

Painting the Resemblance over the Image:

Reflections with Basil of Caesarea and Diadochus of Photike

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2. Basil of Caesarea

2.1. The power of the likeness

- On the Origin of Humanity, Discourse 1, 16, SC 160, 206-8, trans. Harrison, 43-4:

Ποιήσομεν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα
ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν. Τὸ μὲν τῇ
κτίσει ἔχομεν· τὸ δὲ ἐκ προαιρέσεως
κατορθοῦμεν. Ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ κατασκευῇ
συνυπάρχει ἡμῖν τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα
γεγενῆσθαι Θεοῦ· ἐκ προαιρέσεως ἡμῖν
κατορθοῦται τὸ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν εἶναι
Θεοῦ.

„«Let us make the human being according to our image and according to our likeness» [Gen 1.26] By our creation we have the first, and by our free choice we build the second. In our initial structure co-originates and exists our coming into being according to the image of God. By free choice we are conformed to that which is according to the likeness of God.

2. Basil of Caesarea

2.1. The power of the likeness

Τοῦτο δὲ τὸ κατὰ προαίρεσιν, δυνάμει ἡμῖν ἐνυπάρχει· ἐνεργεία δὲ ἑαυτοῖς ἐπάγομεν. Εἰ μὴ προλαβὼν εἶπεν ὁ Κύριος ποιῶν ἡμᾶς· «Ποιήσομεν» καὶ «καθ' ὁμοίωσιν», εἰ μὴ τὴν τοῦ γενέσθαι καθ' ὁμοίωσιν δύναμιν ἡμῖν ἐχαρίσατο, οὐκ ἂν τῇ ἑαυτῶν ἐξουσίᾳ τὴν πρὸς Θεὸν ὁμοίωσιν ἐδεξάμεθα. Νῦν μέντοι δυνάμει ἡμᾶς ἐποίησεν ὁμοιωτικούς Θεῶ.

And this is what is according to free choice: the power exists in us but we bring it about by our activity. If the Lord, in anticipation, had not said in making us 'Let us make', and, 'according to the likeness', if he had not given us the power to come to be according to the likeness, we should not have received the likeness to God by our own authority [power]. Yet now he has made us with the power to become like God."

2. Basil of Caesarea

2.2. The painter and his work

On the Origin of Humanity, Discourse 1,
16, SC 160, 208, trans. Harrison, 44:

Δύναμιν δὲ δοὺς πρὸς τὸ ὁμοιῦσθαι
Θεῷ, ἀφῆκεν ἡμᾶς ἐργάτας εἶναι τῆς
πρὸς Θεὸν ὁμοιώσεως, ἵνα ἡμέτερος ᾖ
τῆς ἐργασίας ὁ μισθός, ἵνα μὴ ὥσπερ
εἰκόνες ὧμεν παρὰ ζωγράφου
γενόμεναι, εἰκῇ κείμεναι, ἵνα μὴ τὰ τῆς
ἡμέτερας ὁμοιώσεως ἄλλῳ ἔπαινον
φέρῃ.

And in giving us the power to become
like God, he let us be artisans of the
likeness to God, so that the reward for
the work would be ours. Thus we would
not be like images made by a painter,
lying inertly, lest our likeness should
bring praise to another.

2. Basil of Caesarea

2.2. The painter and his work

Ὅταν γὰρ τὴν εἰκόνα ἴδῃς ἀκριβῶς
μεμορφωμένην πρὸς τὸ πρωτότυπον,
οὐ τὴν εἰκόνα ἐπαινεῖς, ἀλλὰ τὸν
ζωγράφον θαυμάζεις. Ἵνα τοίνυν τὸ
θαῦμα ἐμὸν γένηται καὶ μὴ ἀλλότριον,
ἐμοὶ κατέλιπε τό καθ' ὁμοίωσιν Θεοῦ
γενέσθαι. Κατ' εἰκόνα γὰρ ἔχω τὸ
λογικὸς εἶναι, καθ' ὁμοίωσιν δὲ γίνομαι
ἐν τῷ Χριστιανὸς γενέσθαι.

For when you see an image exactly
shaped like the prototype, you do not
praise the image but you marvel at the
painter. Accordingly, so that the marvel
may become mine and not another's, he
has left it to me to become according to
the likeness of God. For I have that
which is according to the image in being
a rational being, but I become according
to the likeness in becoming Christian.

3. Diadochus of Photice

3.1. Seal of virtue, seal of beauty

The seal of God's virtue is imprinted on the beeswax that represents the human being. Just as the wax needs to be "warmed up and thoroughly softened", the human person should be "tested in efforts and weaknesses". (ch. 94, SC 5 bis, 155, trans. Ermatinger, 122.)

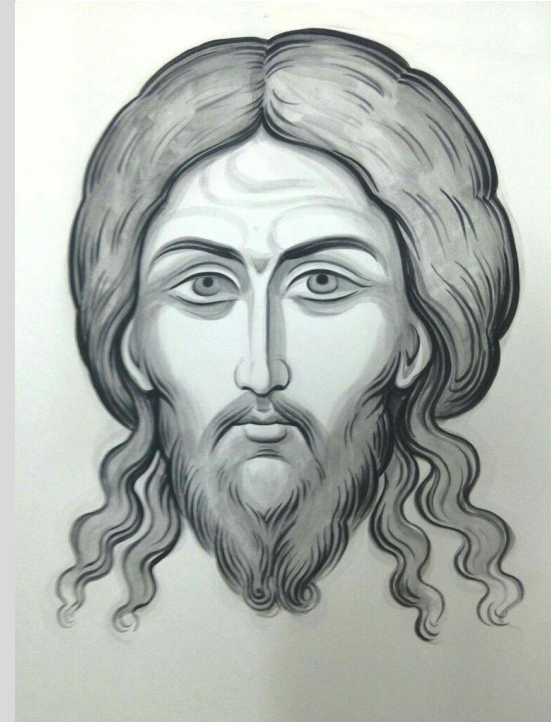
Diadochus also mentions "the seal of the divine beauty" (τοῦ κάλλους τοῦ θείου τὴν σφραγίδα), according to the words of the Ps. 4,7: "the light of your face, God, is sealed upon us". This seal imprints the human heart. (ch. 94, SC 5 bis, 156, trans. Ermatinger, 123.)



3. Diadochus of Photice

3.2. On marks and lines

- the imprint or mark (χαρακτήρ)
- the trait, characteristic feature or line (γραμμά).
- Ultimately, the goal of human life is to possess the “mark of the likeness” (ὁ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὁμοιώσεως). (ch. 89, SC 5 bis, p. 149)
- In baptism the divine grace regenerates the human, by washing “every stain of sin” and making clearly visible and resplendent “all the etchings of the soul” (πάσας τὰς γραμμάς τῆς ψυχῆς... λαμπρύνει). (ch. 89, SC 5 bis, p. 149)



3. Diadochus of Photice

3.3. The grace that paints

Diadochus, One Hundred Chapters, ch. 89, SC 5 bis, 149. trans. Ermatinger, 117:

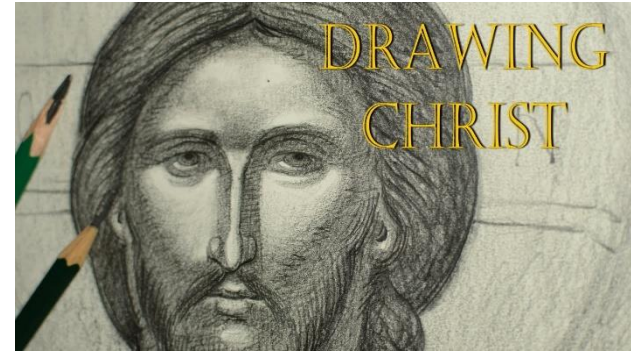
Τὸ δὲ ἐκδέχεται ἵνα σὺν ἡμῖν ἐργασηται, ὅπερ ἐστὶ τὸ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν. Ὅταν οὖν ἄρξηται ὁ νοῦς ἐν πολλῇ αἰσθήσει γεύεσθαι τῆς χρηστότητος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, τότε ὀφείλομεν εἰδέναι ὅτι ἄρχεται ἡ χάρις ὥσπερ ἐπιζωγραφεῖν εἰς τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα τὸ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν.

The other part, which is the likeness, she hopes to bring about with our cooperation. When the mind (intellect) begins to taste the goodness of the Holy Spirit with profound sentiments, then we ought to know that grace is beginning to paint the likeness over the image. (revised).

3. Diadochus of Photice

3.3. The grace that paints

Ch. 89, SC 5 bis, 149, trans. Ermatinger, 118: In the same way, in fact, that painters first sketch the figure of the painting of a person in one color (ἐνὶ χρώματι διαγράφουσι τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου), and then little by little they make it flourish with one pigmentation upon another, reflecting even the model's hair faithfully (οὕτως τὸ τοῦ ὁμοιογραφουμένου ἄρχι καὶ τῶν τριχῶν ἀποσώζουσιν εἶδος), so too the grace of God first establishes a sketch of 'in the image' (ῥυθμίζει τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα) through baptism as when the human was first created.



3. Diadochus of Photice

3.3. The grace that paints

When grace sees that we desire with all our heart the beauty of the likeness (τοῦ καλλοῦς τῆς ὁμοιώσεως) and to be naked and without fear (cf. Gen 2:25) in its workshop, then it makes virtue flourish over virtue (cf. John 1:16); thus elevating the soul's beauty from glory to glory (ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς εἶδος ἀναφέρει, cf. 2 Cor 3:18), it places upon it the distinguishing mark of 'the likeness' (τὸν χαρακτῆρα τῆς ὁμοιώσεως αὐτῇ περιποιεῖ).



4. Comparison

Glory, resplendence and image of God

Diadochus:

- The imprint of the character of the model is not separated from the participation in his light and radiance, which enables the human ascension in glory.
- The perfection of the likeness is achieved and known in illumination (ch. 89).
- Experiencing an “abundance of illumination” is to “enjoy the glory of the Lord” in silence (ch. 8).
- To arrive at perfect love – a state synonym with perfect likeness – is to achieve “complete impassibility wrought by God’s glory” (ch. 17).

4. Comparison

Glory, resplendence and image of God

Paul's Christology:

In the vocabulary of the Hebrews 1:3, Christ is the radiance of God's glory (ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης) and the expression of God's being (χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ), an image bearing the very character of the divine nature.

In Colossians, Christ is the "image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15), mediating the epistemic and existential access to the incomprehensible God.

4. Comparison

Glory, resplendence and image of God

Basil, On the Holy Spirit, 18, 45, 149C,
SC 17 bis, 406, trans. Andersen, 72:

Πῶς οὖν, εἴπερ εἷς καὶ εἷς, οὐχὶ δύο θεοί; Ὅτι βασιλεὺς λέγεται καὶ ἡ τοῦ βασιλέως εἰκὼν, καὶ οὐ δύο βασιλεῖς. Οὔτε γὰρ τὸ κράτος σχίζεται, οὔτε ἡ δόξα διαμερίζεται. Ὡς γὰρ ἡ κρατοῦσα ἡμῶν ἀρχὴ καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία μία, οὕτω καὶ ἡ παρ' ἡμῶν δοξολογία μία, καὶ οὐ πολλαί· διότι ἡ τῆς εἰκόνος τιμὴ ἐπὶ τὸ πρωτότυπον διαβαίνει. Ὁ οὖν ἐστὶν ἐνταῦθα μιμητικῶς ἡ εἰκὼν, τοῦτο ἐκεῖ φυσικῶς ὁ Υἱός. Καὶ ὥσπερ ἐπὶ τῶν τεχνικῶν κατὰ τὴν μορφήν ἡ ὁμοίωσις, οὕτως ἐπὶ τῆς θείας καὶ ἀσυνθέτου φύσεως, ἐν τῇ κοινωνίᾳ τῆς θεότητός ἐστιν ἡ ἔνωσις.

How does one and one not equal two Gods? Because we speak of the emperor, and the emperor's image – but not two emperors. The power is not divided, nor the glory separated. One is the dominion and authority over us; we do not send up glories to God, but glory; the honor given the image passes to the prototype. The image of the emperor is an image by imitation, but the Son is a natural image; in works of art the likeness is dependent on its original form, and since the divine nature is not composed of parts, in the community of the divinity is the union [of persons].

4. Comparison

Glory, resplendence and image of God

Paul's Christology:

- the notion of “form” has an explanatory role in Phil. 2, 6:
- being in “the form of God” (ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ), Christ has accepted to take on “the form of a servant” (μορφὴν δούλου λαβών).

4. Comparison

Platonic background

Plato's Philebus 38e-39c: correspondence between the object (seen in the world) – the word (written in the soul) and the image of the object (painted in the soul).

Plato's Republic 596a-603b: argument for the double ontological distancing of the works of art from Forms, with imitation (*mimesis*) introducing each time an inferior ontological status.

Plato's painting metaphor can serve several philosophical purposes: theory of language, theory of art, ontology, theory of the state.

5. Conclusions

Painting the Ressemblance over the Image

- The use of the painting metaphor marks a shift from Christological (Paul) to *trinitarian and anthropological focus* (Diadochus and Basil).
- Basil and Diadochus leave behind a formal and substantial understanding of the image and prefer a *dynamic, a vivid-performative one*.
- In anthropology, the metaphor of the painting is used to show the human being as *icon in the making*.
- It moves the understanding of the *eikon* from the realm of “inert” objects, art and craftsmanship into the realm of life, relatedness and active participation together with *God the painter*.
- It helps rethinking the *materiality* and *mediation* of the image through a certain shift towards the paradigm of the *mirror* and the *light-glory*.