de fide catholica’, in *PL*, CLXIII, p. 1058; Bruno Astensis, ‘Expositio in Genesim’, in *PL*, CLXIV, pp. 157-58 (Gen. 1.26); Petrus Cellensis, ‘Epistola XLIII’, in *PL*, CCII, p. 465; Petrus Blesensis, ‘Contra perfidiam Judaeorum’, in *PL*, CCVII, pp. 830-31; Martinus Legionensis, ‘Sermo IV in Natale Domini II’, in *PL*, CCVIII, pp. 109-111, 388-389, 436; *idem*, ‘Sermo VII in Septuagesima II’, in *PL*, CCVIII, pp. 578-79; *idem*, ‘Sermo XXXIV in Festivitate sanctae Trinitatis’, in *PL*, CCVIII, pp. 1271-1272. Gualterus de Castellione, ‘Tractatus contra Judaeos’, in *PL*, CCIX, pp. 450-51; Thomas Aquinas, ‘Summa

First, the angelic interpretation would not allow them to make trinitarian claims. Secondly, the ancient Christian exegetes were convinced that if God said ‘let us make [...]’ to the angels, human beings would have to be created in the angels’ image which was unacceptable to them. Accordingly, the ancient Christian interpreters argued that angels, as God’s creatures could neither cooperate with the Creator of the universe, when he crafted human beings, nor set the pattern for the creation of humankind. From a Christian perspective, God simply could not use angels as his deputies or proxies, while creating human beings, without making their features a part of the image in which human race was created.

The church fathers’ interpretation of the plural forms in Gen. 1.26 determined their trinitarian reading of ‘one of us’ in Gen. 3.22. In their opinion, God was speaking of himself in the plural because he was the Trinity. Thus, ‘one of us’ was supposed to mean ‘one of the three divine persons’. In principle, the church fathers realized that the angelic interpretation of ‘let us make [...]’ (Gen. 1.26) would entail the angelic explanation of ‘one of us’ (Gen. 3.22) as ‘one of the spiritual beings such as God and his angels’. Obviously, the angelic reference was repudiated by the ancient Christian expositors in both instances because it would undo their trinitarian argumentation.

The Western⁴⁰ Christian theologians in the Middle Ages interpreted the plural forms in Gen. 1.26 and 3.22 according to the patristic consensus, as

theologiae’, in *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita*. V (Rome: Ex Typographia Polyglotta, 1889), p. 395; Nicolaus de Lyra, ‘Genesis’, in *Biblia sacra cum glossis interlineari et ordinaria* (6 vols.; Lyon: Vincent, 1545), I, pp. 28r-28v (Gen. 1.26); Dionysius Carthusianus, ‘Compendium theologicum’, in *Opera minora*. I (Cologne: Soter, 1532), p. 58v.

40. Eucherius, ‘Commentarii in Genesim’, pp. 900 (Gen. 1.26), 915 (Gen. 3.22); Paschasius Diaconus, ‘De Spiritu sancto libri duo’, in *PL*, LXII, pp. 13-14; Vigilius Tapsensis, ‘Contra Arianos, Sabellianos, etc., dialogus’, in *PL*, LXII, pp. 185-86, 225-26; *idem*, ‘De Trinitate’, pp. 256-57; *idem*, ‘Contra Marivadum’, in *PL*, LXII, pp. 387, 393; Fulgentius, ‘De fide’, in *PL*, LXV, pp. 674-75; *idem*, ‘De Trinitate’, in *PL*, LXV, p. 500; Beda Venarabilis, ‘Hexaameron’, pp. 28-30 (Gen. 1.26), 60-61 (Gen. 3.22); *idem*, ‘In Pentateuchum commentarii’, in *PL*, XCI, p. 200 (Gen. 1.26); *idem*, ‘De sex dierum creatione liber’, in *PL*, XCIII, pp. 216-17 (Gen. 1.26), 234 (Gen. 3.22); Hildephonsus Toletanus, ‘Liber de virginitate perpetua S. Mariae’, in *PL*, XCVI, p. 79; Alcuinus, ‘Interrogationes et responsiones in Genesim’, in *PL*, C, pp. 520, 524-25, 533; *idem*, ‘Dicta beati Albini Levitae’, in *PL*, C, pp. 565-68; *idem*, ‘De fide sanctae Trinitatis’, in *PL*, CI, p. 15; Rabanus Maurus, ‘Commentariorum in

Genesim libri quatuor', in *PL*, CVII, pp. 459-61 (Gen. 1.26), 499-500 (Gen. 3.22), 530 (Gen. 11.7); *idem*, 'De universo', in *PL*, CXI, p. 27; Walafridus Strabus, 'Glossa ordinaria', in *PL*, CXIII, pp. 80 (Gen. 1.26), 96-97 (Gen. 3.22); Angelomus Luxoviensis, 'Commentarius in Genesis', in *PL*, CXV, pp. 121-22 (Gen. 1.26), 144-45 (Gen. 3.22), 167 (Gen. 11.7); Paulus Alvarus Cordubensis, 'Epistolae', p. 499; Hincmarus Rhemensis, 'De una et non trina deitate', in *PL*, CXXV, pp. 589-95; Isidorus Mercator, 'Collectio Decretalium', in *PL*, CXXX, p. 214; Remigius Altissiodorensis, 'Commentarius in Genesis', in *PL*, CXXXI, pp. 56-57 (Gen. 1.26), 67 (Gen. 3.22); Petrus Damianus, 'Antilogus contra Judaeos', in *PL*, CXLV, pp. 42-43; Othlonus Emmerammi, 'Dialogus de tribus quaestionibus', in *PL*, CXLVI, pp. 97-98; Guillelmus de Campellis, 'Dialogus inter Christianum et Judaeum de fide catholica', 1057. Bruno Astensis, 'Expositio in Genesis', pp. 157-58 (Gen. 1.26); Rupertus Tuitiensis, 'Commentariorum de operibus S. Trinitatis libri XLII: Liber Genesis', in *PL*, CLXVII, pp. 247-52, 314-15; *idem*, 'Commentariorum de operibus S. Trinitatis libri XLII: De operibus Spiritus sancti', in *PL*, CLXVII, pp. 1581; *idem*, 'In Jonam prophetaem commentarium', in *PL*, CLXVIII, p. 416; *idem*, 'De glorificatione Trinitatis et processione sancti Spiritus', in *PL*, CLXIX, pp. 75-76, 79; *idem*, 'De divinis officiis', in *PL*, CLXX, pp. 183-84, 307-12; Hildebertus Cenomanensis, 'Sermones de tempore (XXI)', in *PL*, CLXXI, p. 435; *idem*, 'Tractatus theologicus', in *PL*, CLXXI, pp. 1076-77, 1118; Hugo de Sancto Victore, 'Summa sententiarum', in *PL*, CLXXVI, pp. 51-52; Petrus Abaelardus, 'Expositio in Hexaemeron', in *PL*, CLXXVIII, pp. 759-63 (Gen. 1.26-27); *idem*, 'Introductio ad theologiam', in *PL*, CLXXVIII, pp. 990-91, 998-99; *idem*, 'Theologia Christiana', in *PL*, CLXXVIII, pp. 1126-28; *idem*, 'Epitome theologiae Christianae', in *PL*, CLXXVIII, pp. 1701, 1705-1707; Zacharias Chrysopolitanus, 'De concordia evangelistarum', in *PL*, CLXXXVI, pp. 31-32; Robertus Pullus, 'Sententiae', in *PL*, CLXXXVI, pp. 689, 731; Petrus Lombardus, 'In Epistolam I ad Corinthios', in *PL*, CXCI, p. 1631 [1 Cor. 11.4-7]; *idem*, 'Sententiarum libri quatuor', *PL*, CXCII, pp. 526-27; Bandinus Theologus, 'Sententiarum libri quatuor', in *PL*, CXCII, pp. 973-74, 1002-1003; Hugo Ambianensis, 'De fide catholica et Oratione Dominica', in *PL*, CXCII, pp. 1341-42; Gerhohus Reicherspergensis, 'Commentarium in Psalmos', in *PL*, CXCIII, pp. 629, 1459 (Ps. 40.15 [Vulgate 39.16]); Wolbero Pantaleonis Coloniensis, 'Commentaria in Canticum canticorum', in *PL*, CXCIV, p. 1226 (Cant. 6.12); Petrus Comestor, 'Historia scholastica', in *PL*, CXCVIII, p. 1063; *idem*, 'Sermo V', in *PL*, CXCVIII, p. 1736; Hugo Eterianus, 'De haeresibus Graecorum', in *PL*, CCII, p. 250; Petrus Cellensis, 'Epistola XLIII', p. 465; *idem*, 'Sermo XXXV', in *PL*, CCII, p. 745; Garnerius Lingonensis, 'Sermo II', in *PL*, CCV, pp. 575-81; *idem*, 'Sermo XXII', in *PL*, CCV, pp. 716-18; Petrus Blesensis, 'Sermo XXVI', in *PL*, CCVII, pp. 639-40; *idem*, 'Contra perfidiam Judaeorum', pp. 830-31; *idem*,

did their Byzantine⁴¹ counterparts. It appears that the trinitarian interpretation of the aforementioned plural forms was inherent in the ancient and mediaeval concept of the Christian identity, albeit the Christian Scriptures never interpreted these passages in trinitarian terms.

Since most of the Christian expositors prior to the age of the Reformation relied on the LXX version of Gen. 3.5 (ἔσεσθε ὡς θεοί, γινώσκοντες καλὸν καὶ πονηρόν) or on the Vulgate (*eritis sicut dii scientes bonum et malum*), the fact that the plural form of the participle (יְדַעִים) modified אֱלֹהִים, was unknown to them. Generally speaking, the ancient⁴² and mediaeval⁴³ Christian

‘Instructio fidei catholicae’, in *PL*, CCVII, pp. 1071-72; Martinus Legionensis, ‘Sermo IV in Natale Domini II’, pp. 109-111, pp. 388-389, 436; *idem*, ‘Sermo VII in Septuagesima II’, pp. 578-579; *idem*, ‘Sermo XXXIV in Festivitate sanctae Trinitatis’, pp. 1271-72; *idem*, ‘Sermones de diversis (Sermo XI)’, in *PL*, CCIX, p. 169; Gualterus de Castellione, ‘Tractatus contra Judaeos’, pp. 437-438, 450-451; Alanus de Insulis, ‘De fide catholica contra haereticos libri IV’, in *PL*, CCX, pp. 403-404; *idem*, ‘Regulae theologicae’, in *PL*, CCX, p. 639; Petrus Pictaviensis, ‘Sententiarum libri quinque’, in *PL*, CCXI, p. 896; Sicardus Cremonensis, ‘Mitræ’, in *PL*, CCXIII, p. 327; Aquinas, ‘Summa theologiae’, in *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita*, V, pp. 395, 405-406; *idem*, ‘Summa theologiae’, in *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita*, VIII (Rome: Ex Typographia Polyglotta, 1895), p. 35. Hugo de Sancto Caro, ‘Liber Geneseos’, in *Opera omnia in universum Vetus et Novum Testamentum* (8 vols.; Venice: Pezzana, 1703), I, 3r (Gen. 1.26); Nicolaus de Lyra, ‘Genesis’, pp. 28r-28v (Gen. 1.26), 43r-43v (Gen. 3.22); Dionysius Carthusianus, ‘Compendium theologicum’, p. 58v.

41. Justinianus, ‘Tractatus contra Monophysitas’, in *PG*, LXXXVI/1, pp. 1137-40; Procopius Gazaesus, ‘Commentarius in Genesim’, pp. 107-108 (Gen. 1.26), 113-14 (Gen. 1.26), 187-88 (Gen. 3.5), 221-24 (Gen. 3.22), 311-14 (Gen. 11.7); Cosmas Indicopleustes, ‘Topographia Christiana’, in *PG*, LXXXVIII, pp. 309-12; Anastasius Sinaita, ‘In Hexaameron’, in *PG*, LXXXIX, pp. 930-34, 1055-56; *idem*, ‘Disputatio adversus Judaeos’, pp. 1205-1208; Maximus Abbas, ‘Quaestiones ad Thalassium’, in *PG*, XC, pp. 361-64; Leo Patricius, ‘Epitome interpretationis in Genesim e variis patribus’, in *PG*, CVI, pp. 1021-22; Georgius Hamartolus, ‘Chronicon’, in *PG*, CX, pp. 645-50; Euthymius Zigabenus, ‘Panoplia dogmatica’, pp. 259-62, 735-36; Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus, ‘Ecclesiasticae historiae libri’, pp. 345-46.

42. Ephraem Syrus, ‘Explanatio in Genesim’, p. 30 (Gen. 3.5); Procopius Gazaesus, ‘Commentarius in Genesim’, pp. 187-88 (Gen. 3.5), 223-24 (Gen. 3.22).

43. Beda Venarabilis, ‘Hexaameron’, pp. 54 (Gen. 3.5), 60-61 (Gen. 3.22); *idem*, ‘In Pentateuchum commentarii’, p. 211 (Gen. 3.5); Rabanus Maurus,

theologians explicated the phrase ‘like אלהים’ in Gen. 3.5 as a figure of speech by means of which the serpent intended not only to highlight but even to exaggerate the benefits, which Eva could reap by eating fruit from the tree, in order to deceive her more effectively. Although the ancient and mediaeval Christian expositors⁴⁴ sporadically embraced the angelic interpretation of אלהים in Gen. 3.5, Procopius of Gaza⁴⁵ noticed that in Hebrew אלהים might denote either God or gods, and in his view, both readings could make sense in the context of Gen. 3.5.

As a matter of fact, some of the ancient and mediaeval Christian theologians were cognizant of the lexical and grammatical features of God’s generic name in Hebrew (אלהים). For instance, Justin⁴⁶ mentioned that in Hebrew the root אל conveyed a sense of power (δύναμις), while Jerome⁴⁷ asserted that Hebrew אלהים might be parsed either as singular or as plural, and therefore, could denote either God or gods (idols), depending on the context. In the Middle Ages Rabanus Maurus⁴⁸ recalled Jerome’s statement, adding that אלהים might denote not only true God or false god(s) but also God’s people or God’s messengers (i.e. angels). Actually, the non-divine denotations of אלהים, such as religious or communal leader(s), ruler(s), judge(s) or idol(s), were known to the ancient Christian theologians.⁴⁹

‘Commentariorum in Genesim libri quatuor’, pp. 488-89 (Gen. 3.5), 494 (Gen. 3.13); Walafrius Strabus, ‘Glossa ordinaria’, p. 92 (Gen. 3.5); Angelomus Luxoviensis, ‘Commentarius in Genesin’, pp. 136-37 (Gen. 3.5); Rupertus Tuitiensis, ‘Commentariorum de operibus S. Trinitatis libri XLII: Liber Genesis’, pp. 292-93; Alanus de Insulis, ‘De fide catholica contra haereticos libri IV’, pp. 403-404; Hugo de Sancto Caro, ‘Liber Geneseos’, pp. 6r (Gen. 3.5), 6v (Gen. 3.22); Nicolaus de Lyra, ‘Genesis’, p. 41r (Gen. 3.5).

44. Bruno Astensis, ‘Expositio in Genesin’, p. 167 (Gen. 3.5).

45. Procopius Gazaeus, ‘Commentarius in Genesin’, pp. 223-24 (Gen. 3.22).

46. Justinus, ‘Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo’, pp. 765-68.

47. Hieronymus Stridonensis, ‘Epistola XXV ad eandem Marcellam de decem nominibus Dei’, in *PL*, XXII, pp. 429-30.

48. Rabanus Maurus, ‘Commentariorum in Genesim libri quatuor’, pp. 511-12 (Gen. 6.1-2).

49. Aphraates, ‘Demonstratio XVII’, in *Patrologia Syriaca* (ed. Rene Graffin; 2 vols.; Paris: Didot, 1894–1907), I, pp. 787-96; Augustinus, ‘In Psalmum LXXXI enarratio’, in *PL*, XXXVII, pp. 1046-51 (Psalm 82/LXX 81); Eusebius Caesariensis, ‘Commentaria in Psalmos’, in *PG*, XXIII, pp. 981-90 (Psalm 82/LXX 81); Theodoretus Cyrensis, ‘Quaestiones in Exodum’, in *PG*, LXXX, pp. 243-44 (Exodus

Furthermore, in the Middle Ages Peter Abelard⁵⁰ argued that in Hebrew **אלהים** was the plural form either of **אלוה** or of **אל** and he maintained that **אלהים** could denote true or false God(s) or the judge(s), depending on the context. For Abelard, the plural ending of **אלהים** was an indication of the plurality within the Godhead. Consequently, he reasoned that since **אלהים** occurred with both singular and plural grammatical forms, the singular forms connected with **אלהים** safeguarded God's unity, while the plural forms demonstrated the plurality of persons within the Godhead.

Additionally, the pseudo-Clementine literature⁵¹ is the evidence of the ancient Christian perspective on the generic name of God and an account of the ancient Christian reception of the plural forms (Gen. 1.26; 3.5; 3.22; 11.7; Exod. 22.27, 28) based on the Septuagint. In the pseudo-Clementine dialogues the passages cited above were adduced by the heterodox interlocutor as proof of polytheism and refuted accordingly by the orthodox⁵² party. The orthodox party vanquished the polytheistic reading of these passages in two ways. First, it argued that the appellation 'God' communicated varying degrees of power and authority. Consequently, true God was the almighty Creator and Ruler of the universe, while false gods (idols) purported to be agents of divine power and they were perceived this way by their worshippers. Moreover, Moses (Exod. 7.1), judges (Exod. 22.27, 28) or angels could be called 'gods' because they represented the LORD in the world, stood proxy for him and acted on his behalf. Actually, believers might also be called

7), 273-74 (Exodus 22); *idem*, 'Interpretatio in Psalmos', in *PG*, LXXX, pp. 1527-30 (Ps. 82.1-6/LXX 81.1-6).

50. Petrus Abaelardus, 'Introductio ad theologiam', pp. 998-99; *idem*, 'Theologia Christiana', pp. 1126-28; *idem*, 'Epitome theologiae Christianae', pp. 1701, 1705-1707; Garnerius Lingonensis, Martinus Legionensis, Peter Lombard, Petrus Blesensis, Alanus de Insulis and Bandinus Theologus reasoned likewise. Garnerius Lingonensis, 'Sermo XXII', pp. 716-17. Martinus Legionensis, 'Sermo XXXIV in Festivitate sanctae Trinitatis', p. 1272. Petrus Lombardus, 'Sententiarum libri quatuor', p. 527; Petrus Blesensis, 'Contra perfidiam Judaeorum', pp. 832-33; Alanus de Insulis, 'De fide catholica contra haereticos libri IV', pp. 403-404; Bandinus Theologus, 'Sententiarum libri quatuor', pp. 973-74.

51. [Pseudo-]Clemens, 'Constitutiones apostolicae', pp. 849-50; *idem*, 'Recognitiones', pp. 1266-69; *idem*, 'Homilia XVI', pp. 369-70, 373-78.

52. Namely, by the party qualified as orthodox within the framework of the narrative.

'gods' as God's children. Secondly, the orthodox party contended that in Gen. 1.26 God said 'let us make [...]' to his Wisdom (*σοφία*) which could be equated with the Logos. Although the pseudo-Clementine writings were not explicit on this point, Christians naturally identified the aforementioned Logos with Jesus. Thus, the ancient and mediaeval Christian interpreters pursued the trinitarian interpretation of the plural forms in Gen. 1.26 and 3.22, knowing the classic Jewish exposition thereof and being mindful of the possible non-divine aspects of the meaning of *אלהים* which played a significant part in the Jewish exegesis of Gen. 3.5.

Classic Jewish Exposition

Expounding Gen. 1.1, the grand Midrash on the Book of Genesis⁵³ safeguarded the unity of God and pointed out that *אלהים*, which could be parsed either as singular or as plural and which might denote either true/false God(s) or human/angelic agent(s) of power, depending on the context, referred to the one and only God in Gen. 1.1 because *אלהים* acted as the subject of the singular verb (*ברא*), not the plural one (*בראו*). Likewise, the grand Midrash⁵⁴ recalled that Gen. 1.27 read that God created (*ויברא אלהים*), not that gods created (*ויבראו אלהים*), humankind. Thus, there was only one divine authority /power (*רשות*), not many (*רשויות*), creating the universe. This hermeneutical presupposition determined the Midrashic interpretation of the plural forms which in Genesis 1–3 might refer to the Divine.

Commenting upon Gen. 1.26, the grand Midrash⁵⁵ contended that the plural form 'let us make [...]' signalled that God consulted (*גמלך*) someone or something, while creating human race. Several answers to the question, whom God consulted, were recorded in the grand Midrash. According to the first interpretation, God consulted (*גמלך*) the works of heaven and earth, namely, the intangible and tangible⁵⁶ creatures which were created prior to the creation of humankind. The grand Midrash mentioned that God either could consult all prehuman creatures at once or could consult creatures made

53. 'ספר בראשית', in *מדרש רבה על התורה*, p. 2v (Gen. 1.1).

54. 'ספר בראשית', in *מדרש רבה על התורה*, p. 16r (Gen. 1.26).

55. 'ספר בראשית', in *מדרש רבה על התורה*, pp. 15r-16r (Gen. 1.26), 29v (Gen. 2.7).

56. Animate and inanimate.

on every single day prior to the creation of human beings. This process of consultation was compared to a political situation in which a king would not act without seeking advice from his counsellors.

According to the second interpretation, God consulted his own heart, namely, consulted himself while creating humankind because when human conduct disappointed God, in Gen. 6.6 God did not blame any proxy or contractor engaged in the work of creation but rather the LORD himself regretted creating human beings and the LORD himself held his own heart (אל לבו) accountable for the act of creation. According to the third interpretation, which was tinged with Platonizing color, God consulted the preexisting souls of the righteous.

According to the fourth interpretation, God consulted the angels ministering in front of him, while creating human beings. Furthermore, the grand Midrash⁵⁷ considered how to explicate God's consultation with angels in the light of the LORD's sovereignty because God was said to seek advice from beings (angels, to be precise) that were created by him and that were inferior and subordinate to him, albeit it would not be customary for superiors to seek advice from their inferiors. Therefore, the grand Midrash viewed God's consultation with angels as a token of the LORD's benevolence and humility, and clarified that while consulting angels, God did not ask for their permission to create humankind but rather requested their opinion without compromising his own authority and power to do whatever would please him.

As regards the creation of human beings in God's image, the grand Midrash⁵⁸ registered that the human race was created as a bridge between 'upper' beings and 'lower' beings, namely, between spiritual beings (i.e. God along with his angels)⁵⁹ and animals. Consequently, humankind would embrace both intellectual and physical attributes, and would be torn between immortality characteristic of the spiritual sphere and mortality intrinsic to the physical sphere. Thus, human beings were created, on the one hand, in the image and likeness coming from the upper realm (מן העליונים), on the other hand, in the image and likeness arising from the lower realm (מן התחתונים). In short,

57. 'ספר בראשית', in *מדרש רבה על התורה*, pp. 15v-16r (Gen. 1.26).

58. 'ספר בראשית', in *מדרש רבה על התורה*, pp. 16r-16v (Gen. 1.27), 30r (Gen. 2.7).

59. Therefore, the ancient Jewish tradition occasionally spoke of humankind as created in the image of angels but this was a mental shortcut. 'שמות מדרש רבה ספר', in *ספר מדרש רבות על התורה* (Leipzig: Wienbrack, 1864), p. 251 (Exod. 22.1)].

they were created as both intangible and tangible beings. The upper sphere, which might be called spiritual, intellectual or celestial, knew neither reproduction nor death, while the lower sphere, which could be denominated as physical, animal or earthly, harbored both of these phenomena.⁶⁰

Therefore, it could be argued that according to the grand Midrash, the image, which God imprinted on human beings, consisted in both intangible and tangible features by virtue of which humankind could act as a bridge between heaven and earth. Thus, the image referred to in Gen. 1.26-27 was God's in the sense that God was the One who imprinted the image, namely, the intangible and tangible features, on human beings. In other words, the image, in which human beings were created, was that of God because God intentionally designed human identity to bridge both dimensions. This idea was adopted by the subsequent Jewish literature.⁶¹

Moreover, the grand Midrash made other references to God's image/likeness. Explaining Gen. 2.18, the Midrash⁶² stated that without female the likeness (הדמות) would be reduced which implies that the likeness referred to in Gen. 1.26-27 posited that humanity was created as male and female. Consequently, the full likeness could be predicated only of humankind defined as both male and female.⁶³ Besides, it transpires that in the Midrash the terms 'image' (צלם) and 'likeness' (דמות) were employed as synonyms.

Commenting upon Gen. 9.6, the grand Midrash⁶⁴ presented the idea which was also reflected in the Babylonian Talmud.⁶⁵ The image (identical with the likeness) was understood as God's collective representation in the world assigned to humankind. Thus, God created the human race to serve as his image in the world, namely, to represent him in the world. Therefore, by taking human life or by refusing to procreate, the image would decrease. Consequently, actions which expand or facilitate life enhance the image, whereas actions which terminate or suppress life diminish the image. Clearly, the early

60. Philo of Alexandria also noted that the human body, which belonged to the material, visible world, was mortal, while the incorporeal dimension of human beings (called rational soul or mind), which reflected the ideal, invisible world, was immortal. Philo Alexandrinus, 'De opificio mundi', pp. 46-47.

61. 'ילקוט בראשית', pp. 6r-6v (Gen. 1.26).

62. 'ספר בראשית', in *מדרש רבה על התורה*, p. 35r (Gen. 2.18).

63. 'ספר בראשית', in *מדרש רבה על התורה*, pp. 16r (Gen. 1.26), 46r (Gen. 4.1)].

64. 'ספר בראשית', in *מדרש רבה על התורה*, pp. 70r-70v (Gen. 9.6).

65. 'יבמות', in *תלמוד בבלי*. VII (Warsaw: Orgelbrand, 1860), p. 63v (no. 63b).

rabbinic tradition affirmed human body as a part of God's design and recognized it as belonging to the image of God.⁶⁶ In the early rabbinic tradition this image denoted, on the one hand, the tangible and intangible features which God imprinted on human beings, on the other hand, the status and function of humankind that in its material (body) and immaterial (soul/spirit) aspects represented God in the world, namely, acted as the image of God in the world.

Such an approach to the image as to the intangible and tangible imprint left by God on humankind in its entirety corresponded to the Talmudic assertion⁶⁷ that the value of individual life ought to be the same as that of the community or even the same as that of whole humankind. Discussing this issue, the Babylonian Talmud⁶⁸ noticed that although the same image, which was imprinted by God on Adam, was also imprinted upon all subsequent generations of human beings, every single human being was unique and should be treated this way. Thus, both the unity and the diversity of human race were duly acknowledged as a part of God's perfect design.

The ancient Jewish tradition treated Gen. 1.26 with caution and ventured to bring together two propositions which otherwise might be set against one another. On the one hand, God created the world through his Wisdom (identical with his Word/Torah) and God could consult his heavenly court, more specifically, his angels, while creating humankind and he might engage them as his proxies and agents, while creating human beings. On the other hand, God was the sole Creator of the universe so that the act of creation was his work, not the angels'. Therefore, any independent non-divine activity in or contribution to the act of creation was denied. God was to be affirmed as the only Maker of the world with no partner (שותף) in the work of creation.⁶⁹ Actually, the idea of more than one divine power or authority (רשות) involved in the act of creation was condemned in ancient Jewish literature⁷⁰ and it was

66. 'מדרש רבה ויקרא', in *ספר מדרש רבות על התורה*, p. 354 (Lev. 25.39). Alon Goshen Gottstein, 'The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature', *HTR* 87 (1994), pp. 171-95.

67. 'סנהדרין', p. 37r [no. 37a].

68. 'סנהדרין', pp. 37r (no. 37a), 38r [No. 38a].

69. 'סנהדרין', p. 38r (no. 38a); 'ספר בראשית', in *מדרש רבה על התורה*, pp. 1v (Gen. 1.1), 7r (Gen. 1.5).

70. 'חגיגה', in *תלמוד בבלי*, VI (Warsaw: Orgelbrand, 1860), p. 15r (no. 15a).

characteristic of the Gnostic tendencies penetrating both Judaism and Christianity in that period.⁷¹

Balancing these two propositions was not an easy task. For instance, the grand Midrash⁷² reported that in Gen. 1.26 God might consult the preexisting souls of the righteous and the possibility of such a consultation was illustrated with 1 Chron. 4.23, which described workers (היוצרים) staying with a king and working for him. These workers acted as the king's agents and assistants. Moreover, the Midrash juxtaposed Hebrew היוצרים, which was derived from the root יצר, with the statement, that God made (וייצר) human beings, from Gen. 2.7. Since such an illustration, in which God was compared to an earthly king, while God's counsellors were compared to the king's workers, might imply that the souls of the righteous were not only God's counsellors but also 'makers' (היוצרים) of humankind, the Midrash clarified that God (הקב"ה) only consulted them (גמלך) and that he himself created the world (וברא את העולם). Thus, theological limitations were placed on the comparison, which was employed in the Midrash, in order to uphold both propositions simultaneously.

The grand Midrash⁷³ interpreted the plural form (ידעי) in Gen. 3.5 in the light of the singular form (ידע), of which אלהים was the subject in the same verse, in order to rule out any interpretation undermining God's absolute unity. The Pirke attributed to Rabbi Eliezer⁷⁴ offered an interesting exposition of the phrase כאלהים ידעי טוב ורע in Gen. 3.5. Accordingly, אלהים in that phrase denoted true God, while the knowledge of good and evil was construed as the ability to do good and evil. Thus, the Pirke argued that the serpent tried

71. Robert G.T. Edwards, 'Clement of Alexandria's Anti-Valentinian Interpretation of Gen 1:26-27', *ZAC* 18 (2014), pp. 365-89; Friedländer, *Der vorchristliche jüdische Gnostizismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1898); Heinrich Graetz, *Gnostizismus und Judentum* (Krotoschin: Monasch, 1846); Robert Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1903), pp. 261-66, 291-303; Larry W. Hurtado, 'First-Century Jewish Monotheism', *JSNT* 71 (1998), pp. 3-26; Adiel Schremer, 'Midrash, Theology, and History: Two Powers in Heaven Revisited', *JSJ* 39 (2008), pp. 230-54; Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1977); Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, 'Form(s) of God: Some Notes on Metatron and Christ', *HTR* 76 (1983), pp. 269-88.

72. 'ספר בראשית', in *מדרש רבה על התורה*, p. 15v (Gen. 1.26).

73. 'ספר בראשית', in *מדרש רבה על התורה*, p. 39r (Gen. 3.5).

74. *ספר פרקי רבי אליעזר*, p. 19.

to convince Eve that by eating the fruit, she could ‘be like God’, namely, could acquire God’s power to create and to destroy, to bring to life and to terminate life.

As regards Gen. 3.22 (כִּאֶחָד מִמֶּנּוּ), the grand Midrash⁷⁵ listed three possible interpretations of that phrase. First, אֶחָד מִמֶּנּוּ could refer to God along with his holy retinue. Secondly, in defiance of the received (Masoretic) vocalization (כִּאֶחָד), אֶחָד was parsed as the absolute state, while מִמֶּנּוּ was parsed as singular (literally: ‘from him’). Consequently, אֶחָד was harnessed to the infinitive (לִדְעוּת) which was said to be modified by מִמֶּנּוּ. All of this was supposed to produce the following meaning: ‘Adam became like the one who would know, namely, choose between good and evil by himself’. Although the final rendition made sense in the context of the narrative, this reasoning was untenable in grammatical terms because אֶחָד מִמֶּנּוּ must be viewed as the partitive phrase (‘one of us’) and the syntax of Gen. 3.22 would not allow the preposition with the pronominal suffix (מִמֶּנּוּ) to modify the infinitive (לִדְעוּת) instead of אֶחָד. Thirdly, the grand Midrash epitomized the interpretation recorded in Targum Onkelos and in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. According to this reading, owing to his knowledge of good and evil, Adam became unique in the world in the same way as God was unique in heaven. In other words, by acquiring the knowledge of good and evil, Adam became God-like because he ultimately possessed the knowledge which was previously reserved for God. In addition, the Yalkut Shimoni⁷⁶ maintained that according to Gen. 3.22, Adam became like one of the angels, ministering in front of God and being endowed with the knowledge of good and evil.

The plural forms attested in Gen. 1.26, 3.5 and 3.22 were examined in the Babylonian Talmud. In the case of Gen. 1.26, the tractate Sanhedrin⁷⁷ suggested that God said ‘let us make [...]’ to his heavenly court, and it highlighted God’s unity based on the fact that in Gen. 1.27 אֱלֹהִים was the subject of the singular form of the verb (וַיִּבְרָא). Thus, in Gen. 1.26 God contemplated and announced his intention of creating humankind in the presence of his angels, whereas Gen. 1.27 reported that God’s action was accomplished. Since God said ‘let us make [...]’ to the angels, ‘our image’, in which humankind was created according to Genesis 1.26, was interpreted as the image both of

75. ‘ספר בראשית’, in *מדרש רבה על התורה*, pp. 44r-44v (Gen. 3.22).

76. ‘ילקוט בראשית’, p. 15r (Gen. 3.22).

77. ‘סנהדרין’, p. 38v (no. 38b).

God and of his angels. Consequently, the image denoted the features which were shared both by God and by the angels.

The tractate Megillah⁷⁸ and the minor tractate of the Babylonian Talmud called Sofrim⁷⁹ implied that in Gen. 1.26 נעשה (let us make) should be interpreted as if God was the sole Maker (אעשה) [I will make]. In the case of Gen. 3.5, Sofrim⁸⁰ stated that the first (ידע אלהים) occurrence of אלהים was divine, namely, denoted true God, whereas the second one (כאלהים ידעי) was non-divine, yet no further specification was provided.

The Midrashic and Talmudic exposition of the plural forms in Gen. 1.26, 3.5 and 3.22 laid the foundations for the Jewish interpretation of these phenomena in the Middle Ages⁸¹ and it could be traced back, at least, to the second century because Justin,⁸² one of the early Christian church fathers, recapitulated and rejected several interpretations of these plural forms which were attested in the Targumim and Midrashim.

78. 'מגילה', in תלמוד בבלי V (Warsaw: Orgelbrand, 1860), p. 9r (no. 9a).

79. 'סופרים', in תלמוד בבלי XIII, p. 48v.

80. 'סופרים', in תלמוד בבלי XIII, p. 50v.

81. Saadia Gaon, 'בראשית', in פירוש על התורה ועל ג"ך (London: Gad, 1959-1960), p. 10 (Gen. 3.5; 3.22); *idem*, ספר האמונות והדעות (trans. Judah ibn Tibbon; Jozefow: זועצר, 1885), pp. 93-94, 96, 147; Berliner, ed., *Raschi: Der Kommentar des Salomo b. Isak über den Pentateuch* (Frankfurt am Main: Kauffmann, 1905), pp. 4 (Gen. 1.26-27), 7 (Gen. 3.5), 9 (Gen. 3.22); Samuel ben Meir, 'בראשית', in פירוש התורה (ed. David Rosin; Breslau: שאטטלענדער, 1881-1882), p. 8 (Gen. 1.26-27); Abraham ibn Ezra, 'ספר בראשית', in ספר בראשית תורה ספר בראשית (New York: פריעדמאן, 1970-1971), pp. 26-30 (Gen. 1.26-27), 50 (Gen. 3.5), 61 (Gen. 3.22); Maimonides, *More Nebuchim*. II (trans. Judah ibn Tibbon; Vienna: Schmid, 1828), pp. 12v-14r; *idem*, *More Nebuchim*. I (trans. Judah ibn Tibbon; Vienna: Schmid, 1828), p. 10r; David Kimhi, *Kommentar zur Genesis* (ed. Abraham Ginzburg; Pressburg [Bratislava]: Schmid, 1842), pp. 16r-18v (Gen. 1.26-27), 31v-32v (Gen. 3.5), 38v-39r (Gen. 3.22); Nahmanides, 'ספר בראשית', in מקראות גדולות 'ספר בראשית', pp. 25-28 (Gen. 1.26-27), 38-39 (Gen. 2.7); Jacob ben Asher, 'בראשית', in פירוש השור על התורה (Warsaw: זיסבערג, 1880), p. 4r (Gen. 1.26); Hezekiah ben Manoah, 'ספר בראשית', in ספר חזקוני על חמשה חומשי תורה (Lemberg [Lviv]: Schrenzel, 1859), p. 4v (Gen. 1.26).

82. Justinus, 'Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo', pp. 617-20.

Conclusion

The ancient and mediaeval Christian thinkers advocated the trinitarian interpretation of the plural forms in Gen. 1.26 and 3.22, not necessarily in Gen. 3.5, because the plural forms in Gen. 1.26 and 3.22 were evident from the Septuagint and from the Vulgate on which they relied in their exegesis. Moreover, the Christian expositors knew the mainstream Jewish interpretations of these forms and some of the Christian theologians were also familiar with the lexical and grammatical features of אֱלֹהִים.

Thus, the church fathers intentionally embarked on the trinitarian reading of the plural forms in Gen. 1.26 and 3.22, and decided to dismiss the Jewish approach to such phenomena. Actually, Christian theology expanded and reworked the Jewish concept of mediation (the divine Wisdom or Word) in the work of creation and preservation of the world. While the proposition, that God created the world through the Wisdom/Word which emanated from God and which was absolutely dependent on God and entirely intrinsic to him, was known and acceptable to Judaism, the Christian identification of the divine Wisdom/Word with Jesus and the Christian insistence on the independent, or at least, distinct ontological status thereof could not be absorbed by the Jewish tradition.

Patristic theology stressed the connection between the preincarnate Logos (equated with the Son, thought of as the second person of the Trinity) and the image of the Trinity, particularly, of the Son, in which humankind was said to be created. Consequently, the Logos became a specific human being, which like the whole human race, was created in the image of the preincarnate Logos. Therefore, in contradistinction to the Jewish interpreters, the church fathers did not elaborate upon the content of the image which was intuitively perceived by them as the divine dimension of human beings.

For instance, John of Damascus⁸³ offered a perspective on the content of the image, which was typical of patristic theology, and he identified the image with νοῦς. In his view, this νοῦς was associated both with the Divine and with human body, mediating between God and human corporeality. Figuratively speaking, νοῦς as God's image in human beings, could be depicted as a window on the spiritual world, as the intellectual (νοερὸν δῆλον) and moral (αὐτεξούσιον [endowed with free will]) disposition of divine origin which

83. Joannes Damascenus, 'De fide orthodoxa', in *PG*, XCIV, pp. 919-22, 1071-74.

allowed human beings to participate in the higher, spiritual knowledge. In fact, the patristic identification of the image with νοῦς or with the rational soul could be traced back to Philo of Alexandria.⁸⁴ Furthermore, John of Damascus explicated the likeness, in which humankind was created, as virtue (ἀρετή). Ultimately, the history of the interpretation of the plural forms in Gen. 1.26 and 3.22 can serve as a hermeneutical model for Judaism and early Christianity parting ways in theological terms.

84. Philo, 'De opificio mundi', pp. 23, 48; *idem*, 'Quis rerum divinarum heres sit', p. 52; *idem*, 'De mutatione nominum', p. 195; *idem*, 'Legum allegoriarum liber I', in *Opera quae supersunt*, I, p. 71; *idem*, 'De plantatione', in *Opera quae supersunt*, II, pp. 137-38; *idem*, 'De sominiis liber II', in *Opera quae supersunt*, III, p. 294; *idem*, 'De specialibus legibus (III)', in *Opera quae supersunt*, V, p. 207.