

# CHRIST – IMAGE OF GOD, A CHAPTER OF PAULINE CHRISTOLOGY

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**Abstract:** This article focuses on certain prominent concepts that Apostle Paul uses in different contexts to describe Jesus as the one who preexisted in God's form and whose Incarnation supremely imaged God (1 Tim 3:16: *ephanerōthē en sarki*). Christ, the new Adam, is the perfect image of God (2 Cor 4:4) who reflects the glory of God. The Apostle identifies Christ as the *eikōn* (representation, icon) of God on Whose face the glory of God shines (2 Cor 4:4.6). In *Phil 2:6-11*, being equal with God is related to being in the form of God (*morphē theou*). The Son of God is the *eikōn* of the unseen God and superior to all creation (Col 1:15), because all things were created through Him (Col 1:16). Heb 1:3 expresses the Son's identity of nature in relation to His Father (*apaugasma tes doxes*, brightness of His glory), and that the Son is the perfect and eternal "icon" of the Father (*charactēr tes upostaseos*, the express image of His person). This study argues for the Christological significance of Paul's hermeneutic of these concepts in relation to the Holy Scripture and Church's Tradition, as well as in the current research context.

**Keywords:** *Eikōn-Christology, morphē theou, eikōn theou, charactēr tes upostaseos, form, image, icon*

## Introduction

The contemplation of the person and work of Jesus Christ represents the unchanging heart of Christian theology<sup>1</sup>. The Apostle Paul held that man was made in the image of the preexistent Christ, Who is the

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<sup>1</sup> John BEHR, *Formation of Christian Theology. The Way to Nicaea*, volume 1, Crestwood, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001, p.237.

image of God<sup>2</sup>. This means that what the Old Testament says about our divine likeness is to be understood in the light of Paul's statements that call Jesus Christ the image of God and that speak of the transforming of believers into this image. Oliver Crisp shows that "God eternally ordains that Christ be the archetype of human beings"<sup>3</sup>.

By using some specific expressions, St Paul declares that Christ is the image (*eikōn*)<sup>4</sup> of the invisible God (Col 1:15), the impress of his Father's hypostasis (*charactētes upostaseos autou*, Heb 1:3), and in Him the fullness of the divinity dwells bodily (Col 2:9); in Him we see God, and it is in Him that the glory of God is revealed (cf. also Jn 1:14), shining in the face (*en prosopo*) of Christ (2 Cor 4:6), the Lord of glory (1 Cor 2:8)<sup>5</sup>. In the hymnic language of Phil 2:6-11, Jesus Christ is confessed to be in the form of God and equal to God.

The preexistent Christ, image of God, is also named by St Paul the heavenly man (*ho epouranios*, 1 Cor 15:49). He has been assigned a role within creation, alongside God the Father (1 Cor 8:6). This means that He is truly divine, sharing the same nature (*homoousios*), with the Father. St. Basil illustrates this aspect in the following excerpt: "It is held about the Son that He is a firstborn icon (2 Cor 4.4; Col 1:15), the brightness of the Father's glory (Heb 1:3)... according not to a [temporary] state, or to the way of being, but He is [through Himself] God's living, working being and shining glory"<sup>6</sup>. Within the same writing against Eunomius, St. Basil

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<sup>2</sup> A. T. HANSON, "The Midrash in 2 Corinthians 3: A Reconsideration", in Stanley E. PORTER, Craig A. EVANS (ed.), *The Pauline Writings*, London, Bloomsbury, p.107.

<sup>3</sup> Oliver CRISP, "A Christological Model of the *Imago Dei*", in Joshua R. FARRIS, Charles TALIAFERRO, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, Ashgate Publishing, Burlington, 2015, p.226. Adam was a representative of God on earth, created in the image of God, but only Christ, the last Adam (1 Cor 15:45), the man from heaven (1 Cor 15:47), is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15), so making Adam a "type of the One to come" (Rom 5:14) John BEHR, *Formation of Christian Theology*, p.52.

<sup>4</sup> In the *Koinē* period the word *eikōn* was used for bills of sales, portrait pictures, statues, coin impressions, and even human rulers who represented a god. It was also used for abstract concepts, such as ideas, thoughts, and dreams, as well as Platonic ideas, such as the cosmos as an image of God (Daniel WALLACE, *The Image of God as the Resurrected State in Pauline Thought*, <https://bible.org/article/image-god-resurrected-state-pauline-thought>, note 3 (accessed on March 31, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> John BEHR, *Formation of Christian Theology*, p.53.

<sup>6</sup> SF. VASILE CEL MARE, *Scieri dogmatice și exegetice*, rom.transl. Policarp Pârvuloiu &

teaches thus: “And if He makes the Father known through Himself (Jn 17:26), it is because He is not a creature but God’s true Son and icon (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15) and the express image of His person (Heb 1:3)”<sup>7</sup>.

Focusing on some specific Pauline phrases regarding Christ as being the image of God, in the following lines we try to underscore their theological meanings in their original settings.

**1 Corinthians 15:49.** In the context of this verse the emphasis lies primarily with Christ’s bearing the *imago Dei* in His human life. In His coming as the ‘second Adam’, He did what Adam failed to do: bear the divine image in His humanity<sup>8</sup>.

In his homilies on *Genesis*, Origen alludes to this Pauline verse and teaches as follows: “You bore at that time ‘the image of the earthly.’ But now since these things have been heard, having been cleansed from the whole earthly mass and weight by the Word of God, make the ‘image of the heavenly’ shine brightly in you”<sup>9</sup>.

Writing about the image of the man of heaven, Ambrosiaster says: “This means that just as we have borne the corruptible body of the earthly Adam, so we shall in the future bear an incorruptible body, like that of the resurrected Christ” (*Commentary on Paul’s Epistles*)<sup>10</sup>.

**2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:4-6.** It is in Christ that the believer can be changed from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18), which is another Pauline way of stating conformity to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29)<sup>11</sup>. *Eikōn* in 3:18 is generated by the mirror imagery, the Corinth being at that time a city

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Dumitru Fecioru, București, *Basilica Ph.*, 2011, p.140.

<sup>7</sup> SF. VASILE CEL MARE, *Scrieri dogmatice și exegetice*, p.168.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon D. FEE, *Pauline Christology. An Exegetical-Theological Study*, Peabody, Hendrickson Publishers, 2007, p.519.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas C. ODEN (general editor), Gerald BRAY (edited by), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, I – II Corinthians*, New York, London, Routledge, 2012, p.176.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas C. ODEN, Gerald BRAY, *I – II Corinthians*, p. 176. Jung Hoon Kim explains that in this context “*eikōn* has the connotation of ‘essential character’, and can be understood as equivalent to *morphē*’... At present, believers bear the image of Adam in his physicality, but they will ultimately bear the image of Christ in his spirituality (cf. vv. 53-54) (Jung Hoon KIM, *The Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline Corpus*, New York, T&T Clark International, London, 2004, p.199).

<sup>11</sup> Bill TRASHER, *The Attributes of God in Pauline Theology*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, 2001, p.166.

famous for its bronze mirrors. The Apostle states that the Corinthians themselves are being transformed into the same 'image', the image of God as that is borne perfectly by Christ.

Further on, Paul refers to the glory of Christ Who, as the very image of God, reflected His character (2 Cor 4:4). As James Howard shows, Paul's argument that Christ reflects God's glory is the key of understanding Christ as the image of God<sup>12</sup>.

St Gregory Nazienzen stresses that Christ is a living image: "this is of nature of an image, to be the reproduction of its archetype and of that whose name it bears; only that there is more here. For in ordinary language an image is a motionless representation of that which has motion, but in this case it is the living reproduction of the living one and is more exactly like than was Seth to Adam or any son to his father (*The Theological Orations* 4.20)<sup>13</sup>. Asking rhetorically what is the face of God like? Jerome replies that it is "as His image, certainly, for as the apostle says, the image of the Father is the Son... He who sees the Son sees also the Father (*Homily 6 on Psalm 66/67*)<sup>14</sup>.

According to Frank Matera, "when Paul calls Christ the image of God (2 Cor 4:4b), he is affirming that Christ is the way we know God" Then he states that "Paul is not so much interested in telling believers that Christ is the image of God as he is in teaching them that they are being transformed into the image of Christ, Who is the image of God"<sup>15</sup>. Nevertheless, we may consider with G. Fee that in 4:4b - with its twofold language 'image' and 'glory' - the emphasis is on Christ Himself, here the true image of God being borne by the one who shares the divine glory<sup>16</sup>.

Paul teaches that those spiritually blinded are prevented from seeing the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God (2 Cor 4:4a). As God's image, Christ the Saviour casts clarity upon the hazy notions

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<sup>12</sup> James M. HOWARD, *Paul, the Community, and Progressive Sanctification: An Exploration into Community-Based Transformation within Pauline Theology*, New York, Peter Lang, 2006, p.64.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas C. ODEN, Gerald BRAY, *I – II Corinthians*, p.229.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas C. ODEN, Gerald BRAY, *I – II Corinthians*, p.229.

<sup>15</sup> Frank J. MATERA, *God's Saving Grace: A Pauline Theology*, Grand Rapids/Cambridge, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012, p.7-8.

<sup>16</sup> Gordon FEE, *Pauline Christology*, p.520.

regarding the ‘immortal and invisible’ God ‘dwelling in unapproachable light’ (1 Tim 1:17; 6:16). The title *image of God* signifies here that Christ acts against the satanic counter-power, as representative of the kingdom of God. In this Pauline context, Christ’s title *eikōn tou theou* asserts the glorified Christ’s unique relation to God and means that Christ’s rightful place is at the throne of God.

The Apostle emphasizes that God, Who has revealed glory to creation, has revealed now His full glory in Christ (4:6). The *eikōn* is the person himself and, therefore, *prōsōpon* in 2 Cor 4:6 is probably best rendered ‘person’, rather than ‘face’: the stress lies here not so much on the appearance but on the totality of the Lord Jesus Christ. Differently from Ezek 1:26-28, Paul’s explicit statement involves a direct identification of concrete human as the *eikōn theou*<sup>17</sup>.

**Romans 8:29.** According to St Paul, God has foreordained that believers are to be ‘conformed to the image of his Son’, who Himself is God’s ‘firstborn’ among the many who are to become His brothers and sisters. The eternal Son of God perfectly bears the *divine image* in the condition of His own identity with our humanity.

Regarding Rom 8:29, St. Cyril of Alexandria teaches that “Christ models us again through the Spirit according to His image and imprints upon the souls of the believers, in a spiritually and unspoken manner, the beauty of His flesh... For we have been restored to the first image, being sealed in that face through the Son, Who is the image and likeness of the Father (Heb 1:3), and not different of Him, through the being’s identity”<sup>18</sup>.

**Philippians 2:6-8.** The first strophe of the hymn from Phil 2:6-11 states that Christ existed in the form of God (*en morphē theou*) but in the emptying process He took the form of a slave (*morphēn doulou*). The Pauline language suggests an antithesis of ‘God’ and ‘slave’, but the repetition of *morphē* identifies the two in the way that John in his gospel

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<sup>17</sup> C. Kavin ROWE, “New Testament Iconography? Situating Paul in the Absence of Material Evidence”, in Annette Weissenrieder, Friederike Wendt & Petra von Gemünden (ed.), *Picturing the New Testament: Studies in Ancient Visual Images*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, p.300.

<sup>18</sup> SF. CHIRIL AL ALEXANDRIEI, “Despre Sfânta Treime. Altă pildă de lucrare neîmpărțită: chipul”, în *Scrieri. Partea a III-a*, București, EIBM al BOR, trad. pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, 1994, p.107.

identifies crucifixion with exaltation<sup>19</sup>.

Larry Hurtado acknowledges that most scholars take these verses to reflect a belief in the personal preexistence and incarnation of Christ<sup>20</sup>. He argues then that Phil 2:6-7 should be read as describing the action of the ‘preincarnated’ or ‘preexistent’ Christ<sup>21</sup>.

Gordon Fee shows that Paul’s choice of the term is meant to define Christ’s ‘mode’ of preexistence with God and to indicate the extreme nature of the ‘mode’ of His incarnation: in the ‘form’ of a slave. Fee explains that *en morphē theou* is used only with regard to Christ’s being the divine image-bearer in His incarnation, not with regard to His preexistence, although recognizing that *Adam’s Christology* is present in Paul’s thought<sup>22</sup>.

According to Origen, under the abasement of the Cross the Son appears as “more divine and truly in the image of the Father”<sup>23</sup>. In this way, Christ becomes as an exemplary paradigm for the conduct of believers. Phil 2:6-11 (esp. vv. 6-8) are usually related to 2 Cor 8:9: Christ having graciously ‘impoverished’ Himself for the redemptive ‘enrichment’ of believers. As a paradigm for believers these verses show how Christ acted as God, and how He acted in His humanity.

Prior to his “having taken the ‘form’ of a slave”, Christ was in fact

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<sup>19</sup> Graham WARD, “Kenosis: Death, Discourse and Resurrection”, in L. GARDNER, David MOSS, Ben QUASH, Graham WARD (ed.), *Balthasar at the End of Modernity*, Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1999, p.22.

<sup>20</sup> Larry W. HURTADO, *Lord Jesus Christ*, p.121.

<sup>21</sup> Larry W. HURTADO, *Lord Jesus Christ*, p.123. He remarks that in Greek texts *en morphē theou* is not interchangeably used with *eikōn theou*. In the Genesis passages *eikōn theou* is used to express the status of the human creature (Gen 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6). As he shows, explicit Christological meaning of *eikōn* is to be found in 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15 and less direct but still likely in 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18. By contrast, *morphē theou* is never used elsewhere in any allusion to Adam. In fact, *morphē theou* is not used at all in the Greek Old Testament (Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, p.122).

<sup>22</sup> Gordon FEE, *Pauline Christology*, p.523. Fee thinks that Paul’s references to the Son of God as bearing the divine “image” (Rom 8:29; Col 1:13-19; cf. 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18-4:6; Col 3:10) are deliberately contrasting Christ as “second Adam” with the first Adam (Gordon FEE, *Pauline Christology*, p.518). Peter Ellis quotes Cullmann’s interpretation in saying that the “form of God” (*morphē theou*) in Phil v. 2:6a is to be understood in the sense of Gen 1:26 (Peter F. ELLIS, *Seven Pauline Letters*, Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1982, p.127).

<sup>23</sup> ORIGEN, *Com. Jn.* 1.231 (Cf. John BEHR, *Formation of Christian Theology*, p.189).

“in the ‘form’ of God” (*en morphē theou uparchon* v. 6a). Fee states that *en morphē theou* can scarcely be an allusion to Christ’s humanity as being ‘in God’s image’<sup>24</sup>. Christ was characterized by what was essential to being God. Starting from the definition of *morphe*, which means that which truly characterizes a given reality, Fee acknowledges that this is the right word to characterize both the reality (His being God) and the metaphor (His taking on the role of a slave), since it denotes ‘form’ or ‘shape’ in terms of those characteristics that are essential to it. Therefore, some translations render *morphē* by the phrase ‘in very nature God’ (TNIV)<sup>25</sup>.

Graham Ward explores the theological implications of the Pauline phrase *en morphē theou*. First, he states that this may be the equivalent of the Johannine “that glory I had with you before the world began” (17:5). Second, he understands that the dative *en* suggests Trinitarian participation by the Son in the Father. As for the *eikōn*, he thinks that this concept do not implies a distinction between form and substance, but a participation of one in the other. His reason for this interpretation is that in both the LXX and elsewhere in the New Testament *eikōn* is associated with the glory of God, His *doxa*<sup>26</sup>.

**Colossians 1:15.** Paul states in the hymn from Col 1:15-20 that the Son of God is the divine agent both of creation and of redemption. With his use of *eikōn* in this passage Paul’s emphasis is on the incarnated Son of God as the divine image-bearer. The emphasis on the Son’s bearing the divine image, in the first strophe, moves towards His human identity, resembling ourselves, which transpires in His work of reconciliation, in the second strophe. It is the one in Whom all the divine fullness dwells (bodily) (Col 2:9)<sup>27</sup>. In the John’s Gospel, Jesus declares: “He who has

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<sup>24</sup> Gordon FEE, *Pauline Christology*, p.377.

<sup>25</sup> Gordon FEE, *Pauline Christology*, p.378-379. Thomas Schreiner stresses that Christ shared the divine nature before he took humanity upon himself. “To say that Jesus *was in form of God* is another way of saying that he was divine. The divinity of Jesus is confirmed by the phrase *equality with God* in Phil 2:6, for Jesus’equality with God is another way of speaking of the *form of God*” (Thomas R. SCHREINER, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ*, Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2008, p.324-325).

<sup>26</sup> Graham WARD, “Kenosis: Death, Discourse and Resurrection”, p.22.

<sup>27</sup> Gordon FEE, *Pauline Christology*, p.521.

seen Me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9). Adam and Eve were created ‘in’ God’s image (Gen 1:26-27), but Jesus *is* uniquely the image of the invisible God<sup>28</sup>. One could say that as the Gospel alone unlocks the treasures of the Scripture, so it is only in the Son, as preached in the Gospel, that the invisible and immeasurable God becomes visible and comprehensible<sup>29</sup>.

What is said here of Christ and of God must be understood for every icon, as John of Damascus states. In his view *eikōn tou theou tou aoratou*, icon of the invisible God (Col 1:15), must be generalized to every icon: “What audacity! What boldness of mind, to fight God and His commands! You, who refuse to worship images, would not worship the Son of God, the Living Image of the invisible God (Col 1:15) and His unchanging form. I worship the image of Christ as the Incarnate God”<sup>30</sup>.

Hanson underscores that according to Paul, Christ was “the one visible representative of the invisible God” (Col 1:15). *Eikōn* must mean the visible image of the invisible despite the efforts of Origen and other Platonists to argue otherwise<sup>31</sup>. John Heil points to the fact “that He [Christ] has a likeness to the invisible God that transcends the realm of the created world and that is preexistent and preeminent over it”<sup>32</sup>. Earle Ellis observes rightly that “the primary basis for the ascriptions given to Christ in Col 1:15-19 was in all likelihood the author’s own experience of the resurrected Lord”<sup>33</sup>. Robert Kappelle underlines ‘image’ as one of the divine names likewise those in Phil 2:6 ff, and he remarks that Col 1:15 ff is ascribing to Jesus deeds only deity can perform. As he points

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas R. SCHREINER, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ*, p.327.

<sup>29</sup> John BEHR, *Formation of Christian Theology*, p.122.

<sup>30</sup> ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Apologia Against Those Who Decry Holy Images*, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/johndamascus-images.asp> (accessed on 9 april 2017). The incarnation supports the icon and the icon witnesses to the incarnation. In the iconophiles’ view, the incarnation of the Logos was the main scriptural argument justifying religious visual art. According to Col 1:15, Christ is not only the Word of God but also his “icon” (*eikōn*) (See Eugen J. PENTIUC, *The Old Testament in Eastern Orthodox Tradition*, Oxford University Press, 2014, p.268-269).

<sup>31</sup> A. T. HANSON, “The Midrash in 2 Corinthians 3”, p.108-109.

<sup>32</sup> John Paul HEIL, *Colossians: Encouragement to Walk in All Wisdom as holy Ones in Christ*, Atlanta, Society of Biblical Literature, 2010, p.64.

<sup>33</sup> E. Earle ELLIS, “Collosians 1:12-20. *Christus Creator, Christus Salvator*”, in Idem, *The Sovereignty of God in Salvation: Biblical Essays*, London, T & T Clark, 2009, p.43.

out, the meaning of ‘icon’ is that Christ makes visible what is invisible. If God could be seen, then this is what God would look like (cf. Col 2:9)<sup>34</sup>.

**Colossians 3:10.** The main topic of the exhortations of 3:5 ff. is the creation of a new human being according to the image (*kat’eikōna*) of its Creator (Col 3:10)<sup>35</sup>. Of course, here is a deliberate reference back to Christ as the ‘image’, as proclaimed in the hymn<sup>36</sup>.

Kavin Rowe conceives that “the image of God is anthropological in a double – and very Pauline – sense: Jesus Christ and the community of human beings that participate in him... In the person of Jesus Christ and his Christologically shaped community, the God of Israel does in fact have an image”<sup>37</sup>.

**Hebrews 1:3.** The author of the Epistle proclaims Jesus as “the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being” (Heb 1:3). In this verse the whole emphasis is on the unity between Christ and God the Father. Although there are two statements, there is expressed the same idea: Jesus Christ provides a perfect expression of God. The Greek word translated by ‘reflection’ (*apaugasma*) no longer appears in the New Testament; it can be translated as ‘brightness’ as well as ‘reflection’. Translating it as ‘reflection’ implies a passive sense, approved by a majority of modern commentators, while ‘brightness’ an active one. The Greek Fathers have preferred the active meaning, retained also in the Nicene Creed as *phos ek photos* (Chrysostom)<sup>38</sup>.

St. John Chrysostom highlights the difficulty to give an appropriate name to the divine being<sup>39</sup>. Theodoret of Cyrus says that “on the one hand,

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<sup>34</sup> Robert P. Vande KAPPELLE, *Wisdom Revealed: The Messenge of Biblical Wisdom Literature – Then and Now*, Eugene, Wipf & Stock, 2014, p.211.

<sup>35</sup> In light of Col 1:15 the phrase *eikōna tou ktisantos* (Col 3:10) reads as circumlocution for *eikōn tou theou*. Chrysostom et al. read *tou ktisantos* of Christ (C. Kavin ROWE, “New Testament Iconography?” p.305, note 72).

<sup>36</sup> Andrew T. LINCOLN, A. J. WEDERBURN, *The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.40.

<sup>37</sup> C. Kavin ROWE, “New Testament Iconography?” p.306.

<sup>38</sup> Paul ELLINGWORTH, *Commentary on Hebrews*, p.98.

<sup>39</sup> “Through the expression *the brightness*, there has been showed the equalness of the essence or of the being of the Son and the Father, and His proximity to the Father. Think to the finesse of these words: He took one essence and being represented by two hypostases, same as He does in relation to the knowledge of the Spirit... Think about what kind of names he employs, not finding at all the denomination or the name to be

the glory is eternal, therefore, eternal also the shine is. And on the other hand, the brightness has the same nature with the fire; same semblance between the Son and the Father... Thus, through a lot of words has taught us the divine Apostle... the same being<sup>40</sup> and eternity<sup>41</sup>. By the expression “the brightness of the glory”, St. Theophylact understands that 1) the Son is born of the Father; 2) that He was born without passion; 3) that the Father has not lessened, nor has lowered because He bore the Son; and 4) that the Father and the Son are one in essence, namely that the Son is born of the Father as light is born of light<sup>42</sup>.

The very being (*hypostasis*) of God stamped in Jesus Christ is the fundamental reality or the essence of God. The word translated ‘the exact imprint’ (*charaktēr*) does not appear elsewhere in the New Testament, appearing only three times in the LXX<sup>43</sup>. In the current verse, *charaktēr tēs hypostaseōs autou* strengthens *apaugasma tēs doxēs* in describing the essential unity and the exact likeness between God the Father and His Son<sup>44</sup>.

St. Theophylact stresses that the Pauline expression ‘image of the hypostasis’ of the Father shows that the Son is a person: “as the Father is enhypostatic and has perfect self hypostasis..., in the same manner the Son also is enhypostatic and has separate and perfect hypostasis”<sup>45</sup>.

## Conclusions

1. In some statements of high Christology character, St Paul is teaching us that Jesus is the *image of God*. By this phrase we are to understand

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given for the being” (Sf. IOAN GURĂ DE AUR, *Comentariile sau explicarea Epistolei către Evrei*, trad. Theodosie Athanasiu, Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, București, 1923, p.61-62).

<sup>40</sup> of the Son and the Father.

<sup>41</sup> FERICITUL TEODORET AL CIRULUI, *Tâlcuire la Epistolele Sfântului Apostol Pavel*, vol. I, trad. Iulia Cărare și Mircea Ștefan, Ed. Doxologia, Iași, 2015, p.247-248.

<sup>42</sup> SFÂNTUL TEOFILACT AL BULGARIEI, *Tâlcuirea Epistolei către Evrei*, trad. mitrop. Veniamim Costache, îndreptarea tălmăcirii Florin Stuparu, București, Ed. Sophia, 2011, p.16.

<sup>43</sup> EDGAR V. MCKNIGHT / CHRISTOPHER CHURCH, *Hebrews-James*, The Smyth & Helwys Bible commentary, 28, Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2004, p.32-33.

<sup>44</sup> PAUL ELLINGWORTH, *Commentary on Hebrews*, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1993, p.99-100.

<sup>45</sup> SFÂNTUL TEOFILACT AL BULGARIEI, *Tâlcuirea Epistolei către Evrei*, p.18.

first *Adam's Christology*, as illustrated in 1 Cor 15:49, and that what is implied in Phil 2:6-7. At the same time, Christ's title *eikōn tou theou* proclaims the glorified Christ's unique relation to God (2 Cor 3:18; 4:4.6).

2. To say that Jesus was *in the form of God* is another way of saying that He was divine. Paul uses *en morphē theou* in Phil 2:6 with regard to His being the divine image-bearer in His incarnation. Christ was characterized by what was essential to being God. Therefore, some translations render *morphē* by the phrase 'in very nature God'.
3. The divine nature of Jesus is suggested also by the statement that He is "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15; cf. 2 Cor 4:4), which played a central place in the theological debate for sustaining the veneration of icons.
4. The two words *hapax-legomena* of Hebrews 1:3, *apaugasma* and *charaktēr*, render the same teaching according to which Jesus Christ, as God's incarnated Son, provides a perfect expression of God.
5. The Christological title *image of God* has anthropological implications. Human beings were made in the image of God. Jesus incarnates that image, demonstrating the possibilities available to every human as God intended. In Rom 8:29 *eikōn* is determined eschatologically and refers to the human existence in light of its participation in Christ. The emphasis in Col 3:10 stands on Christ's being the divine image-bearer Who in His Church also re-creates the fallen humanity into that same image.

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