

1:26a “Let Us Make ...”

THE DIVINE SENATE IN SESSION. JOHANNES BRENZ: When God says, “Let us make humankind,” we should understand the Father to be speaking with the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is the holiest senate and the most sacred of councils that was ever convened. In this council of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it was concluded and ordained that humankind would be created in the image and likeness of God, and that they would be partakers of the divine blessedness and preside over all the other creatures on earth, in the sea and in the sky, and thus be like God on earth. This is the final resolution, so to speak, of that divine and heavenly council. COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26–27](#).

GOD WAS NOT SPEAKING TO THE ANGELS WHEN MAKING HIS IMAGE. WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: Here it is asked, to whom God might have spoken these words, “Let us make humankind according to our image and likeness,” and whether there were several makers in whose image humankind was made.... Some say that God spoke in this way to the angels, as if he would have wished to use their works to create humankind. Unthinkingly, they do not see how absurd it is to appoint as our creators those whom we regard as fellow servants under one God. If angels are the makers of our nature, how will we deny them the honor of worship and adoration due to our maker and creator? But if they are not our makers but rather our fellow servants, nor God’s coworkers in the work of creation but rather his handiwork just as we are, then how is it to be understood that God said to them, “Let us make humankind”? Further support arises in that he does not say, “according to my image and likeness,” but “according to our image and likeness.” If he had spoken to the angels, we would now have angels not only as our creators but also our archetypes, so that we would be created according to the image not only of God but also of them. But if these things are deservedly rejected as absurd and incompatible with the Holy Scriptures, it follows that God was not speaking to the angels here.... This opinion is clearly detestable for the suspicion it raises, as if after making heaven, the sea, the earth, and all the things that now fill them, God were unable to create humankind by himself and instead found it unavoidable to summon help from his own creatures! COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26–27](#).

“LET US MAKE” REFERS TO THE TRINITY, NOT TO THE ANGELS OR THE “‘ROYAL’ WE.” JOHN CALVIN: Given that the Lord needs no other advisor, there can be no doubt but that he consulted with himself. [Certain Jewish writers], however, are wholly ridiculous when they imagine that God conducted a conversation with the earth or the angels. Obviously, the earth was a most excellent advisor! But to ascribe the least portion of such an exquisite work to the angels is a sacrilege to be abhorred. Where, indeed, will they find that we were created according to the image of the earth or that of the angels? Does not Moses explicitly exclude all creatures the moment he declares that Adam was created after the image of God? Others, who deem themselves more acute (but are doubly benighted), say that God spoke of himself in the plural number, according to the custom of princes—as if that barbarous style of speaking that has grown into use within the past few centuries had even then prevailed in the world!... Christians properly contend from this testimony, then, that there exists in God a plurality of persons. COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26](#).

“LET US MAKE” POINTS TO GOD’S UNITY AND TRINITY. WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: Let us understand that by this locution ... the mystery of the Holy Trinity is faithfully and truly expressed a bit more brightly than before, and that in this way God the Father expressed his consultation with the Word and the Spirit. We should also understand, next, that Moses narrated events with caution and care so as not to say, “And they created

humankind,” lest he seem to introduce a plurality of gods and confirm the impiety of the nations, but spoke in the singular, “And God created.” Likewise, he also did not say, “And they said, ‘Let us make humankind,’ ” but “And God said, ‘Let us make humankind,’ ” so that he might thereby give a nod to the communion of the works of the Holy Trinity in a way that would at the same time not obscure the divine unity. COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26–27](#).

GOD’S ESTEEM FOR US SHOULD BIND US TO HIM. HULDRYCH ZWINGLI: When he wished to create humankind, God employed much deliberation and great counsel. Indeed, he did not merely say, “Let it be done, let the earth emerge from the water,” as with the earlier things, but descending into himself from on high, he fortifies his speech with weighty words, saying, “Let us make!” We are thus to discern, first of all, the divine nature in the special character of its persons; and, second, we should learn of our own nobility and dignity. For even if man (*homo*) was made from earth, God nonetheless made him with his own hand, so that we might see how highly God regarded humans, so that humans might serve their creator alone, worship only him, trust and cling to him alone—not to the earth, nor to the sun, nor to the water. ANNOTATIONS ON [GENESIS 1:26](#).

[1:26b](#) *God’s Image and Likeness*

DISCOVERING AN IMAGE WE HAVE NEVER SEEN. JOHANNES BRENZ: Adam himself, who felt and experienced this image before he first sinned, was able to discuss the image of God much more explicitly than his descendants. The difference between Adam and us is like that between someone who was endowed with sight for a while but became blind, and someone blind from birth. The former can argue about colors because he saw them once upon a time; the latter, because he has never seen colors, how can he dispute about them? In the same way, because we were conceived and born in sin, we cannot understand or explain the true nature of this image except insofar as the Scriptures teach us about it and to the degree that we regain it in this life in Christ and by faith. God’s image in us has been corrupted by sin, and the primary reason for the Holy Spirit to explain certain things about it is not to indulge our curiosity but rather, by pointing out the beauty of this image as it was in the beginning, to excite our interest in its restoration. But it cannot be regained except by being regenerated through faith in Christ. Truly, may it happen that we may be adopted as God’s children, renewed by the Holy Spirit, and begin again to resemble God, until God’s perfect image is finished and completed in us in the age to come. COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26–27](#).

GOD’S IMAGE MEASURED BY RIGHTEOUSNESS AND GENEROSITY. KONRAD PELLIKAN: Truly, even before humans were fashioned, God seems to have smothered them with his blessings, as it were, in all the things he had already created, the delightful joy and utility of which they would need to ponder and by which they might be provoked to love God more ardently as their beneficent father, to revere him more piously and to worship him more worthily. Nor is the reading to be disapproved, but rather embraced, that the image of God according to which humans were created is called the law (*ius*) of human nature, by which one ought to be absolutely eager to do good to all, just as God does. That [image] is possessed neither by brute beasts nor by the impious and the unjust, but rather by those who cultivate righteousness and bear the character of God the Father by imitating Christ the Son of God through their mercy and kindness, innocence of life and gracious generosity. These are the ones who truly bear God’s image—that image according to which they were made, which was immediately corrupted by Adam, and which by Christ was truly cleansed and renewed. COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26](#).

John L. Thompson, Timothy George, and Scott M. Manetsch, eds., *Genesis 1–11: Old Testament*, vol. 1, Reformation Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012).

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GOD'S IMAGE CONSISTED OF WISDOM AND HOLINESS. WILLIAM PERKINS: This image of God has two principal parts: wisdom and holiness. Concerning wisdom, Paul says, "Put on the new self, which is created in knowledge after the image of him which created him." This wisdom consists in three points. First, he knew God his Creator perfectly, for Adam in his innocence knew God as far as it was fitting for a creature to know his Creator. Second, he knew God's will, as far as it was fitting for him, to show his obedience thereunto. Third, he knew the wisdom and will of his Creator touching the particular creatures: for after Adam was created, the Lord brought every creature unto him, presenting them unto him as being lord and king over them, that he might give names unto them. Whereby it appears that Adam in his innocence knew the nature of all creatures and the wisdom of God in creating them, else he could not have given them fit names; and when God brought Eve unto Adam, he knew her at the first and said, "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman, etc." The second part of God's image in us is holiness and righteousness, which is nothing else but a conformity of the will and affections and of a person's whole disposition both in body and soul to the will of God our Creator. EXPOSITION OF THE APOSTLES' CREED.

HOW WE IMAGE GOD. PETER MARTYR VERMIGLI: The image of anyone is a *form* that calls him to mind. The likeness of anyone is a *quality* that calls him to mind. But it has to be explained in the simplest terms just what this image might be. Human beings not only possess powers of understanding, by which they are not unrelated to God, but they are also created with the most distinguished or, more precisely, divine characteristics, endowed with justice, wisdom, compassion, self-control, and charity. Paul urges us to be restored to this image, to that human being who, according to God, was created in holiness and truth. Christ is the fullness of God's *image* according to his divine nature, and in his human nature one finds as much of the divine *likeness* as is possible.... We have been made so that we might be like him, for we have the capacity for understanding and divine perfections. We were created with these attributes, but we cannot be restored to them without the help and example of Christ, who is the first and true image. How we may be God's image is clear from our happiness, which we hold in common with God, that is, with him whom we are called to love and know. COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26–27](#).

WE IMAGE GOD WHEN WE REMEMBER. JOHANNES BRENZ: Human beings were created not only to consider the present moment but also to remember the things of the past. A trace of this gift and ornament has remained in us after sin. Indeed, we remember and keep in mind not only things we saw or did yesterday or the day before, but also the things we did or witnessed as adolescents many years ago. God's remembrance, however, is so great that he regards things done many thousands of years ago as if now present.... Thus, human beings were created in an image similar to God in that they are endowed with memory, by which they remember the past. COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26–27](#).

NATURAL LAW CONNECTS GOD'S IMAGE TO THE GOLDEN RULE. HULDRYCH ZWINGLI: Some refer [the image] to dominion over creatures, that humans should preside over all just as God does; others connect it to the mind. But I think this image and likeness is what we call the law (*ius*) of nature: "What you would have done to you, do to others!" This image is inscribed and impressed on our hearts. Brute beasts do not have this; rather, nature has assigned animals of every kind to protect themselves in life and body. Therefore, those who attend to justice, who seek God, who imitate God and Christ in innocence of life toward all as well as doing good to them in turn—these are the ones, in the final analysis, who bear that ancient image of God, which has been cleansed and restored by Christ. For just as in Adam we are all corrupted, so in

Christ we are all renewed, when, having been endowed with the divine mind, we conduct ourselves according to the character of Christ. ANNOTATIONS ON [GENESIS 1:27](#).

CONSCIENCE, TOO, IMAGES GOD. ANNA MARIA VAN SCHURMAN:

In us, as in a temple,
 there is a member that abides
and, like a looking glass,
 reflects what in every soul resides.
I speak of that member
 that can its Maker praise
and teach its neighbors
 of its inner state and ways.
But see how conscience
 serves a purpose of a deeper sort;
this power works inside us
 and convenes the highest court.
As a power in our souls,
 it is crafted to amaze:
a light to us, a witness,
 and the judge of all our ways,
a tribunal where heaven's judgments
 cannot but unfold,
where all our deepest inner secrets
 cannot but be told.
It brings to us a peaceful life
 or else brings troubled weather;
it gladdens hearts with heaven's joy
 or makes them live forever.
As law and judge, it rules within

to keep us on the path
and makes us know if we deserve
God's favor or his wrath.
In it the blind see something,
in it the deaf can hear
the voice of nature sounding
in every human ear,
calling out, "There is a God,
all-powerful, good and wise,
who made us that his highest praise
might evermore arise."

PARAPHRASE OF [GENESIS 1–3](#).

GOD'S LIKENESS REMAINS IN US LIKE A SPARK COVERED WITH ASHES. BALTHASAR HUBMAIER: If before the Fall God's likeness was free and unbound in us, since the Fall it is held captive and the sin of the Fall is damning. After the restoration of the Fall through Christ, this likeness is made free again, although captive in the sinful and poisoned body; but the curse has been removed from the sin of the Fall insofar as we do not by our own wickedness make it damning again by rebelliously walking in it.... The image or inbreathing of God is still in us all, although captive and as a live spark covered with cold ashes is still alive and will steam if heavenly water is poured on it. It also lights up and burns if one blows on it. That is the source of the conscience in the Jews, pagans, and Christians, as Paul writes about it, [Rom. 2:15](#). But Christ restored the quenched spark of flame on Easter Day when he breathed upon his disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Now Christ has ordered his servants to inbreathe and blow by proclaiming his holy Word, that the wounded soul may be reawakened from sleep. A CHRISTIAN CATECHISM.

GOD'S IMAGE MEANT FREEDOM FROM FEAR. MARTIN LUTHER: My understanding of the image of God is this: that Adam had it in his being and that he not only knew God and believed that He was good, but that he also lived in a life that was wholly godly; that is, he was without the fear of death or of any other danger, and was content with God's favor. In this form it reveals itself in the instance of Eve, who speaks with the serpent without any fear, as we do with a lamb or a dog. For this reason, too, if they should transgress His command, God announces the punishment: "On whatever day you eat from this tree, you will die by death," as though He said: "Adam and Eve, now you are living without fear; death you have not experienced, nor have you seen it. This is My image, by which you are living, just as God lives. But if you sin, you will lose this image, and you will die." So we see now what great dangers and how many varieties of death and chances of death this wretched nature is compelled to meet with and to endure in addition to the execrable lust and other sinful passions and inordinate emotions that arise in the hearts of all. We are never secure in God; apprehension and terror cause us concern even in sleep. These and similar evils are the image of the devil, who stamped them on us. LECTURES ON [GENESIS 1:26](#).

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GOD'S IMAGE MAY BE KNOWN FROM GOD'S OWN CHARACTER. JOHANNES BRENZ: In the beginning, not just one part but the whole person was created to be an image or facsimile similar to God. To understand it aright, we should compare those things that were in us before sin (at least, so far as such things can be inferred from Scripture or from human misery) or that still remain in us, with those things that are in God or that *are God* himself (so far as the Holy Spirit wishes to reveal them through Scripture). And first, God created humans wise and industrious, and endowed with such intelligence that they might know not only how to administer the things of this earth, which had been given to them to rule, but also that God was their creator.... That Adam bestowed names on all the animals is proof of his wisdom as well as his dominion. And when, having been awakened from sleep, he beheld Eve, he spoke prophetically not only of her, but of Christ and his bride, the church, just as Paul explains. So Adam as created was the greatest philosopher and the greatest prophet, that is, the wisest of all bodily creatures. Yet there is no doubt but that God surpasses all things in his wisdom and that, truly, he is wisdom itself.... Thus, when God had made human beings wise, yet is himself wisest of all by far, it is clear that human beings are created in God's image in just this way, that they were made wise and intelligent. COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26–27](#).

THE IMAGE OF GOD REPRESENTED THE PINNACLE OF INTEGRITY. MARTIN LUTHER: The image of God, according to which Adam was created, was something far more distinguished and excellent, since obviously no leprosy of sin adhered either to his reason or to his will. Both his inner and his outer sensations were all of the purest kind. His intellect was the clearest, his memory was the best, and his will was the most straightforward—all in the most beautiful tranquility of mind, without any fear of death and without any anxiety. To these inner qualities came also those most beautiful and superb qualities of body and of all the limbs, qualities in which he surpassed all the remaining living creatures. I am fully convinced that before Adam's sin his eyes were so sharp and clear that they surpassed those of the lynx and eagle. He was stronger than the lions and the bears, whose strength is very great; and he handled them the way we handle puppies. Both the loveliness and the quality of the fruits he used as food were also far superior to what they are now.

But after the Fall death crept like leprosy into all our perceptive powers, so that with our intellect we cannot even understand that image. Adam would not have known his Eve except in the most unembarrassed attitude toward God, with a will obedient to God, and without any evil thought. Now, after sin, we all know how great passion is in the flesh, which is not only passionate in its desire but also in its disgust after it has acquired what it wanted. Thus in both instances we see neither reason nor will unimpaired, but passion greater than that of cattle. Is this not a serious and pernicious leprosy, of which Adam was free before sin? Moreover, he had greater strength and keener senses than the rest of the living beings. To what extent is man today surpassed by the boars in their sense of hearing, by the eagles in their sense of sight, and by the lion in his strength? Therefore no one can picture in his thoughts how much better nature was then than it is now. LECTURES ON [GENESIS 1:26](#).

THREE OPTIONS FOR THE IMAGE OF GOD, BUT DOMINION IS BEST. WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: The extent to which one is rendered similar to God matters greatly, since it cannot happen that we become like God in every way. God has his *essence*, in which three divine persons uniquely share. He has his *natural quality*, by which he is just, good, wise, etc. And there is also *divine power*, by which the Lord and King of all governs everything that is in heaven and on earth. Therefore we must see according to which of these three we have been created to be the image. I cannot imagine that anyone has ever thought that the human race was created

according to the image of God's essence, even if you consider a genius. Therefore it remains that we were created as the image and likeness either of his *quality* or of his *power* to rule all things. And here the views of Christians are divided. Some understand it of the rational soul, in which there is memory, intellect and volition, so that humans were created as God's image according to [the soul]; and thus they situate the image of God in the inner person as understanding, wisdom, thoughtfulness and upright living.... Others expound [it] of the power and dignity to rule all things, according to which man was created according to the image of God and constituted lord over the earth and all the things that are in it.... I prefer to follow this view rather than one that breathes philosophical subtlety and is, moreover, of such a kind that with equal reason the angels, too, could be seen as created according to God's image. Indeed, if it is fitting to consider reason, wisdom, volition, intellect, and other things of this kind in this matter and to lodge the image of God in those things, nothing prevents angels, who are in any case much more righteous than we, from also being named as created according to God's image. For they draw considerably nearer to divine wisdom and understanding than we do. Yet Scripture does not attribute to them as it does to us, that they were made according to God's image and likeness. Why? Namely, because they were not constituted lords of earth and of beasts, a dignity God expressly conferred on humankind. COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26–27](#).

THE IMAGE WAS DESIGNED WITH CHRIST IN MIND. KONRAD PELLIKAN: "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our resemblance or designs." Namely, let us form and produce humankind, the noblest creature of the world, according to that form, exemplar, model or effigy that has been predestined before the formation of all creatures to be united to the Son of God and taken up by him in Christ, who is called the firstborn of all creatures, in whom all things were made; and according to that appearance (*speciem*) preformed from eternity and assumed by the Word. COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26](#).

WHAT THE IMAGE IS AND IS NOT. ANDREW WILLET: We do not approve the opinion of Rupert, who by *image* here understands the second person of the Trinity [and] by *likeness* or *similitude* the third person, namely, the Holy Spirit: for when the Lord says "Let us make humankind in our image," the image of the whole Trinity is expressed, and not the image of the Father only. Neither are the words so to be taken, as though humanity was made according to the likeness of that human nature which Christ the Son of God was to assume: for the Scripture says that Christ took upon himself human likeness ([Phil 2:7](#)), not [that humanity took on] his likeness. We also reject the idea of Eugubinus and Oleaster, who think that God took upon himself a human shape when he created humanity, ... for God the Father never appeared in any such shape, nor could it be said to be God's image, being assumed but for a time. Neither yet do we distinguish these words, as some of the Fathers (Origen, Basil, Ambrose), who refer "image" to the *natural gifts* of reason, understanding and memory; [and] "likeness" to the *supernatural gifts* of grace, as of holiness and righteousness: for we see that the apostle applies the image to the work of grace in our renovation or regeneration ([Col 3:10](#)).... We therefore conclude that there is no difference in the sense and meaning of these words, but that one is the explication of the other....

But to put all out of doubt, the apostle shows how we are to understand the image of God in humankind in [Ephesians 4:24](#) ("Which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness") and [Colossians 3:10](#) ("Put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him"). This image then consists not so much in the substance of the soul or in the natural faculties thereof, as of understanding, free will, memory, but in the knowledge and illumination, holiness and justice of the soul, which are now wrought in us by grace, [but] then were given by creation. Our reasons [include] that

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... the image after which people are naturally begotten is not the image of God: for it would be absurd, if not impious, to say that God's image may be naturally propagated. Rather, by nature we receive the image of the reasonable soul, as Adam begot Seth "in his own likeness after his image" ([Gen 5:3](#)), that is, like unto him both in soul and body, so that the image of God does not consist in the substance of the reasonable soul. [In addition,] that image of God according to which Adam was created is by his fall utterly lost and extinguished, for otherwise this image need not be renewed and revived in us, as it is by Christ, as the apostle shows [above]. But the substance of the reasonable soul with its natural faculties and powers are not lost; this image, therefore, is not expressed therein. COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26–27](#).

LIKENESS POINTS TO GOD'S COVENANT WITH ADAM AND WITH US. PETER RIEDEMANN: God's covenant is an everlasting covenant, existing from the beginning and continuing into eternity. It shows that it is his will to be our God and Father, that we should be his people and beloved children. Through the covenant, God desires continually to pour into us through Christ every divine blessing and all good things. That such a covenant of God existed from the beginning is shown in that God created people in his own likeness. All was well with them, and there was no corrupting poison in them. Even when people were deceived and robbed of this likeness by the counsel of the serpent, God's purpose nevertheless endured. The covenant which he had previously made expresses this clearly, namely, that he should be our God and we his people. Out of this comes a promise to take away the devil's power through the woman's offspring. This makes it clear that it was God's intention to redeem us from the devil's power and restore us as his children. Thus, God made his covenant first with Adam, and then more clearly with Abraham and his descendants. Now he has made this covenant with us through Christ and has established and confirmed it through Christ's death. Just as a will is not valid until the death of the one making the will, in the same way God gave his Son up to death, so that we would be redeemed from death through him and be the children of his covenant forever. [CONFESSION OF FAITH](#).

IMAGE DOES NOT DIFFER FROM LIKENESS. JOHN CALVIN: Interpreters do not agree about the meaning of these words. Yet it suits most of them, if not all, to distinguish *image* from *likeness*. And this distinction is almost universal: that the image resides in the substance of a thing, while likeness is found in its accidents. Those who want to define things briefly say that the *image* includes the endowments that God conferred on human nature, while they explain *likeness* in terms of God's gratuitous gifts. But Augustine, more than anyone, speculates far too cleverly in order to fabricate a Trinity within human beings. For he takes hold of the three faculties that Aristotle enumerates in the soul—intellect, memory and will—and from one Trinity subsequently derives many. If any readers have the leisure and wish to be amused by such speculations, let them read the tenth and fourteenth books of *On the Trinity* and the eleventh book of *The City of God*. To be sure, I confess that there is something in a human being that refers to the Father and the Son and the Spirit, nor do I have any difficulty in admitting as well that distinction of the faculties of the soul (although the simpler division into two parts, which is more usual in Scripture, is better suited to a sound doctrine of piety). But a definition of the image of God ought to rest on a firmer basis than such subtleties. As for myself, before I would define the image of God, I deny that it differs from his likeness. For, later on, when Moses repeats the same things, he disregards the likeness and is content to mention the image. If anyone should stipulate that he was merely trying to be concise, I answer that where he twice stresses the word *image*, he makes no mention of likeness. We also know that it was common among the Hebrews to repeat the same thing in different words; and besides, the phrase itself shows that the second

term was added for the sake of explanation: “Let us make,” he says, “in our image, according to our likeness,” that is, so that they may be like God or represent God’s effigy. COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26](#).

MANICHAEANS AND ANTHROPOMORPHITES BOTH ERR ABOUT THE IMAGE OF GOD. WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: The Manichaeans seek in this text how what Moses writes could be true, that humankind was made according to the image of God. And since they understand [this image] as a figure of our *body*, they argue that surely God does not have a body and members configured as our members, because he is a spirit. Next, the Anthropomorphites, because they see that certain bodily members are attributed to God in the Holy Scriptures, ... understand humans to be created according to God’s image and likeness so that God truly does have a body conformed to the human body. They do not reject the Scriptures of the Old Testament, but their misunderstanding leads them to swallow this error and so perceive God in unworthy ways. The Manichees, however, do not accept the Old Testament, and since they know God is a spirit and does not have a body and members, they raise a quibble against Moses in this place, as if what he wrote could in no sense be true, that humans were made according to God’s image. We must therefore seek how to understand that what Moses says is true and, at the same time, that the Anthropomorphites are wrong, and that the Manichees have impiously raised a quibble against the truth. COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26–27](#).

THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO RESTORE THE IMAGE. MARTIN LUTHER: Intellect and will indeed have remained, but both very much impaired. And so the Gospel brings it about that we are formed once more according to that familiar and indeed better image, because we are born again into eternal life or rather into the hope of eternal life by faith, that we may live in God and with God and be one with Him, as Christ says ([Jn 17:21](#)). And indeed, we are reborn not only for life but also for righteousness, because faith acquires Christ’s merit and knows that through Christ’s death we have been set free. From this source our other righteousness has its origin, namely, that newness of life through which we are zealous to obey God as we are taught by the Word and aided by the Holy Spirit. But this righteousness has merely its beginning in this life, and it cannot attain perfection in this flesh. Nevertheless, it pleases God, not as though it were a perfect righteousness or a payment for sin but because it comes from the heart and depends on its trust in the mercy of God through Christ. Moreover, this also is brought about by the Gospel, that the Holy Spirit is given to us, who offers resistance in us to unbelief, envy, and other vices that we may earnestly strive to glorify the name of the Lord and His Word, etc. In this manner this image of the new creature begins to be restored by the Gospel in this life, but it will not be finished in this life. But when it is finished in the kingdom of the Father, then the will will be truly free and good, the mind truly enlightened, and the memory persistent. Then it will also happen that all the other creatures will be under our rule to a greater degree than they were in Adam’s Paradise. Until this is accomplished in us, we cannot have an adequate knowledge of what that image of God was which was lost through sin in Paradise. But what we are stating faith and the Word teach, which, as if from a distance, point out the glory of the divine image. Just as in the beginning the heaven and the earth were unfinished masses, so to speak, before the light had been added, so the godly have within themselves that unfinished image which God will on the Last Day bring to perfection in those who have believed His Word. LECTURES ON [GENESIS 1:26](#).

THE IMAGE OF GOD MAY BE KNOWN FROM ITS RESTORATION. JOHN CALVIN: Since the image of God has been destroyed in us by Adam’s fall, what it was originally like must be deduced from its restoration. Paul says that we are transformed into the image of God by the gospel. And according to him, spiritual regeneration

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is nothing else than the restoration of the same image ([Col 3:10](#); [Eph 4:24](#)). However, that he locates this image “in righteousness and true holiness” is a synecdoche,[†] for however much these are the chief part, they are not the whole of God’s image. By this word, therefore, the integrity of our whole nature is designated, for Adam would have been endowed with right understanding, with his affections in harmony with reason, all his senses sound and well-regulated, and he truly would have excelled in everything good. Accordingly, the chief seat of the divine image was in his mind and heart, where it would have been prominent, yet there was no part of him in which some sparks of it did not shine forth. Indeed, there was in each of the parts of the soul a moderation that corresponded with its rank: in the mind, the light of right understanding flourished and reigned, while rectitude stood by as the mind’s companion, all the senses were designed and eager for due obedience to reason, and there was a suitable correspondence in the body with this internal order. But now, even if some obscure tracings of that image are found remaining in us, they are nonetheless so damaged and mutilated that they may truly be said to be destroyed. For besides the degradation that appears so hideously everywhere, this evil also is added, that no part is undefiled by the stain of sin. COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26](#).

A DEGREE OF SOLIDARITY IN HAVING LOST THE IMAGE OF GOD. WOLFGANG CAPITO: We are made from the same clay and we are all equally the dead offspring of the dead Adam. No one, therefore, is better by nature than anyone else, but there are some to be found who are more destructive than others with respect to their morals and pursuits, insofar as they conceal less than others the stinking corpse of their soul and the pus of their rotten heart. Their evil appearance is decorated with showy pretense and lies hidden in other things that are claimed as superior to good sense and the virtues of the soul. But they alone are good who have received an alien goodness, that is, Christ the Lord.

From what has been said so far, it is clear (I think) what it means for us to be recreated in the image of God—we who are human beings born from other human beings in the image of Satan. The first human was created so that he would have progressed every day in that same image and according to that same likeness, just as he was corrupted according to the same image of Satan by his guilt, ... from which we are now reformed into the image of God. For by repairing what had fallen into ruin, the plan is the same and the goal is the same as what was well founded in every way at the beginning. But who does not know from this revelation of the gospel that we are to regard that person as renewed who bears by faith a mind illumined by the mortification of the flesh? Therefore the life of the first human being and the disposition of one who is in the image and according to the likeness of God will be nothing other than the knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us and the will and affection of the senses that our first parents had by means of the light of God. Adam’s original nature was fully equal to the gift we receive by our faith, which is understood from its effects. ON GOD’S WORK OF THE SIX DAYS.

THE POLISHED MIRROR IS NOW A FRIGHT MASK. DAVID CHYTRAEUS: The image’s *deformation*, which resulted from our first parents’ fall and was passed on to all of us through carnal propagation, ought to be contemplated and deplored. Indeed, all those now born from virile seed carry within their minds a darkness that is unaware of God, along with doubts about God’s will and providential care. In our wills there is an abhorrence of God and an absence of the fear of God, of faith and love; there is a carnal security, mistrust, self-regard, concupiscence and depraved tendencies. In our hearts, all our affections defy God’s will and these evils render us liable to God’s wrath and eternal death. So while human beings ought to be a polished mirror and the express image of God, through the fall of our first parents we’ve become the devil’s fright

mask. And yet just as a mirror spattered with mud still renders some image, however obscure, so too in us do some marks and traces of God remain even after the fall, and these are gradually given luster in this life by the Son of God, until the entire image of God in us is restored. COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26–27](#).

CHRIST RESTORES ADAM (AND US) TO THE PURITY OF GOD’S IMAGE. DAVID JORIS: The true restitution is the first, which has thus occurred in Christ. Put briefly, everything we have lost in the first Adam, by disobedience through the devil, is restored by and through the obedience of Jesus Christ. Also, that those who now believe in the name of Jesus, that he is Christ, and call upon him as his head and Lord and prove to be obedient, in these people all things will be restored and renewed; changed from flesh into spirit, from death into life, from the earthly into the heavenly beings, until they have become once again the likeness and true image of God through Christ Jesus, by grace. They will be just as God made Adam in the beginning as an image of God: immortal, pure, without spot or sin, simple and innocent, just like God. We must again put on these clean unspotted, white garments of simplicity and innocence, else we cannot enter into Eden, that is, into the life and kingdom of God. Pay attention. These are the pure wedding garments which few people upon the earth have known. Yes, these are the garments of faith, in which exist the union and incorporation. These were given first to Adam from the rising of the sun, and now have been entrusted to me through grace, from the rising of the sun. [THE WONDERFUL WORKING OF GOD](#).

THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH IS INVOLVED IN RESTORING GOD’S IMAGE AND LIKENESS. WOLFGANG CAPITO: An *image* is an internal and holistic expression of the substance. But what do you find like this in the divine writings, except in the eternal Word of the Father, who is Jesus Christ? For of him it is written that “he is the image of the invisible God,” and “the splendor of his glory, and the image of his substance, upholding all things by the word of his power.” Indeed, he is begotten from eternity, and as the Father understands himself perfectly, he who is in that very same Word expresses himself wholly—just as an earthly image expresses its original in part. *Likeness*, however, is not an expression of substance, but more like a resemblance to qualities found in God. For even if God’s wisdom and truth and goodness and similar kinds of virtue are, as we humans say, nothing in God but God’s own essence, nonetheless let us wholly regard them as characteristics of God’s qualities, as if they were attributes of things. Nor does human reason conceive of them otherwise than the way Scripture speaks, namely, that God accommodates the things of God to our capacity. Accordingly, we who have been corrupted by Adam’s sin are then completed in God’s image and according to his likeness by the grace of adoption, when we are initiated into the sacraments of Christ and when, the gospel having been heard, faith effects for us the remission of sins through Christ.

The whole ministry of the church—the word of proclamation, baptism and the Eucharist, and the exercise of the keys [discipline]—plays a part toward this end. For through [the church] we are renewed to the image of God that has been displayed, that is, according to the example of the eternal Son; through it we are restored from death to life and we put on Christ, the eternal image of the Father; and through it we become the image and glory of God, in that, by the Holy Spirit working within us, we become one with Christ. It is thereby clear how we are reformed according to the image of God. But by this same ministry of the church we are [also] daily fashioned into God’s likeness, if, having been enlightened by grace, “we put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, and we bear with one another and forgive one another if anyone has a complaint against another: just as Christ forgave you, so also should you forgive.” ON GOD’S WORK OF THE SIX DAYS.

LIVING FROM THE IMAGE. PETER MARTYR VERMIGLI: This passage also reminds us of the obligation, intention and appearance of all our actions. Whenever we are about to do something, we should ask ourselves, “Does this reflect my Father? Is this what it means to live out his image?” COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26–27](#).

GOD’S IMAGE IS THE BASIS FOR LOVING EVEN ENEMIES. JOHN CALVIN: We are not to consider what people deserve on their own merits but should rather attend in everyone to the image of God, to whom we owe all honor and love. However, it is among those of the household of faith that this same image is more carefully to be observed, insofar as it has been renewed and restored through the Spirit of Christ. Therefore, whoever you may meet who needs your aid, you have no reason to refuse to help.

Say that these people are strangers: yet the Lord has impressed a mark upon them that ought to be familiar to you, and by that means he forbids you to despise your own flesh.

Say that they are contemptible and of no account: yet the Lord shows them to be those whom he has deemed worthy of the beauty of his image.

Say that you owe nothing for any service of theirs: yet they have been substituted, as it were, in the place of God, toward whom you ought to recognize the many and great benefits by which he has bound you to himself.

Say they are undeserving that you should exert yourself in the least for them: yet God’s image, by which they are commended to you, is so worthy that you should offer to it yourself and all your possessions.

Now if someone has not only deserved nothing good from you but has also provoked you by unjust acts and injuries, not even this is just cause for you to desist from embracing them in love and pursuing the duties of love. You will say, “They have deserved something far different of me.” Yet what has the Lord deserved? When he commands you to forgive them for whatever sins they have committed against you, truly he wishes them to be charged against himself. [INSTITUTES 3.7.6](#).

GOD’S IMAGE IS WORTHY OF HONOR ESPECIALLY IN OTHERS. WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: No one can sufficiently weigh just how great a dignity it is to be created according to the image and likeness of God, even if one should ponder it as greatly as possible. It is clearly worthy of the greatest admiration that Adam, having been taken from the earth (according to his name), is formed according to the image of God. Now if a beggar were elevated to be the image of a king, everyone would marvel at his unparalleled good fortune. It seems a great thing that a Hebrew boy taken out of chains was promoted to be the image and likeness of the king in Egypt. With how much greater wonder should it be celebrated in this case that dust and earth is formed by God to be God’s image and likeness? We are therefore admonished by this consideration that, first, mindful of our origins, we should respond to God’s esteem for us with godly and pious lives, lest we profane the divine image in us by shameful living. Then, that we should honor this dignity in all mortals, especially in our brethren and other believers, lest we heedlessly injure another.... It is madness to come to the point that we honor God’s image in ourselves yet pay it no respect in our neighbors. On this point, those who have neither guarded an angelic dignity in themselves nor paid respect to the divine image in others bear a resemblance less to God than to Satan. COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:26–27](#).

1:27 Male and Female ... in God’s Image

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THE PRIMAL UNITY OF ADAM AND EVE. MARTIN LUTHER: Thus even if this image has been almost completely lost, there is still a great difference between the human being and the rest of the animals. Before the coming of sin the difference was far greater and more evident, when Adam and Eve knew God and all the creatures and, as it were, were completely engulfed by the goodness and justice of God. As a result, there was between them a singular union of hearts and wills. LECTURES ON [GENESIS 1:26](#).

MAN ALONE IS BUT HALF A HUMAN BEING. JOHN CALVIN: It is not pointless repetition that the image of God is again mentioned here. In fact, it is a remarkable instance of the divine goodness, something that can never be sufficiently proclaimed. At the same time, he calls our attention to the excellence we have lost, so as to kindle in us the desire for its recovery. When he shortly adds that “God created them male and female,” he commends to us that conjugal bond by which the society of the human race is nurtured. For this form of speaking, “God created humankind, male and female created he them,” is of the same force as if he had said that the man himself was but half a human being. COMMENTARY ON [GENESIS 1:27](#).

EVE SHARED GOD’S IMAGE AND DOMINION. MARTIN LUTHER: In order not to give the impression that He was excluding the woman from all the glory of the future life, Moses includes each of the two sexes; for the woman appears to be a somewhat different being from the man, having different members and a much weaker nature. Although Eve was a most extraordinary creature—similar to Adam so far as the image of God is concerned, that is, in justice, wisdom, and happiness—she was nevertheless a woman. For as the sun is more excellent than the moon (although the moon, too, is a very excellent body), so the woman, although she was a most beautiful work of God, nevertheless was not the equal of the male in glory and prestige. However, here Moses puts the two sexes together and says that God created male and female in order to indicate that Eve, too, was made by God as a partaker of the divine image and of the divine similitude, likewise of the rule over everything. LECTURES ON [GENESIS 1:27](#).

WHY ADD “AND FEMALE”? WOLFGANG CAPITO: There was a need for this phrase, lest someone should say that the man alone was created in the image of God. For he made the whole human in the image of God, and it is not just man who is included in the term *human* but also woman, which is proved by the following words: “For God created him, male and female he created them.” Neither the plan for the image nor the plan for this speech ends with the one man, but the force of each pertains also to the woman. And from this phrase stems that statement of the apostle: “Neither the man without the woman,” he says, “nor the woman without the man in the Lord. For just as woman comes from man, so also man comes through woman. But all things are from God,” therefore the man is said to be most like the image and glory of God, “but woman is the glory of the man,” and through him as her head, if the matter is borne in orderly fashion, a pious woman is also the glory of God, no less than a faithful man. All things, indeed, are from God. Nonetheless, she is subjected to the man for the sake of order as well as from the sequence of creation: for she was taken out of the man, not only on account of sin and the deceptions of the serpent that were allowed in before the man’s fall. Wherefore in a marriage that is pious and restored to its first state, you should understand that it ought to be the arrangement that a woman be underneath the man no less than in a common marriage. For Eve was blameless when taken from the man and given to him as a helper. Indeed, he created the man alone, then he built the woman from the rib taken from the side of the sleeping man, so that she would be a helper to the man and dutifully bear the authority of her husband, always nearby, assisting the man. ON GOD’S WORK OF THE SIX DAYS.

EVE NOT A “DEFECTIVE MALE.” MARTIN LUTHER: Lyra also relates a Jewish tale, of which Plato, too, makes mention somewhere, that in the beginning man was created bisexual and later on, by divine power, was, as it were, split or cut apart, as the form of the back and of the spine seems to prove. Others have expanded these ideas with more obscene details. But the second chapter refutes these babblers. For if this is true, how can it be sure that God took one of the ribs of Adam and out of it built the woman? These are Talmudic tales, and yet they had to be mentioned so that we might see the malice of the devil, who suggests such absurd ideas to human beings. This tale fits Aristotle’s designation of woman as a “maimed man”; others declare that she is a monster. But let them themselves be monsters and sons of monsters—these men who make malicious statements and ridicule a creature of God in which God Himself took delight as in a most excellent work, moreover, one which we see created by a special counsel of God. These pagan ideas show that reason cannot establish anything sure about God and the works of God but only thinks up reasons against reasons and teaches nothing in a perfect and sound manner. LECTURES ON [GENESIS 1:27](#).