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Man as Male and Female: Created in the Image of God

Nathan Jastram

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between man and woman was intended as a source of great joy from the beginning.[1] It is difficult to imagine any topic that is more intimately connected with the lives of individuals from all stations of life in all parts of the world, unless it would be the topic of the nature of God. As it happens, those two topics are related. As controversies about sexual distinctions exercise society and church, it has become increasingly clear that the way in which one understands the relationship between man and woman is often linked to the way in which one understands the nature of God. This link finds its first expression in the account of creation itself: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27).[2] Since man as male and female was created *in the image of God,* learning about God is linked to learning about man as male and female, and vice versa.

In broad terms, the goals of this document are (1) to define the "image of God" in a way that is faithful both to the biblical texts in which it occurs and to the wealth of scholarship devoted to the topic; (2) to examine whether the biblical passages that speak of the image of God are related to the biblical passages that speak of sexual distinctions, and if so, in what way; (3) to explore whether the unity and distinction, the equality and order, that are included within God are also reflected in those who are created in His image; and (4) to examine whether the ordered relation between the sexes depends on God's enduring design for His creation or on man's changing social customs.

This study often uses the word "man" and its corresponding masculine pronouns to refer to the human race as a whole, including both male and female, young and old. This usage is not intended to offend those who have chosen to avoid such language as a matter of policy in favor of "gender-neutral" language. Three reasons provide the rationale for such a

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[1]I wish to thank those who have read earlier drafts of this paper and contributed their comments. Three in particular need to be mentioned by name, James Voelz, William Weinrich, and Harold Senkbeil, whose insightful questions and contributions have been incorporated throughout. Thanks are also due to Paul Nus, to Pilgrim Lutheran Church in West Bend, Wisconsin, and to the Lutheran Heritage Foundation for providing support to bring this project to completion.

[2]Unless otherwise noted, the translation used in this study is the *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1984).

usage in this document: (1) it is the way the Bible often speaks, particularly in the key passages under discussion; (2) it corresponds to the usage of a vast wealth of scholarship devoted to the image of God; (3) it helps to teach the ordered unity of male and female that God intended when He created them.

It is true that in recent years so-called gender neutral Bibles have appeared, most notably the New Revised Standard Version.[3] Such translations are all seriously flawed in at least one respect—they deliberately change the text rather than translating the words that are there. Hebrew, Greek, and English are remarkably similar with respect to sharing the convention that the word "man" and masculine pronouns may be used to refer to human beings in general, both male and female. When translators deliberately change the text to make it "gender-neutral" instead of translating the text as it stands, they run the risk of making the Bible conform to the world rather than vice versa. What begins as an attempt to be less offensive can lead to a serious corruption of the text that obscures teachings about Christ or about the relationship between the sexes.

A warning note against embracing "gender-neutral" language was sounded by Leonard Klein years ago:

> One change may present more problems than some have thought, and that is the dropping of the term "man" for the human race. Not only does the term still merit consideration because it is widely used in a number of sciences and elsewhere as the name for the species, but in scientific theology as well it would seem to have a function that cannot be supplanted by the collective "people" or the abstractions "humankind" and "humanity." Theologically "man" means the adamic whole, the rebellious one who stands over against God as his enemy. Martin Franzmann put it well: "In Adam we have all been one, one huge rebellious man" (*LBW* 372). We have a solidarity in our sin and in our redemption by the second Adam that is watered down and obfuscated by more collective or abstract terms. Thus it is arguable that theology must continue to have not a doctrine of *humanity* but a doctrine of *man*, however we may choose to talk about the race in liturgy and preaching.[4]

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has written that the way the Bible uses the word "man" [Hebrew *adam*] is significant for theology: "There are

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[3]The following comments are similar to comments we have made to The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, which comments have now been included in its "Comparative Study of Bible Translations" (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2002), 12.

[4]Leonard Klein, "That God Is To Be Spoken of as 'He,'" *Lutheran Forum* (Pentecost 1988), 23.

several factors in the creation account in Genesis 2 which provide the basis for Paul's teaching about the relationship of man and woman. . . . The man is designated as Adam (v. 20), which is also the term used to describe the race. That the man is given this name suggests that he occupies the position as head of the relationship."[5] As head of the relationship, man represents the human race in a way that woman does not. It was through Adam that original sin infected the human race, even though Eve was the first to sin. And it was through another man, Jesus Christ, that the human race was cleansed from its sin: "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). It was not an accident that Jesus was man; it was necessary for him to be man in order to represent the entire human race.

When speaking theologically, then, it is best to be very cautious when replacing "man" with some other "gender-neutral" term, so as not to risk creating a new theology by altering how to refer to the human race. There is no such thing as humanity that is not enfleshed, engendered, as male or female, yet the Bible shows that it is *not* necessary to constantly distinguish the two sexes. They can both be called "man" as a result of the ordered unity in which God created them, just as husband and wife can be called "one flesh." In this study, "man" refers specifically to the adult male only when it is used in connection with, or in contrast to, "woman," or when it refers to a particular male such as Jesus Christ. The plural "men" is used in this study to refer to adult males, but when the plural is found in quotations from biblical or other sources the context must determine whether it is used generally about all people or specifically about adult males alone.

I. THE DEFINITION OF THE IMAGE OF GOD

The simplest and most comprehensive definition of the image of God is that it means "to be like God." Lutherans are accustomed to thinking of the image of God as being like God with respect to righteousness, but that does not exhaust the many ways in which people can be like God. In fact, the words "image" and "likeness" that are used in the Bible do not have the meaning "righteousness" specified among their meanings in the standard dictionaries of biblical Hebrew and Greek. The definition of the image of God as being like God is broad enough to conform to the common biblical meaning of the words "image" and "likeness," and to

[5]"Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice," A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, 1985), 23.

incorporate the insights of many theologians who have written about the subject. The following discussion draws on doctrinal writings of the church, discussions of Luther and the Lutheran Confessions, biblical passages, and grammatical and semantic studies to support this definition. The definition "to be like God" is the most faithful to the Scriptural texts in which the phrase "image of God" is found, and unleashes the full power of the doctrine with reference to many related questions concerning man and God.

A. Various definitions of the image of God

1. General

In "An Explanation of the Small Catechism," The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod has published the following questions and responses which serve as a brief definition of the image of God.

> **106.** What was the image of God?
>
> The image of God was this:
>
> A. Adam and Eve truly knew God as He wishes to be known and were perfectly happy in Him.
>
> > Col. 3:10 Put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him (NKJV).
>
> B. They were righteous and holy, doing God's will.
>
> > Eph. 4:24 Put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness (NKJV).
>
> **107.** Do people still have the image of God?
>
> No, this image was lost when our first parents disobeyed God and fell into sin. Their will and intellect lost the ability to know and please God. In Christians God has begun to rebuild His image, but only in heaven will it be fully restored. . . .
>
> > Gen. 5:3 [Adam] had a son in his own likeness, in his own image. . . .[6]

This brief definition includes three aspects: intellect (knowledge of God); righteousness (holiness, doing God's will); and will (happiness in God). These three aspects emerge again and again in the definitions of the image of God found in the writings of Christian theologians. In the aspect of intellect is also mind, reason, memory, knowledge, wisdom, and senses. In the aspect of righteousness is also holiness, conscience, morality, justice,

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[6]"An Explanation of the Small Catechism," *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991), 111-112.

soul, spirit, and virtue. In the aspect of the will is also free cooperation with God, happiness, and freedom of choice. "An Explanation of the Small Catechism" focuses on the spiritual dimension of these aspects in order to stress what is most significant for the relationship between God and man, and provides a handy but brief summary of the image of God.

Some theologians prefer to speak of the image of God according to this brief definition. In basic terms, they define the image of God as what makes Christians different from non-Christians. For instance, Francis Pieper explains that among Lutheran theologians there is agreement that the image of God "consists in the knowledge of God and holiness of the will" (i.e., "the divine image in the proper sense"), but disagreement about whether "a divine image is still ascribed to man after the Fall" (i.e., "the image of God in a wider sense, according to which man, in distinction from the animals, is still a rational being even after the Fall"). In his most direct response to this question, Pieper aligns himself with those who deny that there is such a thing as an image of God in a wider sense.

Because Pieper's position on this issue has often been misunderstood, the full quotation from Pieper follows:

> The Lutheran theologians are agreed that the image of God, which consists in the knowledge of God and holiness of the will, is lacking in man after the Fall, since Col. 3:10 and Eph. 4:24 distinctly state that it is being restored in the believer. *They differ,* however, on the question as to *whether* in Gen. 9:6 ("Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man") and James 3:9 ("With the tongue ... curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God") *a divine image is still ascribed to man after the Fall. Some deny this* and take the passages to describe man as the noble creature who once bore the image of God and in whom God would recreate this image through faith in Christ. *Thus Luther* (on Gen. 9:6, St. L. I 600f), Philippi (*Glaubenslehre,* 3d ed., II, 371f.), Gottfried Hoffman (*Synopsis,* p. 291). *Others say* that these passages describe man as he is after the Fall, a creature endowed with intellect and will, and contend that *this constitutes a certain similitude with God.* Thus Baier (II, 146), Quenstedt (*Systema* I, 876, 901ff.), and others. *The latter distinguish between the image of God in a wider sense,* according to which man, in distinction from the animals, is still a rational being even after the Fall, *and the divine image in the proper sense,* consisting in true knowledge and service of God, which was lost through the Fall. It will be seen that these two interpretations do not differ materially, since Luther and those who agree with him do not deny that man after the Fall retains his intellect and will, and Baier and those who agree with him do not deny that man has through the Fall completely lost the *sapientia* and *iustitia originalis.* However, *the interpretation of Luther is to be preferred. . . . To call man the image of*

God because he possesses reason and will and leave out of consideration what he is to become in Christ is to stretch a point.[7]

Pieper's discussion of the image of God has confused many of his readers. The underlined sections above show that Pieper himself preferred to deny the existence of a "wider" sense of the image of God. He says that the wider sense is denied by some, including Luther, and concludes that "the interpretation of Luther is to be preferred" over against those who teach the wider sense. He concludes that speaking of the image of God in the wider sense is "to stretch a point." This response of Pieper supports the position that the image of God is original righteousness, which was lost in the fall, is regained in Christ, and will be perfected in heaven. However, what Pieper says directly here becomes confusing when compared with statements made elsewhere by both Luther and Pieper. Further analysis shows that the quoted statements oversimplify the teachings of both Luther and of Pieper himself.

The following section of this study will show that Pieper has oversimplified Luther's teaching on the image of God. To see how Pieper has also oversimplified his own teaching on the subject, it is helpful to examine the context from which the quoted paragraph above has been taken. In the immediate context, Pieper speaks of the image of God as including reflections of God's attributes such as wisdom and dominion, and as consisting in "much more than in his possession of intellect and will, in his personality. . . ."[8] For Pieper to say that the image of God consists in "much more" than intellect, will and personality shows that he considered intellect, will, and personality to be legitimate components of the image of God even though they are not the only components or even the major ones. In the same way, to say that following Christ is "much more" than helping the poor is to affirm that helping the poor is a legitimate part, but not the only or the major part, of following Christ.

Pieper implies that in addition to wisdom, dominion, intellect, will, and personality, the components of the image of God include being cultured, endowed with speech, and having a grasp of natural sciences.[9] It is unfortunate that Pieper does not directly address how the inclusion of such components affects his direct statements about how the image of God was lost in the fall. Non-Christians as well as Christians possess wisdom and dominion, albeit in altered state. One does not need to be a Christian

[7]Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (3 vols.; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 1:518-520; emphasis added.

[8]Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 1:515, 516.

[9]Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 1:517.

to have intellect, will, personality, culture, speech, or a grasp of natural science. For this reason, such reflections of God's attributes would normally be classed in the "wider sense" of the image of God, which sense Pieper prefers to deny.

Pieper approaches a reconciliation of these various statements about the image of God by saying, "The real seat of the divine image is not the body, but the soul of man, since the knowledge of God and holiness inhere in the soul. But naturally, the divine image was manifested also in the body, since the body is the organ of the soul and an essential part of man."[10] Yet he does not directly address how this statement relates to his earlier statements that insist that the image of God was the original righteousness of man lost in the fall. When man lost his righteousness, he did not become soulless, nor did his body lose all of the "manifestations" of the divine image. Therefore according to this explanation of the image of God, it was not lost in the fall, however corrupted it may have been. Pieper's discussion of the image of God, then, is confusing because in his simple and direct statements he prefers to deny the wider sense and to insist upon the proper sense alone, while in other statements he indirectly affirms the wider sense.

Other theologians more freely speak of the image of God in the wider sense, including specifically non-spiritual dimensions of intellect (knowledge of nature or rational thought), righteousness (civic righteousness), and will (freedom of choice in general). Many theologians also include other components in their definition of the image of God, such as the human body (upright body, great physical abilities, a balanced physical constitution, a pure and good body), immortality (incorruptibility, glorification), dignity (whatever distinguishes man as surpassing animals, excellence of human nature, worth, nobility), one's relationship with God (faith, love, and trust in God), one's relationship with people (equality, hierarchy, social nature, fraternity, compassion, love, sexual differentiation), and dominion (power, rulership, judgeship).[11] In fact, the phrase "image of God" has often been used as a shorthand reference for whatever human characteristic the author treasures the most, or for whatever characteristic is the most significant for the topic he is addressing, whether it is the ability to use the mind to learn about God or

[10]Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 1:521.

[11]These components have been gathered from the works of scholars from the Church Fathers to modern theologians, including Irenaeus, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria, Anselm, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Pope Pius XII, Brunner, Barth, and others.

for rational thought, to be righteous in God's eyes, to live according to His will, to have surpassing physical capabilities, or to have proper relationships with God and other people. A similar broad range of definitions can be found in Ancient Near Eastern writings from Babylon and Egypt, from the Dead Sea Scrolls, and from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.[12] When the non-spiritual dimensions of the image of God are stressed, the definition in its simplest form becomes "what makes man different from animals," or as Calvin says, "The image of God extends to everything in which the nature of man surpasses that of all other species of animals."[13]

2. Luther

To trace the definitions of the image of God that are especially significant for Lutherans, one needs to turn to what Luther and the Lutheran Confessions have said. Luther had several explanations of what the image of God included, usually expressed as trinities: knowledge of God, belief that God is good, and holiness of life; justice, wisdom, and happiness;[14] "to feel, think, and want exactly what God does";[15] righteousness, holiness, and truth; eternal life, freedom from fear, everything that is good; glory and prestige; domination and dominion; immortality.[16] Most of his statements stress the spiritual dimension of the image of God, but he did not deny that a non-spiritual dimension is included in the image. Notice his "not only, but also" language in the following quotation: "When Moses says that man was created also in the similitude of God, he indicates that man is *not only* like God in this respect that he has the ability to reason, or an intellect, and a will, *but also* that he has a likeness of God, that is, a will

[12]For the writings from Babylon and Egypt, see Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 151-153. For the Dead Sea Scrolls, see *4QWords of the Luminaries*[a] (4Q504 [4QDibHam[a]]) frg. 8, in Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* (second ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 417. For the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha see Sir. 17:1-14; Wis. 2:23-24; 4 Ezra 8:42-45; 4 Macc. 15:4; Sir. 30:4; Wis. 15:16; TestNap. 2:5; *Slavonic Enoch* 44. See also the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [*TDNT*] (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:393-394.

[13]John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.15.3.

[14]Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke, kritische Gesammtausgabe* [*WA*] (66 vols.; Weimar: H. Böhlaus, 1883-), 42:51.

[15]Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* [*LW*] (55 vols.; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 26:431.

[16]*LW*, 34:177; *WA* 42:65; *LW*, 1:69; *LW*, 34:177; *LW*, 1:84.

and an intellect by which he understands God and by which he desires what God desires, etc."[17]

If one operates with the general principle that the image of God can be best known by what was lost in the fall and will be regained fully only in the new creation, then it becomes clear that Luther believed there is a physical dimension of the image of God. The following quotation, whether or not it teaches the literal truth or is hyperbolic, shows the physical characteristics that Luther believed were lost in the fall and thus by implication were components of the original image of God: "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."[18]

Although Luther taught that the image of God was lost in the fall, he was careful in his choice of words so that they would show (1) that there is an *absolute* loss of righteousness, that nothing spiritually good remains in man after the fall, so that salvation is by grace alone, and (2) that there is a *relative* loss of natural gifts and abilities, that they are greatly marred, but that even after the fall, man remains a special creature of God, far different from animals. Luther speaks of the *relative* loss of the image of God several times in his writings. Speaking about the knowledge of God which is part of the image of God, Luther says, "Of this knowledge we have feeble and almost completely obliterated remnants. The other animals, however, completely lack this knowledge. . . . 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."[19] Calvin agrees that even after the fall human beings retain traces of the image of God which distinguish them from animals: "We see in this diversity [of gifts] some remaining traces of the image of God, which distinguish the entire human race from other creatures."[20]

Luther also speaks of the image of God as affecting the condition of man, so that the image can be said to be both lost and present at the same time: "Even though man *has lost this image* through sin, . . . his condition is nevertheless such that it can be restored through the Word and the Holy Spirit. God wants us to show respect for *this image [which is] in one*

[17]*LW*, 1:337; italics added.
[18]*LW*, 1:62.
[19]*LW*, 1:67.
[20]Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.17.

another."[21] The following quotation likewise illustrates how Luther can speak of the image "disappearing" and yet remaining in a marred condition.

> Our adversaries today maintain the foolish position that the image and similitude of God remain even in a wicked person. To me their statement would appear to be far more correct if they said that the image of God in man *disappeared* after sin in the same way the original world and Paradise disappeared. For man was righteous from the beginning; the world was most beautiful from the beginning; Eden was truly a garden of delight and joy. After sin all these things *were marred* to the extent that all creatures and the things which were good at first later on became harmful on account of sin.[22]

Notice that Luther says that the image of God "disappeared after sin," but he immediately adds "in the same way the original world and Paradise disappeared." Just as the original world did not vanish without a trace after the fall, so the image of God does not vanish without a trace. Rather, both leave remnants that are corrupted or "marred to the extent that all creatures and the things which were good at first later on became harmful on account of sin." Once again, Calvin agrees that the image of God does not vanish without a trace, but leaves mutilated remnants:

> There is no doubt that Adam, when he fell from his state, was by this defection alienated from God. Therefore, even though we grant that God's image was not totally annihilated and destroyed in him, yet it was so corrupted that whatever remains is frightful deformity. . . . Now God's image is the perfect excellence of human nature which shone in Adam before his defection, but was subsequently so vitiated and almost blotted out that nothing remains after the ruin except what is confused, mutilated, and disease-ridden.[23]

Taking the hint from Luther, a good way to speak about the effect of the fall on the image of God is to liken it to the effect of the fall on life. By God's decree, man lost his life when he sinned by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree: "When you eat of it you will surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Though life was lost, a remnant of life remained to natural man, a remnant that was so corrupted from the original intention that people who possessed it could be called dead ("As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins" [Eph. 2:1; cf. Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13; Rev. 3:1]). The "life" that was lost or so corrupted it could be called "death" is renewed in Christ ("But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" [John 20:31; cf. Rom. 5:21; 6:4; Eph. 5:14]), and perfected in the new creation ("To

[21] *LW*, 2:141; italics added.
[22] *LW*, 1:90; italics added.
[23] Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.15.4.

those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life" [Rom. 2:7; cf. Titus 1:2]). *The loss of life in the fall, like the loss of the image of God in the fall, is not a complete extermination, but a radical change for the worse.*

Understanding how both life and the image of God can be lost without being completely exterminated helps in the proper understanding of "An Explanation of the Small Catechism," quoted at the beginning of this study. When the "Explanation" poses the question of whether people still have the image of God and then briefly answers, "No, this image was lost when our first parents disobeyed God and fell into sin," it should not be understood as denying that natural man has the image of God *in any sense.* Otherwise it would be in conflict with the biblical passages that teach that all people are made in the image of God (see the discussion below of Gen. 9:6 and James 3:9). The brief answer in the "Explanation" should be understood as applying *absolutely* to the image of God in the sense of righteousness, but only *relatively* to the image of God in the sense of the gifts and abilities that distinguish man from animals.

Further support for this understanding can be found in a recent LCMS commentary on Corinthians, which agrees that the image of God is lost completely with respect to righteousness, but only partially with respect to other aspects:

> We may form a coherent picture of the biblical data regarding the image of God along these lines: some aspects of the divine image were completely lost in the fall, such as the original innate righteousness, obedience to God, and trust in God. But human beings still retain other aspects of the divine image, at least in part, such as their role as rulers over creation, carrying out the divine mandate to fill the earth and subdue it, and the capacity to have an intimate relationship with God.[24]

3. The Lutheran Confessions

The Lutheran Confessions follow the lead of Luther in stressing the spiritual dimension of the image of God without denying the physical. They identify the image of God as original righteousness, and the lack of the image as original sin, but speak of both as including body and soul, spiritual and natural dimensions. The Confessions deliberately include references to the Church Fathers, and the treasury of descriptive terms in the Confessions reflect terms or concepts used by the Fathers in their definitions of the image of God: fear, faith and love toward God; original

[24]Gregory Lockwood, 1 *Corinthians,* Concordia Commentary Series (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 594, footnote 12.

righteousness; the very likeness of God; a balanced physical constitution; knowledge, fear, and trust in God; wisdom and righteousness that would grasp and reflect God; knowledge, righteousness and truth; truth, holiness and righteousness; holiness; mind, heart and will; reason, power and ability:

> In the Scriptures righteousness contains not merely the second table of the Decalogue, but also the first, commanding *fear of God, faith and love toward him.* So *original righteousness* was intended to involve not only *a balanced physical constitution,* but these gifts as well: a surer *knowledge of God, fear of God, trust in God,* or at least the inclination and power to do these things. This the Scripture shows when it says that man was created in the image of God and after his likeness (Gen. 1:27). What else is this than that a *wisdom* and *righteousness* was implanted in man that would *grasp God and reflect him,* that is, that man received gifts like the *knowledge of God, fear of God, and trust in God*? So Irenaeus interprets the likeness of God. And after saying a great deal about it, Ambrose says, "That soul is not in the image of God in which God is not always present." In Eph. 5:9 and Col. 3:10 Paul shows that the image of God is the *knowledge of God, righteousness,* and *truth.* Peter Lombard is not afraid to say that *original righteousness* is *the very likeness of God* which he put into man. We cite the opinion of the ancients, with which Augustine's interpretation of the image agrees.[25]
>
> Original sin is the complete lack or absence of the *original concreated righteousness* of paradise or of the image of God according to which man was originally created in *truth, holiness and righteousness,* together with a disability and ineptitude as far as the things of God are concerned. As the Latin words put it, "The description of original sin denies to unrenewed human nature the gifts and power, or the faculty and the concrete acts, to begin and to effect anything in spiritual matters." . . . Original sin in human nature is not only a total lack of good in spiritual, divine things, but . . . at the same time it replaces the lost image of God in man with a deep, wicked, abominable, bottomless, inscrutable, and inexpressible corruption of his entire nature in all its powers, especially of the highest and foremost powers of the soul in *mind, heart, and will.* As a result, since the Fall man inherits an inborn wicked stamp, an interior uncleanness of the heart and evil desires and inclinations. By nature every one of us inherits from Adam a heart, sensation, and mind-set which, in its highest powers and the light of reason, is by nature diametrically opposed to God and his highest commands and is actually enmity against God, especially in divine and spiritual matters. True, in natural and external things which are subject to reason man still possesses a measure of *reason, power, and*

[25]Apol II, 16-22; in Theodore Tappert, *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 102-103; italics added.

> *ability,* although greatly weakened since the inherited malady has so poisoned and tainted them that they amount to nothing in the sight of God.[26]

If one operates with the general principle that the image of God can be best known by what was lost in the fall and will be regained fully only in the new creation, then it becomes clear that the Lutheran Confessions include a wider sense of the image of God in their teaching. The last quotation says that original sin "replaces the lost image of God in man with a . . . corruption of *his entire nature in all its powers,* especially of the highest and foremost powers of the soul in mind, heart, and will." This corruption absolutely excludes righteousness in the spiritual dimension of human nature, making it impossible "to begin and to effect anything in spiritual matters." On the other hand, the corruption of original sin does not obliterate the natural dimension of human nature which the Church Fathers included in their definitions of the image of God. Instead of obliterating the image of God, original sin severely weakens, poisons, and taints it: "True, in natural and external things which are subject to reason man *still possesses* a measure of reason, power, and ability, *although greatly weakened* since the inherited malady has so poisoned and tainted them that they amount to nothing in the sight of God." *By including comments about the natural component of human nature in the discussion about the image of God being lost in the fall, the Confessions show their agreement with Luther and the Church Fathers who taught that both body and soul are created in the image of God, and that a comprehensive definition of the image of God needs to include not only a spiritual, but also a natural or physical dimension.*

In addition to the two passages quoted above in which the main topic is original sin, the Confessions also speak of the image of God in the context of the third function of the law: "Our first parents even before the Fall did not live without the law, for the law of God was written into their hearts when they were created in the image of God."[27]

If this law of God written into hearts is the same thing as the conscience, then once again the Confessional understanding of the image of God is inclusive of the wider sense since also non-Christians continue to possess a conscience, though it is marred.

4. Synodical statements, resolutions, and teachings

In addition to the Lutheran Confessions, The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod has adopted various statements and resolutions that speak of the image of God. The *Brief Statement,* like the Confessions, stresses the

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[26]FCSD I, 10-12; in Tappert, 510; italics added.

[27]FC Ep VI "The Third Function of the Law," 2; in Tappert, 480.

spiritual dimension of the image of God, but also specifically includes the natural dimension: "We teach that the first man was not brutelike nor merely capable of intellectual development, but that God created man *in his own image*, Gen. 1:26, 27; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10, that is, in true knowledge of God and in true righteousness and holiness *and endowed with a truly scientific knowledge of nature*, Gen. 2:19-23" ("Of Man and Sin," italics added). A synodical resolution explicitly includes the body in its definition: "The Scriptures teach and the Lutheran Confessions affirm that Adam and Eve were . . . created in God's image with *body* and soul 'pure, good, and holy' (FC, SD, II, 27), thus possessing 'the knowledge of God, fear of God, and trust in God' (Ap II, 17, 18; cf. Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24)" (1967 Resolution 2-31, italics added).

A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles affirms the spiritual dimension and rejects any definition that *denies* the spiritual dimension, but does not explicitly reject definitions that *include more than* the spiritual dimension:

> We believe, teach, and confess that God, by the almighty power of His Word, created all things. We also believe that man, as the principal creature of God, was specially created in the image of God, that is, in a state of righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. . . . We therefore reject the following . . . 3. The opinion that the image of God in which Adam and Eve were created did not consist of concreated righteousness, that is, a perfect relationship to God. [V. Original Sin]

If one compares the definitions found in these doctrinal statements and resolutions, and adds to them those found in the Lutheran Confessions, Luther's writings, and the writings of many other theologians of the church, it becomes clear that there is diversity in the various definitions of the image of God. But the diversity generally results from how inclusively the definition is worded, or which precise terms are used for the various categories, or how the doctrine is being applied to different topics, rather than from *contradictory* understandings of the image itself. The two most common definitions can be stated most simply as (1) what makes Christians different from non-Christians, or (2) what makes man different from animals.

B. Biblical usage

1. Key biblical passages

a) Man in the image or likeness of God

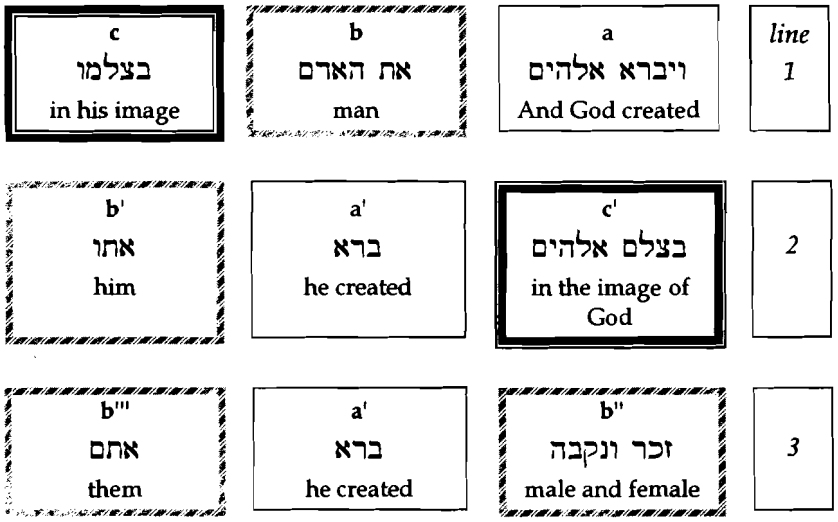
The different definitions of the image of God have their roots in what the Bible itself says about the image of God. There are five passages in

Scripture that speak directly about man being made in the image or likeness of God, or simply of *being* the image of God. This sounds like a surprisingly low number for such an important doctrine. If the importance of doctrine were determined by the number of passages speaking directly about that doctrine, one would have to conclude that the image of God is not very important. By the same standard, however, one would have to conclude that the Trinity is not very important, since there are few passages that teach directly about the three persons united as one God. The doctrines of the image of God and of the Trinity are of fundamental importance not because they are found in so many passages, but because they lay the foundation for everything else that Scripture says about man and God.

(1) Genesis 1:26-28

> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

This is the first and most basic text in Scripture teaching that man was created in the image of God. In typical Hebrew fashion, the phrase "in our image" is expressed also as "in our likeness." Of great importance is the short poetic triplet that describes the creation of man in the image of God. The Hebrew poem is reproduced below with a literal interlinear translation, and with similar borders around the elements that correspond to each other. The lines should be read phrase by phrase, from right to left:



The poetic structure is a b c / c' a' b' / b'' a' b'''. The first line makes the basic statement that God created man in His image. The second line picks up where the first line ends, and explains that "his image" is more precisely "the image of God." The third line picks up where the second line ends, and explains that "him" is more precisely "male and female," who can appropriately be called "them."[28] All the "a" elements are subjects and verbs, telling who did what (God created, He created, He created). All the "b" elements are objects of the verbs, telling what was created (man, him, male and female, them). All the "c" elements are adverbial phrases, telling in what manner the creating was done (in His image, in the image of God).

This structural analysis contributes toward a greater appreciation of the plurality and unity involved in the earliest descriptions of God and man. The elements in the short poem above that are explained in greater detail are precisely those elements in which unity and plurality are in danger of being confused. To say that God created man in *His* image shows that God is a unity. Yet, the preceding verse shows that God is a plurality who can say, "Let *us* make man in *our* image, in *our* likeness." The second line of the triplet, then, explains that "*his* image" is "the image of *God*," and so helps

[28]"Male and female" is nominal, not prepositional, and is used as direct object, not adverb. The standard scholarly grammar book for biblical Hebrew explains that "male and female" is the remote object of the verb "he created" (*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910], §117 *kk*), and "them" is the near object, with the masculine gender of the Hebrew pronoun including both "male and female" (*GKC* §122 *g*). For a close syntactic parallel, see Ps. 89:12 צפון וימין אתה בראתם "The north and the south, you created them" (our translation).

to teach that the source of "*his* image" and "*our* image" is God Himself, in whom there is both unity and plurality.

A similar concern lies behind the description of what was created, man. When God takes counsel with Himself about the crown of His creation, He plans to make a unity called *man*. Yet He speaks of letting *them* rule (verse 26). Then as the text describes the fulfillment of God's plans, it says that God created man (singular), but proceeds to explain that the one man (him) comes as a plurality of male and female (them). The following verse once again speaks of the plurality of man as God blesses *them* and speaks to them using verbs that can be identified as plural in Hebrew.

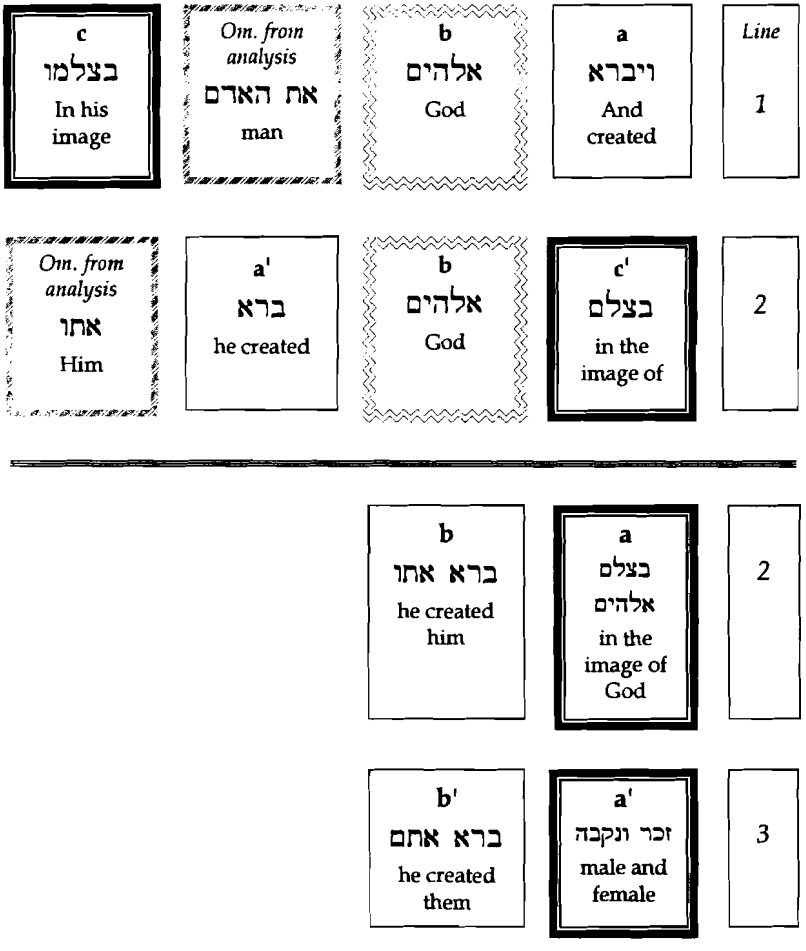
The preceding analysis has had to be somewhat technical because false theology has been taught on the basis of a flawed analysis of the poetic triplet. The flawed analysis is presented below using the same conventions used above to translate the Hebrew and mark corresponding sections.[29] The following analysis divides the triplet into two doublets, repeating by necessity the second line in the process. The first "doublet" is analyzed as inverted parallelism with the structure a b c / c' b a', and the second "doublet" as straight parallelism with the structure a b / a' b'.

Such an analysis is seriously flawed in at least five ways: 1) it splits an original triplet into two "doublets," forcing the middle line to be repeated twice; 2) it analyzes the middle line in two different ways, depending on whether it is considered in relation to the line that precedes or follows; 3) it leaves some words out of the analysis; 4) it correlates "God" in the first line with "God" in the second line even though "God" in the first line is the subject of the verb and "God" in the second line is the object of a prepositional phrase; 5) it equates the nominal phrase "male and female," which is used as an object of the verb, with the prepositional phrase "in the image of God," which is used as an adverb.[30] The fruit of the last flaw is

[29]This analysis is proposed by Phyllis Trible in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

[30]Trible is inconsistent in her analysis of "male and female" in this passage. Although her conclusions depend on treating the nominal "male and female" as corresponding to the adverbial "in the image of God," she inconsistently also treats "male and female" as corresponding to the nominal and pronominal direct objects in the poem, as the following quotation illustrates: "The vehicle of this metaphor belongs to the vocabulary of humanity in the poem. This vocabulary includes three nouns and two pronouns. The nouns are humankind *(ha 'adam)* and male and female *(zakar uneqeba)*. Their corresponding pronouns are him *('oto)* and them *('otam)*. All five words are objects of the verb *create* with God as its subject. Given the parallel usage of this vocabulary, interactions among the five words elucidate their shared and particular meanings" (Trible, *Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 17-18).

the conclusion that the image of God is equivalent to being male and female, and consequently, that to learn about God it is important to search for both male and female metaphors of God, that is, to search for "the image of God male and female."[31]



A proper analysis of the structure and words of the poetic triplet in Gen. 1:27, on the other hand, yields four important truths that are in agreement with the historical teachings of the Christian church. Two of these truths deal with the nature of God, and two with the nature of man. (1) The poem teaches both the unity and plurality of God, and there is no justification for denying the Trinitarian implications of this teaching in favor of claims that when God speaks in the plural here, He is using a "plural of majesty," or

[31]Trible, Rhetoric of Sexuality, 22 et passim.

that He is speaking with His angels.[32] (2) The poem teaches both the unity and plurality of man, showing that male and female are a unity even though they are distinct sexes, and there is no justification for teaching that women are in some sense less human than men, or vice versa. (3) The poem teaches that the "man" or "him" whom God created in His image is actually "male and female" and "them," so that even though the Bible never explicitly uses the words, "woman was made in the image of God," a proper interpretation of this passage makes it certain that woman was indeed made in the image of God. (4) The poem teaches that the "image of God" corresponds to "his image" rather than to "male and female." Being male and female is *associated with,* but not *equivalent to,* the image of God. Because the image of God cannot simply be equated with being male and female, there is no support for understanding God as a union of male and female components, as if God were both Father and Mother.

Before moving on to the next passage, a comment is in order about what this text teaches about dominion ("let them rule [or *have dominion*] over the fish of the sea . . . ," etc.). Because dominion is so closely linked to the image of God in the very first passage that speaks of the image of God, the two are sometimes *equated,* so that the image of God is *defined* as having dominion over the earth.[33] Neither the context nor the Hebrew grammar here, however, supports this equation or simple definition. The context shows that dominion is *associated with,* but not *equivalent to,* the image of God. The same could be said about fertility ("Be fruitful and increase in number" Gen. 1:28) and, if the analysis above is correct, also about unity with plurality.

Hebrew grammar suggests that dominion is associated with the image of God as a purpose or result.[34] In Hebrew grammar, when a cohortative verb, such as "let us make," is followed by a jussive verb, such as "let them rule [or *have dominion*]," the second verb should often be translated as a purpose or result of the first—in this case, "let us make . . . *so that* they may rule [or *have dominion*]." This translation is preferable to that of the NIV, which leaves the *purpose* aspect of the second verb unexpressed. This helps to explain why God *commands* those He has created in His image to be

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[32]Luther also taught that when God speaks in the plural number, he is speaking as a Trinity, not to angels: "For we were not created in the likeness of the angels' but they, together with us, are the likeness of God" (*LW,* 2:227).

[33]Cf. the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* [*TDOT*] (11 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 3:259; also John Crossan, *Imago Dei: A Study of Philo and Saint Paul* (Maynooth, Ireland, 1959), 59.

[34]Cf. *TDNT,* 2:392.

fruitful and to rule over the rest of the world (Gen. 1:28)—He expresses His will that those He has created fulfill the purpose for which they were created. John Mueller says, "In His infinite grace, God bestowed His divine image upon man *in order* a) that he might know and serve Him and experience perfect enjoyment in communion with Him, and b) *that he might be His representative ruler upon earth,* Gen. 1:27, 28."[35] *Therefore to be created in the image of God is not the same thing as to have dominion, but to have dominion is associated with being created in the image of God.*

The close association of dominion and the image of God has often been noted:

> The image of God is closely tied to the subsequent commission to have dominion over the earth. Throughout the Old Testament the vocabulary of dominion describes the rule of kings (Psalm 8; 72) who were to personify God's own gracious rule. . . . Gen. 2:15 shows that dominion means neither domination nor autonomy, but responsibility for the care and cultivation of the earth.[36]

The word "dominion" is used in this study to mean "rule or power to rule," without any negative connotations. It is only because of the corruption of sin that dominion is commonly abused and is often linked with oppression. Because of this linkage in common usage, a good argument can be made to avoid using the word altogether lest it cause offense. For those who wish to speak as Scripture speaks, however, an alternative solution is preferable. Since Scripture uses the word "dominion" without negative connotations in this passage and elsewhere, the church has an obligation to teach such a sense to its members, and to reclaim its Scriptural usage. It is shameful for the church to avoid teaching the correct understanding of Scriptural words for fear of causing offense. A greater offense is to be negligent in teaching what Scripture says, which could lead uninstructed Christians to become offended by the words of Scripture itself when they finally read it for themselves.

Dominion can be exercised without abuse. Christians whose hearts have been changed by Christ are able to resist "lording it over" others, and to exercise their leadership properly in the context of loving, humble service according to their calling. Jesus did not consider it antithetical to be lord and master at the same time He humbly and lovingly served His disciples by washing their feet ("You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for

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[35]John Theodore Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), 209; italics added.

[36]"Spiritual Gifts," A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1994), 51.

that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet" John 13:13-14). A father who devotes his life to his children and thereby lovingly serves them does not renounce his God-given authority over them, but exercises it for their good. It is also possible for governments and other authorities to use their God-given authority properly ("The one in authority . . . is God's servant to do you good" Rom. 13:3-4). If dominion is considered from the example provided by God who rules lovingly over His creation, it becomes clear that dominion, grace and love properly work together.

(2) Genesis 5:1-3

> This is the written account of Adam's line. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them [literally, *called their name*] "man." When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness [literally, *in his likeness*], in his own image [literally, *in his image*]; and he named him Seth.

This passage is important because it explains how God's created world continued to fulfill God's purposes beyond the first generation through the promised line of Seth. It is so similar to the original account in the first chapter of Genesis that many of the comments made there apply here as well. The differences are what catch the eye and need further comment. First, the phrase "the image of God" is here replaced by "the likeness of God," showing that the two phrases are interchangeable. Second, the unity in plurality of man is stressed even more so than in the first account. After using the same mix of singular and plural forms that are found in the first account ("man," "him," "male and female," "them") the text adds literally, "And he called their name 'man.'" The concept has come full circle; what starts as a unity ("man," "him") splits into a plurality ("male and female," "them") and then comes together again in a unified plurality ("their name 'man'").

The major question that plagues the interpretation of these verses is how to understand the final verse, in which Adam "had a son in his [own] likeness, in his [own] image." Did Adam pass on to Seth the image of God in which Adam had been created, or did he pass on a different image, one that had been corrupted by the fall? If Adam did not pass on the image of God, then human beings do not inherit the image of God from their parents through birth. If that is true, then the image of God cannot be what distinguishes man from animals, for Seth was assuredly man not animal. On the other hand, if Adam did pass on the image of God to Seth, why does the text identify the image as Adam's rather than God's?

The difficulty of this question is reflected by the contrary responses offered by two theologians in the respected reference work, the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* Von Rad takes this passage as evidence that the image of God was passed on from Adam to Seth, while Kittel says that the image that was passed on was the "image of dust" mentioned in 1 Cor. 15:49.[37] Luther favors the interpretation that the image of God was not passed on to Seth:

> The simple meaning, however, is this: Adam was created after the image and the similitude of God, or the image was created by God and not begotten; for he did not have parents. He did not remain in this image but fell away from it through sin. And so Seth, who is born later on, is not born after the image of God but after that of his father Adam. That is, he is like Adam; he is the image of his father Adam, not only in the shape of his face but also in likeness. He not only has fingers, nose, eyes, bearing, voice, and speech like his father but is also like him in the remaining qualities both of mind and of body, in manners, character, will, etc. In respect to these Seth does not reflect the likeness of God, which Adam had and lost, but the likeness of his father Adam. But this is a likeness and image which was not created by God but was begotten from Adam. This image includes original sin and the punishment of eternal death, which was inflicted on Adam on account of his sin.[38]

This is the understanding reflected in the synodical "Explanation of the Small Catechism," which cites Gen. 5:3 to prove that man lost the image of God in the fall. On the other hand, Melanchthon speaks of a "continuation of the image of God" which includes human life and human "nature with the harmony of all its parts and senses": "For God wills that we acknowledge that this life of ours and this marvelous nature with the harmony of all its parts and senses is His work and His gift, and that it is even the continuation of the image of God."[39]

What can be asserted with confidence is that the image that Adam passed on to Seth was his own *at the time he passed it on,* that is, after the fall. That means that the image could not have been the pure, unadulterated image of God in which he had been created, since the corruption of sin now stained him. On the other hand, the image that Adam passed on could not have been unrelated to the image in which he had been created. The text itself relates the two images, since Seth was born in the image of Adam, who was created in the likeness of God. The

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[37]*TDNT,* 2:391, 396.

[38]*LW,* 1:339-340.

[39]Philip Melanchthon, *Loci Communes 1543, Locus 13 "Sacraments," Satisfaction* (Concordia Electronic Theological Library on CD-ROM; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999).

English translation adds the word "own" when talking of the image and likeness of Adam, and so emphasizes the distinction between Adam's image and God's image, but the Hebrew text includes no such distinguishing word. The text simply says that Adam was made "in the likeness of God" and then that he "had a son in his likeness, in his image." On the question of whether or not the image of God in some sense is passed on from parent to child after the fall, the next passage to be considered is instructive.

(3) Genesis 9:6

"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man." This passage comes at a critical juncture in the history of mankind, right after the Flood has destroyed all living beings except those in Noah's ark. It is a new beginning for the world, like a new creation, with Noah and his family taking the place of Adam and Eve. God blesses Noah's family with fertility and dominion, just as he did Adam and Eve, and then explains that dominion includes the right to take the life of plants and animals, but not man, "for in the image of God has God made man."

Because these blessings and restrictions apply to all people, male and female, believers and unbelievers alike, the reason for the restriction on murder must also apply to all people. *In other words, the text demands that there must be some sense in which God continues to make all people after the fall in His image.*

This conclusion has been challenged by those who understand the image of God exclusively in terms of original righteousness. A close reading of the Hebrew text reveals that the key verb here ("for in the image of God *has* God *made* man") is in the past tense. This raises the question whether the passage can be used as proof that *all* people are even now made in the image of God, or whether the passage merely refers to the past creation of Adam in the image of God. In support of the latter possibility, the passage could be translated, "for in the image of God had God made the man [i.e., Adam]."

The context helps solve this question. The reason given in Gen. 9:6, "for in the image of God has God made man," explains the preceding law, "whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed." The explanation must be relevant for the law against murder at the time of Noah.

If the image of God here is the original righteousness that Adam lost in the fall, it could be relevant for people in Noah's day only as a memory of God's original intention for them or, if the verbal tense is ignored, as a future goal toward which they could be drawn through faith and final

glorification in heaven. By this interpretation, people must not be murdered because they are historically (in Adam) or potentially (in Christ) made in the image of God. If, on the other hand, the image of God here is not limited to the original righteousness of Adam, then it would be relevant for all human beings, a sort of birthright from God. In that case, people must not be murdered because each person is even now made in the image of God.

The latter possibility is preferable for at least two reasons. The immediate context suggests that the "man" in the reason given for the law ("for in the image of God has God made *man*") is the same as the "man" who is the hypothetical murder victim in the statement of the law itself ("Whoever sheds the blood of *man*, by man shall his blood be shed"). The "man" living during the time of Noah, the same "man" who stands in danger of having his blood shed, is the "man" whom God has created in His image. The given reason ("for in the image of God has God made man") should not be understood as a historical memory about Adam, much less as a future goal toward which man can be drawn, but rather as a settled reality about all human beings even after the fall. What is important here is that the words originally spoken to and about Adam are now explicitly reiterated to Noah and his descendants, showing their ongoing validity. Further support for this understanding comes from its closest parallel in the New Testament, the next passage to be considered.

(4) James 3:9

"With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness." This passage is quite similar to Genesis 9:6. There the prohibition against murder was supported by reference to the image of God in which God has made people. Here a prohibition against cursing is supported by reference to the likeness of God in which people have been made. These two passages, then, support the concept that there is some sense in which God makes *all* people in His image or likeness even after the fall.

The critical Greek verbal participle ("who have been made") is in the perfect tense, just as the Hebrew verb in Gen. 9:6 ("for in the image of God has God made man") is in the perfect tense. In Genesis, one of the two interpretations we considered was that the Hebrew perfect verb referred to the creation of righteous Adam, in which case the verb could be translated with an English pluperfect verb ("for in the image of God had God made the man [i.e., Adam]"). In James, however, it is impossible for the Greek perfect participle to refer to Adam, since the participle is plural and attributive. It attributes "having been made in God's likeness" precisely to

the people who are being cursed at the time of James. The perfect tense shows that God *made* these people in His likeness through His *past* creative activity in their conception and birth rather than that He *makes* them in His likeness through His *current or future* sanctifying activity in Christ. The point is not that the people who were being cursed were at the same time being transformed into the likeness of God through faith in Christ or would be so transformed in the future, but that those who were being cursed had already, at the beginning of their existence, been made in the likeness of God.

(5) 1 Corinthians 11:7

"A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man." The chapter in which this verse is contained can be divided into two sections, both of which have instructions concerning proper worship. The first section discusses how men and women should show proper respect when praying or prophesying, and the second section discusses how the participants should show proper respect when partaking of the Lord's Supper. It is the first section that concerns us here.

Paul begins his instructions with an explanation of the basis for his remarks: "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3). For men and women to show that they acknowledge and affirm this God-pleasing order, men were to worship with the head uncovered, and women with the head covered. After explaining that the sexes are to be distinguished, Paul continues his discussion by saying, "In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man nor man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God" (1 Cor. 11:11-12). Paul teaches, then, that while the sexes are distinguished from each other, they are also united in their mutual dependence on each other and ultimately in their joint dependence on God.

More clearly than any other passage, this passage shows that the image of God is compatible with both the unity of the two sexes and the distinction between them. The Greek grammar of verse seven helps to teach the distinction between the sexes. The verse is constructed in two contrasting halves making use of the μεν [*men*] . . . δε [*de*] construction, which has the meaning "on the one hand . . . but on the other hand. . . ." In order to conform to English literary style, translations often omit the first element and emphasize the contrast in the second clause with a simple

"but," e.g., "[*men*] A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but [*de*] the woman is the glory of man."

While a detailed analysis of all the *men* . . . *de* constructions in the Greek New Testament is beyond the scope of this paper, a computer search reveals that there are some one hundred nineteen such constructions, twenty-four of which span more than one verse. Normally, but not always, each member of the *men* clause is matched by a member of the *de* clause. According to our analysis, there are ninety-eight cases with matching members in each clause, thirteen cases with "extra" members in one clause, and eight cases that technically fit the search criteria but have peculiarities that prevent them from being analyzed with the rest.[40] To be more precise, some fifty-three cases have two members in each clause; twenty-three have three members in each; twenty-two have other combinations of equivalent members in each clause; twelve have one "extra" member in one clause; one has two "extra" members in one clause. There is an element of judgment that must be used in analyzing these clauses, so not every scholar who performs the same exercise will achieve the same results. The general picture, however, should remain the same. *What is important for the purposes of this study is that* men . . . de *clauses (1) normally mark a deliberate series of contrasts, and (2) may omit a member of one clause if the intended contrast is implied by a member in the correlative clause.*

As an example of the most common type of the *men* . . . *de* construction, consider Paul's quotation of his detractors' snide comments: "His letters indeed [*men*] are weighty and strong, but [*de*] his presence is weak and his speaking is not worth listening to" (2 Cor. 10:10, our translation). Each member of the *men* clause is contrasted with a matching member of the *de* clause (letters [implying absence] vs. presence, weighty vs. not worth listening to, strong vs. weak). The Greek text could have omitted the word "strong" from the *men* clause without thereby losing the contrast that would still be *implied* by the word "weak" in the *de* clause.

In fact Paul does use such an omission and implied contrast when he speaks about Jesus Christ, "who has on the one hand [*men*] destroyed death, and has on the other hand [*de*] brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10, our translation). A fuller statement would have been, "who has on the one hand destroyed death *and mortality,* and has on the other hand brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." The *men* clause does not include the words "and mortality," but they are implied by the words "and immortality" in the *de* clause.

[40] Acts 21:39; 23:31-32; 25:4; 1 Cor. 3:4; 5:3; Phil. 2:23; Heb. 7:18-19; 8:4.

The same pattern of omission and implied contrast is also found in the words of the repentant criminal on the cross, "We indeed [*men*] are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But [*de*] this man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41, our translation). A fuller statement would have been, "We indeed are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man *is punished unjustly,* for he has done nothing wrong." Although the *de* clause omits the words "is punished unjustly," they are implied by the contrasting member of the *men* clause, "are punished justly."

The following examples are like the preceding ones; they have contrasts that are implied, even demanded, by Greek grammar and context, but are omitted from the actual text. Brackets are used to show where the *men . . . de* words are, and to identify the contrasts that were omitted:

> And if [*men*] it bears fruit next year [then do not cut it down], but [*de*] if not, then cut it down. [Luke 13:9, our translation]

> Now [*men*] is your time of grief [because I will not see you for a little while], but [*de*] I will see you again and you will rejoice. [John 16:22]

> The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the [*men*] first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other [because they were not yet dead]. But [*de*] when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. [John 19:32-33]

> Moses [*men*] was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. But [*de*] Christ is faithful as a son over God's house, [testifying to what is said in the present]. [Heb. 3:5-6] (The following verse picks up on this omitted but implied contrast with the exhortation, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.")

> For although [*men*] some became priests without an oath, nevertheless [*de*] he [became priest] with an oath. [Heb. 7:20-21, our translation]

To return to 1 Cor. 11:7, the grammar and vocabulary of the passage teach the following contrasts: (1) man is different from woman; (2) man ought not to cover his head but woman ought to cover her head; and (3) man is the image and glory of God but woman is the glory of man rather than the image and glory of God. This can be represented by the following table of contrasts, which groups together explicit statements and necessary implications (within brackets) based on the grammar and context of the passage:

1)	[*men*] A man	But [*de*] the woman
2)	Ought not to cover his head	[Ought to cover her head]
3)	Since he is the image and glory of God [not the glory of woman]	[Since she is not the image and glory of God, but] is the glory of man

The *men* clause sets forth three elements. Since the *men* . . . *de* construction is designed for listing contrasts, one should assume that each element of the *men* clause is deliberately included because it contrasts with an element included explicitly or implicitly in the *de* clause. Of the three elements set forth in the *men* clause, only the first element contrasting the sexes is fully and explicitly contrasted by words in the *de* clause. The second element about covering heads has no corresponding words in the *de* clause with which to make an explicit contrast. Yet the assumption that each element of the *men* clause is deliberately chosen for contrast is shown to be true in the case of this second element by the context of the entire section. Again and again in the verses surrounding this verse, explicit statements are made that the woman is to cover her head (see vv. 5-6, 10, 13, 15). This second element, then, serves as important confirmation that each element mentioned in the *men* clause is intended to be contrasted with an element in the *de* clause, even if that element must be included by implication.

The last element about the image and glory of God is treated in a more complex fashion. The Greek grammar of the *men* . . . *de* construction by itself teaches the simple contrast that although on the one hand, man is the image and glory of God, on the other hand, woman is not the image and glory of God. In addition to this simple contrast, a more complex teaching emerges from the extra information that is included in the *de* clause, that woman is the glory of man. This phrase shows that the relationship between man and woman is established from the time of creation itself, when Adam glories in Eve, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man" (Gen. 2:23). Man cannot be called the glory of woman in this sense, "For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man" (1 Cor. 11:8-9).

The next verse shows the relevance of image and glory relationships to the topic of authority: "For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head" (1 Cor. 11:10). In this way, the contrasts taught by the *men* . . . *de* construction in 1 Cor. 11:7 are combined with the contrast taught earlier in the same chapter, that "the

head of every man is Christ, and [*de*] the head of the woman is man" (1 Cor. 11:3).

There is simply no grammatical or contextual parallel that would support an explanatory translation of 1 Cor. 11:7 along the lines of "man . . . is the image and glory of God; but woman is, *though also the image of God, nevertheless merely* the glory of man."

Commentators on this verse agree that it does not teach that woman is the image of God; many agree that Paul actually denies that woman is the image of God in some sense, though not in others. Lenski says, "Eve was not 'God's image and glory' in the same sense as Adam was."[41] Conzelmann says, "Woman is here, indirectly, excluded from being an image, or she is one only in a derivative sense."[42] Hodge says, "The only sense in which the man, *in distinction from the woman*, is the image of God, is that he represents the authority of God. . . . The woman is in this respect subordinate to the man."[43]

There is less uniformity among the commentators in the implications that they draw from this teaching, in the motivations they suggest for it, or in their own evaluations of the teaching. Robertson and Plummer say, "[Woman] also was made κατ εικονα θεου [*according to the image of God*], for in Gen. ii.26 ανθρωπον [*man*] includes both sexes, but this fact is omitted here, because it is the relation of woman to man, not of woman to God, that is under consideration; and, as she has a superior, she does not so well represent Him who has no superior."[44] Some feel the need to scold Paul for his views and distance themselves from his teaching:

> Paul's point of view is less than Christian in his insistence that man made in the likeness of God reflects the glory of God, while woman made from man reflects the glory of man. The emphasis throughout is on the superior status of man as God's representative on earth; as such, he is invested with divine authority and dominion over the rest of created things, including woman. . . . Nothing could be more explicit or less convincing![45]

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[41]R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1937), 443.

[42]Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 186.

[43]Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: R. Carter, 1857), 210; italics added.

[44]Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1911), 231.

[45]George Arthur Buttrick, et al., ed., *The Interpreter's Bible: The Holy Scriptures in the King James and Revised Standard Versions with General Articles and Introduction, Exegesis,*

As the last quotation says so forcefully, the real difficulty that commentators have with 1 Cor. 11:7 is in the *implications* or *evaluations* of its teaching, not in the *content* of its teaching. The grammar of the *men . . . de* construction shows that a true contrast between man and woman is taught here in reference to the image of God, that in some sense man is the image of God but woman is not. Though the words "woman is not the image of God" are not explicitly stated in the text, the grammar and context of the passage lead to this conclusion. One cannot deny the conclusion merely because the specific words are not used, so long as the conclusion is properly derived from the text. In a similar way, one cannot deny the teaching in Genesis 1:26-27 and elsewhere that woman was made in the image of God, even though the specific words "woman was made in the image of God" are never used in the Bible. *As we have concluded earlier in this paper that there must be some sense in which woman was made in the image of God according to a proper interpretation of the grammar and context of Gen. 1:27, so also we conclude here that there must be some sense in which woman is not the image of God according to a proper interpretation of the grammar and context of 1 Cor. 11:7.*

Interpreters such as Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Gerhard, and others agree that 1 Cor. 11:7 teaches that woman is not the image of God in the same way as is man. Yet the same interpreters also agree that Gen. 1:27 teaches that woman was created in the image of God. Their attempts to harmonize the passages follow two paths: (1) the "image of God" can be thought of in *relative* terms, so that the same individual may be the image of God with respect to one person but not with respect to someone else; (2) the "image of God" has two dimensions, one that includes righteousness and is shared equally by man and woman, and another that includes dominion and is shared equally by man and woman with respect to the rest of creation, but is possessed by man with respect to woman.

Augustine clarifies that woman shares in the dimension of the image of God that includes being "renewed in the spirit of her mind in the knowledge of God according to the image of her Creator," and yet he acknowledges that in some other sense "man alone is said [in 1 Cor. 11:7] to be the image and glory of God."[46] Elsewhere Augustine attempts to explain in greater detail how the image of God can be both affirmed and denied in woman:

Exposition for Each Book of the Bible, 12 vols. (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press), 10:126.

[46]Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, quoted by Børresen, "God's Image Man's Image?" in *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Børresen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 199-200.

> The woman together with her husband is the image of God, so that the whole substance is one image. But when she is assigned as a help-mate, a function that pertains to her alone, then she is not the image of God; but as far as the man is concerned, he is by himself alone the image of God, just as fully and completely as when he and the woman are joined together into one.[47]

Thomas Aquinas speaks of the image of God in two senses, one of which includes women and the other not:

> The image of God, in its principal signification, namely the intellectual nature, is found both in man and in women. Hence after the words, *To the image of God He created him,* it is added, *Male and female He created them* (Gen. 1:27). Moreover it is said 'them,' in the plural, as Augustine (*Gen. ad lit.*, iii, 22) remarks lest it should be thought that both sexes were united in one individual. But in a secondary sense the image of God is found in man, and not in woman, for man is the beginning and end of woman, just as God is the beginning and end of every creature. So when the Apostle had said that *man is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man,* he adds his reason for saying this: *For man is not of woman, but woman of man; and man was not created for woman, but woman for man.*[48]

Luther expands on the relative nature of the image of God in his *Commentary on Genesis:*

> 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.[49]

On the other hand, in his "Disputation Concerning Justification," Luther harmonizes the apparently contradictory Scriptural teachings about the image of God not by identifying different levels of excellence or glory but by identifying two different dimensions of the image of God. He says that Moses uses the term "image of God" in Genesis to mean "righteousness, . . . divine holiness, and truth," which male and female equally possessed, lost, and now must regain through Christ. "Paul, however, is saying [in 1 Cor. 11:7] that only the man is the image of God, not the woman, because the church is subject to Christ, like the woman to the man [Eph. 5:21-24],

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[47]Augustine, *De Trin.* 12.7.10.

[48]Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* 1.93.4; italics original.

[49]*LW,* 1:69.

and God governs the church. But it is the image of God as far as domination and dominion is concerned, not by reason of righteousness."[50]

Calvin also identifies two different dimensions of the image of God as an explanation for the different teachings in Scripture, concluding that women share the dimension that includes the conscience, but not the dimension which includes authority in marriage during the present life. "Both sexes were created according to the image of God [Gen. 1:27], and Paul urges women, as much as men, to be re-formed according to that image [Rom. 8:29]. But when he is speaking about image here [1 Cor. 11:7], he is referring to the conjugal order. Accordingly it has to do with this present life, and on the other hand, has nothing to do with conscience."[51] Again Calvin says,

> We now see how Christ is the most perfect image of God, into which we are so renewed as to bear the image of God in knowledge, purity, righteousness, and true holiness. . . . As to that passage of St. Paul (1 Cor. 11:7), in which the man alone, to the express exclusion of the woman, is called the image and glory of God, it is evident, from the context, that it merely refers to civil order.[52]

Likewise, Johann Gerhard teaches that the image of God consists of two different dimensions and thus can be affirmed and denied in woman. He says,

> The word "image" can be applied in a different sense to the different parts in which the divine image actually consists. In fact, it can be applied in a primary and in a secondary sense. In the primary sense, the image of God consisted in the perfect conformity of the living soul and its faculties to God and his law [etc.]. . . . To all these qualities and properties of the soul and of the body was added an external privilege, that is, the dominion over all other living creatures. And on this point the image of God was shining less primarily [in women], or, shall we say, secondarily. Thus, when the Apostle Paul says that '. . . the woman is the glory of man and man, in turn, is the image and glory of God' (1 Cor. 11:7), he does not deny, with regard to the primary sense, that the woman also was made in the image and likeness of God. But he is concerned rather with the image of God in its secondary sense, i.e., with the dignity of dominion which belonged properly to man, while the woman was subject to his dominion.[53]

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[50]*LW*, 34:177.

[51]John Calvin, *Com. I Cor.*, quoted in Jane Douglass, "The Image of God in Women as Seen by Luther and Calvin," in Børresen, *The Image of God*, 255.

[52]Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.15.4.

[53]Johann Gerhard, *Loci Theologici IV, Locus 9*, in *The Doctrine of Man in Classical Lutheran Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1962), 52-53.

John Crossan agrees that one can both affirm and deny that woman is the image of God; she is the image of God with respect to the world but not with respect to man. "He [Paul] takes the meaning of the Genesis εικων [*image*]-theory to denote dominion over creation. Since the woman has dominion over the world [and thus is the image of God with respect to the world] but is herself under man's dominion [and thus is not the image of God with respect to man] it is clear that she is not as perfect an εικων [*image*] of God's absolute dominion as is the man. . . ."[54] Henri Blocher says in a similar vein, "[Paul] does not deprive the woman, as a human being, of the glory of being as the image of God, but he observes that *in the relationship of the sexes* the privilege of authority, which represents God, rests on the side of the male."[55]

The poet-theologian John Milton attempts to explain how Adam and Eve were united and yet distinct as the image of God in his description of them in the Garden of Eden:

> Two [living creatures] of far nobler shape erect and tall,
> God-like erect, with native honor clad
> In naked majesty seemed lords of all,
> And worthy seemed, for in their looks divine
> The image of their glorious Maker shone,
> Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure,
> Severe but in true filial freedom placed;
> Whence true authority in men; though both
> Not equal, as their sex nor equal seemed;
> For contemplation he and valor formed,
> For softness she and sweet attractive grace,
> He for God only, she for God in him.[56]

Like many before and after him, Milton proposes several distinctions between the sexes in addition to the distinction of authority taught in the Bible, i.e., distinctions in contemplation, valor, softness, and attractiveness. Whatever one makes of the additional distinctions, the main point is that he agrees with the many theologians who teach that man and woman are both united and distinct with respect to the image of God. The divine image shines in both but they are not equal in authority; Adam is "for God only," while Eve is "for God in him [Adam]" (compare 1 Cor. 11:7).

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[54]John Crossan, *Imago Dei: A Study of Philo and Saint Paul* (Maynooth, Ireland: [s. n.], 1959), 20.

[55]Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 104.

[56]John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 4.288-299.

The following study agrees with the insights of these scholars and incorporates them into a unified understanding of the image of God. The image of God includes multiple dimensions and is a relative concept. *Thus it is entirely appropriate for Scripture to affirm and deny the image of God in the same groups of people, when comparing them to different people or when speaking about different dimensions of the image of God.* Some passages affirm that all human beings are created in the image of God, yet other passages teach that Christ is the image of God in a sense that others are not, that saints in heaven are the image of God in a sense that saints on earth are not, that Christians are the image of God in a sense that non-Christians are not, that man is the image of God in a sense that woman is not. It is only when the denials are interpreted *absolutely* rather than *relatively* that these Scriptural passages appear to contradict each other.

(6) Two related passages

i. Ephesians 4:22-24

"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self [literally, *man*], which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self [literally, *man*], created to be like God [literally, *created after God*] in true righteousness and holiness." There is some question about how this passage should be translated. The Greek phrase near the end is του κατα θεον κτισθεντα, which probably means "created after [the likeness/image of] God," but it could also be translated "created in God's way."[57] In any case, the text does not say directly that man was made in the image or likeness of God and so cannot be included in the short list of five such passages in the Bible. Nevertheless, it has been used in the Lutheran Church as one of the proof texts (*sedes doctrinae*) for the definition of the image of God because it conveniently describes the "new man" into which Christians are regenerated in terms that correspond to the so-called proper sense of the image of God, i.e., "true righteousness and holiness." Luther says, "This new man is created after God, as an image of God."[58] Because the new man must be closely related to the image and likeness of God, whatever components are associated with the new man should also be able to be associated with the image of God.

ii. Colossians 3:9-10

[57]Cf. Max Zerwick, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1988).

[58]*WA*, 22:315.

"Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self [literally, *man*] with its practices and have put on the new self [literally, *the new*], which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." This passage uses the phrase "image of its Creator," and so comes very close to qualifying as a passage to be included with the five main passages discussed above. However, a careful examination of the passage reveals a significant difference—here the teaching is not that man has been made in the image of God, or that he is the image of God, as is the teaching of the main passages quoted above. The "image of its Creator" here does not describe how *man* was made, but it provides a goal or pattern for the *new man* who is being *renewed in knowledge* and thus is becoming more like the Creator. Despite the fact that this passage does not speak *directly* about man being made in the image of God, the passage and its context do show *indirectly* that the image of God includes knowledge of God and His will. It is not surprising, then, that this passage is quoted as a proof text (*sedes doctrinae*) to support the definition of the image of God as the knowledge of God, which is included in original righteousness.

b) Christ as the image or likeness of God

The biblical witness to the "image of God" is not exhausted by the passages that speak directly of man being created in the image or likeness of God. Another group of passages speak of Christ being the image, form, or representation of God: "He is the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15); "Christ . . . is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4); "Christ Jesus . . . being in very nature [literally, *in the form of*] God" (Phil. 2:5-6); "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" (Heb. 1:3). These passages teach that Christ has equality with God. Jesus and the Father are one, so we can learn of God by learning of Christ: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9); "When he [a believer] looks at me, he sees the one who sent me" (John 12:45).

This topic is of great importance for the Christian faith. The claim that Jesus is equal to the Father is the major reason He was condemned to death by the Jewish leaders of His day, and reactions to this claim have divided Christians from non-Christians since that time. Christ not only *is like* God, but also *is* God. In Christ, God became man and balanced the scales of justice by His righteous life and death to pay for the sins of man.

For the purpose of this study, the major implication of Christ being the image of God is the insight that statement brings to the phrase "the image of God." Both Christ and man are called the image of God, but there is a great difference between Christ and man. Although man is like God in many ways, he also is unlike God in many ways, and can never be God.

Christ is *much more* like God, and actually *is* God. This means that Christ is the image of God in a way that goes far beyond how man is the image of God. Thomas Aquinas helps to clarify two different senses of levels of likeness, or proportion:

> Proportion is twofold. In one sense it means a certain relation of one quantity to another, according as double, treble, and equal are species of proportion. In another sense every relation of one thing to another is called proportion. And in this sense there can be a proportion of the creature to God, in so far as it is related to Him as the effect to its cause, and as potency to act; and in this way the created intellect can be proportioned to know God.[59]

Christ is like God as His equal, while man is like God as an effect is like its cause. *A comprehensive definition of the image of God, then, must be broad enough to include different levels or qualities of likeness to God, ranging from the likeness that man can possess to the likeness that only Christ can possess, a likeness that is an essential equality with God Himself.*

c) Man as the image or likeness of Christ

If Christ is the image of God, then those who are in the image of Christ are also in the image of God. The passages that speak of the image of Christ stress the righteousness, resurrection, and heavenly glory that belong to believers. "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness [literally, *image*] of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom. 8:29). "If we have been united with him like this in his death [literally, *in the likeness of his death*], we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection [literally, *(in the likeness) of (his) resurrection*]" (Rom. 6:5). "And just as we have borne the likeness [literally, *image*] of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness [literally, *image*] of the man from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:49). "Christ . . . will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21). "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory" (2 Cor. 3:18).

Especially because the resurrection of the body is included in these passages, the image of Christ ***must include both body and soul****. And because the image of Christ is something into which people can "be conformed" (Rom. 8:29), and includes "being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory" (2 Cor. 3:18), the image* ***can be present to a greater or lesser extent in people****.*

[59] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1.12.1.

d) Christ in the likeness of man

Because Christ is both true God and true man, He is not only the image and likeness of God, but also He is the form and likeness of man. "[Jesus] made himself nothing, taking the very nature [literally, *form*] of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Phil. 2:7-8); "He had to be made like his brothers in every way" (Heb. 2:17); God sent "his own Son in the likeness of sinful man" (Rom. 8:3). The Bible therefore teaches that Jesus is the likeness of both God and of man. This likeness is not a superficial resemblance, as if Christ merely resembled God and man without being both. Christ's likenesses are true participations in the essential natures of God and man, so that in Christ the two natures are united in one person.

2. The meaning of "image" and "likeness"

Now that we have completed a survey of the relevant biblical passages, it is helpful to consider the precise biblical meanings of the words "image" and "likeness." Because the image of God is identified and taught originally in the Hebrew text of the creation account in Genesis, it is the meaning of the Hebrew words that is most significant.

The Hebrew word for "image" is צלם *tselem*, which comes from a root meaning "to cut off." An image, then, was originally a likeness that was "cut out" of some material.[60] The Hebrew Bible does not preserve this root in verbal form, so the extant examples of the noun illustrate only the product of the "cutting," that is, the "images," rather than the activity of cutting itself. The Bible does preserve, in both nominal and verbal forms, the closely related root פסל *pasal/pesel*, from a root meaning "to hew," and so provides analogous examples illustrating both the hewing action and the resultant hewn idol. One passage includes both the nominal and verbal forms of this root in one sentence: "Of what use is a hewn idol [nominal form], once its artist has hewn [verbal form] it?" (Hab. 2:18, our translation).

The most common use of the word *tselem* "image" is with a concrete meaning, especially for images of false gods, i.e., "idols." "You have lifted up . . . the pedestal of your *idols*" (Amos 5:26); "All the people of the land went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed the altars and *idols* to pieces" (2 Kings 11:18); "They were proud of the beautiful jewelry and used it to make their detestable *idols* and vile images" (Ezek. 7:20). The

[60] *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), s.v. "צלם."

concrete meaning of *tselem* is the most common meaning not only in Hebrew, but also in the cognate languages Akkadian and Aramaic.[61]

Another use of the word *tselem* is with a more abstract meaning, denoting various likenesses. The "image of God" texts quoted above (Gen. 1:26, 27; 5:3; 9:6) fall into this category. The word is used twice with the meaning of an insubstantial mirage: "Man is a *mere phantom* as he goes to and fro" (Ps. 39:6); "you will despise them as *fantasies*" (Ps. 73:20). The most common Greek translation of the Hebrew *tselem* is εικων *eikon*, which is used concretely for images on coins, for idols, and abstractly for various likenesses. *An image is a likeness that reflects and often represents what it is derived from.*

The word for "likeness" is דמות [*demuth*], which comes from a root meaning "to be like, resemble." The likeness might be of external appearance or of a more abstract resemblance. Examples of likenesses of external appearance include the following: "[Ahaz] saw an altar in Damascus and sent to Uriah the priest *a sketch* of the altar" (2 Kings 16:10); "Below the rim, *figures* of bulls encircled it" (2 Chron. 4:3); "In the fire was *what looked like* four living creatures. In appearance *their form* was that of a man" (Ezek. 1:5); "I saw *a figure like* that of a man" (Ezek. 8:2); "I saw *the likeness* of a throne of sapphire" (Ezek. 10:1). Examples of more abstract likenesses include the image of God texts (Gen. 1:26; 5:1) and, "Their venom is *like* the venom of a snake, like that of a cobra that has stopped its ears" (Ps 58:4). The verbal form is often used abstractly: "To whom, then, *will you compare* God?" (Isa. 40:18); "Unless the Lord Almighty had left us some survivors, we would have become like Sodom, *we would have been like* Gomorrah" (Isa. 1:9); "I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; *I will make myself like* the Most High" (Isa. 14:14); "To whom *will you compare* me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that *we may be compared?*" (Isa. 46:5); "Who *can be compared* with you in majesty?" (Ezek. 31:2); "With what *can I compare* you, O Daughter of Jerusalem?" (Lam. 2:13); "Who *is like* the Lord among the heavenly beings?" (Ps. 89:6); "I *am like* a desert owl" (Ps. 102:6); "Man *is like* a breath; his days are like a fleeting shadow" (Ps. 144:4). The corresponding Greek cognates have the base ομοι *homoi-*, and are used for a wide range of likenesses, both concrete and abstract. *A*

[61]*Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Freedman (6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:389. Other Hebrew words in the same semantic field as צלם *tselem* are תמונה *temunah* (cf. Ex. 20:4 *likeness*), תבנית *tabnith* (cf. Deut. 4:16 *likeness*), צורה *tsurah* (cf. Ezek. 43:11 *form*), ציר *tsir* (cf. Isa. 45:16 *idols*), אליל *elil* (cf. Lev. 26:1 *idols*), מצבה *matsebah* (cf. Lev. 26:1 *graven image*), מסכה *masekah* (cf. Deut. 9:12 *molten image*), תרפים *teraphim* (cf. 1 Sam. 19:13 *image*), and סמל *semel* (cf. Deut. 4:16 *figure*).

likeness is something that is compared to something else and found to be like it, whether concretely or abstractly.

Both *tselem* and *demuth* can be used for concrete objects that look like, reflect, or represent something else, but that is more properly the realm of *tselem*. Both words can also be used for abstract resemblance or comparative likeness between two things, but that is more properly the realm of *demuth*. The idea that there is a participation between an object and its image or likeness can accompany both words, but it is more closely linked to *tselem* than to *demuth*. Augustine said, "Every image is similar to the thing whose image it is; but not everything which is similar to something is also the image of that thing; as in the case of a mirror or a picture, because they are images they are also similar; however, if the one is not born from the other, then it cannot be called an image of that other. For it is then an image when it is expressed from the other."[62] In an even shorter explanation he said, "One egg is not the image of another, because it is not derived from it."[63]

The words "image" and "likeness," then, are used with various senses in Scripture. They are very similar but not identical. The question that most concerns us is how they should be understood in the passages that teach that man was made in the image and likeness of God. Because the primary text teaching about the image of God begins with the words, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness," interpreters have pondered whether the phrases "in our image" and "in our likeness" say the same thing in different words, or whether they mean something different.

Some Church Fathers make a distinction between the two phrases, claiming that "image" here refers to common human characteristics that remain after the fall, while "likeness" here refers to spiritual capacities or activities that were lost or utterly corrupted by the fall. In the words of Irenaeus,

> But when the spirit here blended with the soul is united to God's handiwork (plasma), the man is rendered spiritual and perfect because of the outpouring of the Spirit, and this is he who was made in the image and likeness of God. But if the Spirit be wanting to the soul, he who is such is indeed of an animal nature, and, being left carnal, shall be an imperfect being, possessing indeed the image of God in his formation (in plasmate), but not receiving the similitude through the Spirit, and thus is this being imperfect.[64]

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[62] Augustine, *De Gen. Lib. Impf.*, 16.57.

[63] Augustine, quoted by Aquinas in *Summa Theologica*, 1.35.1.

[64] Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, 5.6.1.

The following statement summarizes the exegesis of the church fathers who agreed with Irenaeus:

> The verse in Gen. 1:26 . . . played an important part among the fathers, esp. in the Arian controversy. Gregory of Nyssa devoted a treatise to the question of the relation between εικων and ομοιωσις. With several fathers he argued for a real distinction between the two. The great Alexandrian theologians taught that εικων is something wherein men were created, which is common to all, and which remains after the fall (Gen. 9:6), whereas ομοιωσις is something for which man was created, that he should strive after it and attain to it.[65]

Luther came to a similar conclusion:

> Even though almost all interpreters take the similitude and the image of God to mean the same thing, nevertheless, so far as I have been able to perceive through careful observation, there is some difference between these two words. For in its strict sense צלם [*tselem*] denotes an image or a figure. . . . דמות [*demuth*], however, which denotes likeness, refers to the accuracy of the image. . . . Therefore when Moses says that man was created also in the similitude of God, he indicates that man is not only like God in this respect that he has the ability to reason, or an intellect, and a will, but also that he has a likeness of God, that is, a will and an intellect by which he understands God and by which he desires what God desires, etc.[66]

When the "likeness of God" is thus distinguished from the "image of God," the likeness of God becomes a goal toward which people strive in this life, but which they can achieve perfectly only in the next. So Origen:

> Now the expression, "in the image of God created He him," without any mention of the word "likeness," conveys no other meaning than this, that man received the dignity of God's image at his first creation; but that the perfection of his likeness has been reserved for the consummation,—namely, that he might acquire it for himself by the exercise of his own diligence in the imitation of God, the possibility of attaining to perfection being granted him at the beginning through the dignity of the divine image, and the perfect realization of the divine likeness being reached in the end by the fulfillment of the (necessary) works.[67]

On this point, however, the consensus of modern scholarship weighs against Irenaeus and others who distinguish between the "likeness of God" and the "image of God." The overwhelming consensus today is in agreement with St. Augustine's conclusion: "It is the customary thing to seek for the relation between image and likeness. The only relation that I can see is that he [Moses] wished to signify the very same reality by these

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[65] *TDNT*, 5:191.

[66] *LW*, 1:337.

[67] Origen, *De Princ.* 36.1.

two words."[68] This consensus rests on a solid foundation. It is significant that the text first says that God planned to make man in His image and in His likeness ("Let us make man in our image, in our likeness," Gen. 1:26); when it records how God carried out His plan, however, it omits the "likeness" phrase and says only that God made man in His image ("So God created man in his own image," Gen. 1:27). Since this is before the fall, before rebellious sin could hinder the fulfillment of God's gracious plans, the fulfillment of God's plan here must have been equivalent to the plan itself. *Making man in God's image must mean the same thing as making him in his likeness.*

Another path leads to the same conclusion. When one compares the first and second major texts about the image of God, the phrases are found mixed in two ways. The first text uses two different prepositions in Hebrew for the phrases "in [Hebrew *be*] our image" and "in [Hebrew *ke*] our likeness." The second text switches the prepositions, so that man is made in [Hebrew *be* rather than *ke*] the likeness of God (Gen. 5:1). Then Seth is born in [Hebrew *be*] the likeness of Adam, and "in [Hebrew *ke*] his own image" (Gen. 5:3). Compared to the first chapter of Genesis, the prepositions have been switched and the order of the nouns has been reversed. This "interlacing and substitution suggest that very little distinction can be made between the two words."[69] "We must be careful not to emphasize the differentiation in the twofold statement בצלמנו כדמותנו [*in our image according to our likeness*] with its distinctive change of prepositions."[70] "Both the nouns and the prepositions are interchangeable."[71]

The table of phrases below helps to illustrate the complete interchangeability of the two phrases "image of X" and "likeness of X" as the Bible uses the terms in their various formulations in the passages significant for this study. They can be used as parallel pairs in the same verse (Gen. 1:26; 5:3), or either one can be used by itself for the other with no change of meaning (compare Gen. 1:27a with Gen. 5:1; then Gen. 9:6 and 1 Cor. 11:7 with James 3:9). The interchangeability of the words "image" and "likeness" in these contexts can also be seen from the English

[68]Augustine, *QQ. in Hept.* 5.4.

[69]*TDOT*, 3:259.

[70]*TDNT*, 2:391. Further support for this conclusion is that the Tell Fekheriye statue has *tsalma* and *demuta* used interchangeably, so the two should be thought of as virtual synonyms (see *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 3:389).

[71]Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 145.

translations that translate εικων [literally, *image*] as "likeness" in Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; and 2 Cor. 3:18.

"Image" [צלם, εικων]	"Likeness" [דמות, ομοι-]
"Let us make man in our image, in our likeness" (Gen. 1:26)	
"So God created man in his own image" (Gen. 1:27[a])	
"In the image of God he created him" (Gen 1:27[b])	
	"When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God" (Gen. 5:1)
"Adam . . . had a son in his own likeness, in his own image" (Gen 5:3)	
"For in the image of God has God made man" (Gen. 9:6)	
"God . . . predestined to be conformed to the likeness [εικονος] of his Son" (Rom. 8:29)	
"Man . . . is the image and glory of God" (1 Cor. 11:7)	
"Just as we have borne the likeness [εικονα] of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness [εικονα] of the man from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:49)	
"We . . . are being transformed into his likeness [εικονα]" (2 Cor. 3:18)	
	"Men . . . have been made in God's likeness" (James 3:9)

C. The image of God is to be like God

1. Support for this definition

a) "Likeness of God" as an aid to understanding "image of God"

The exegetical conclusion that "the image of God" is equivalent to "the likeness of God" contributes to a comprehensive definition of the image of God that is faithful both to the biblical texts in which it occurs and to the wealth of scholarship devoted to the topic. While the phrase "image of God" has, over the centuries, accrued divergent definitions that have tended to fossilize and polarize discussions, the phrase "likeness of God" has not been so burdened. Also the phrase "likeness of God" helps to keep the focus on how man, male and female, *is like God,* rather than on how man *is different from animals,* or how Christians *are different from non-Christians,* which often

become the focal points of discussion when theologians use the phrase "image of God."

Understanding the image of God broadly as the likeness of God has the advantage of taking the biblical words "image" and "likeness" at face value rather than devising unique meanings for them. One searches the two standard dictionaries of biblical Hebrew and Greek in vain to find a meaning of "image" or "likeness" that corresponds to "knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness." There is simply no linguistic support for restricting the breadth of "image" and "likeness" to any small subset of God's attributes. In one of his statements, Thomas Aquinas speaks of the image of God in very broad and relative terms: "Everything imperfect is a participation of what is perfect. Therefore even what falls short of the notion of an image, so far as it possesses *any sort of likeness to God,* participates in some degree the notion of an image."[72] Kolb also teaches a very broad understanding of "the image of God":

> Christians have interpreted what "in his own image" means in several ways. Some have defined it as *human perfection, human holiness.* Others have insisted that it is the *human ability to reason and to make decisions,* elements of human nature that such people have usually defined as central to our humanity. Still others have believed that other human characteristics, such as our *creativity* and our *desire to reproduce children* of our own, must reflect God's image in some way. *The image of God includes all these things.*[73]

Gerhard uses logic to prove that immortality is an aspect of the image of God. He says, "According to Gen. 1:27, 'man was made in the image of God.' Now, the image of God must include in itself immortality also. For how could man reflect the image of the immortal God, if he himself were mortal?"[74]

The same logic provides a valid basis for proving that all other attributes of God that are not peculiar to God alone should be included in a comprehensive definition of the image of God. Because there is no valid support for restricting the image of God to some small subset of attributes of God, generations of theologians who have tried to make such restrictions have not been able to reach a consensus about what to include in such a subset. Many of their competing definitions appear in the first portion of this current study, "Various Definitions of the Image of God." Individual theologians often include competing definitions in their own

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[72]Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* 1.93.2.

[73]Robert Kolb, *The Christian Faith: A Lutheran Exposition* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993), 56-57; italics added.

[74]Gerhard, *The Doctrine of Man,* 47.

discussions of the image of God. Gerhard provides an interesting example that can be added to the example provided by Pieper (see discussion above on pp. 9-11). Gerhard's conception of the image of God appears sometimes to include, sometimes to exclude, the image of God in unbelievers. He says, "The image of God cannot consist of those things which are essential also to the soul of men who are not born anew,"[75] but he also suggests that God wanted "some remnants of that original divine image to be left in man after the fall," so they might remember their former glory, learn the mercy of God, be schooled by God through the remnants so He can restore His image in us, and so that the wicked might be left without excuse.[76] In Gerhard's most direct treatment of the question of whether the image of God was lost in the fall, he explores five possible answers: (1) No if the image of God refers to intellect, will, and other faculties of the soul; (2) No if the image of God refers to general similarity to divine characteristics such as spirituality, intelligence, and free will; (3) No if the image of God refers to dominion over creatures; (4) No if the image of God refers to moral principles of conscience; (5) Yes if the image of God refers to righteousness and holiness. Gerhard uses the first four possible answers as foils to show the superiority of the last answer, which he identifies as the "Scriptural understanding" of the image of God, and he spends the rest of the section proving that the image of God was indeed lost in the fall.[77]

Gerhard treats the image and likeness of God as the original righteousness found in the soul: "As far as our understanding is concerned, we do not distinguish between image and likeness as referring the former to the essence of man's soul, the latter to holiness, righteousness, knowledge of God, and so on. We hold that both words indicate the same thing."[78]

On the other hand, Gerhard also speaks of the image of God as in the body, including immortality and dominion:

> The image of God in the first man consisted in the natural and highest perfection of the whole man, that is, in the uprightness of all the faculties of both soul and body, and in man's integrity and conformity to God, the archetype, without any conflict between flesh and spirit. The wisdom and the light of the divine knowledge shone in man's mind. Righteousness and holiness in his will were perfectly conformed to the Law of God. Hence he enjoyed the perfect harmony of all his members and all superior and inferior

[75]Gerhard, *The Doctrine of Man*, 36.
[76]Gerhard, *The Doctrine of Man*, 63-64.
[77]Gerhard, *The Doctrine of Man*, 61-62.
[78]Gerhard, *The Doctrine of Man*, 33.

> faculties, in perfect agreement with the will of God. He was made immortal and he had dominion over all the animals and creatures of the earth.[79]

Since the image of God is as broad as the likeness of God, there is no need to choose only one of the previously listed definitions and reject the rest; the different definitions can be seen as complementary facets of a broader whole. Luther thus does not contradict himself when he explains the image of God as including knowledge of God, belief that God is good, and holiness of life, and also as including justice, wisdom, and happiness, and also as comprising domination and dominion; rather, he merely emphasizes different aspects of being like God, depending on which topic is under discussion.[80]

b) "Likeness of God" means "to be like God"

To be made in God's likeness is nothing other than to be made to be like God. This definition was proposed already in ancient times: "People . . . are called your [i.e., God's] own image because they are made like you . . ." (4 Ezra 8:42-45). Luther agrees that the "likeness/similitude of God" is equivalent to being "like God": "When Moses says that man was created also in the *similitude of God*, he indicates that man is . . . *like God*. . . ."[81] Indeed, Luther shows that he understands "image of X" to mean the same thing as "to be like X" in the following quotation about Seth:

> And so Seth, who is born later on, is not born after the image of God but after that of his father Adam. *That is, he is like Adam; he is the image of his father Adam,* not only in the shape of his face but also in likeness. He not only has fingers, nose, eyes, bearing, voice, and speech like his father but is also like him in the remaining qualities both of mind and of body, in manners, character, will, etc.[82]

Again Luther says, "Only the Son *is like God,* or only He *is 'the image of the invisible God,'* as we read in Col. 1:15. . . ."[83]

Similarly, Gerhard teaches that the true meaning of "the image of God" is indicated by the phrase "the likeness of God," which means "to be like God in every respect":

> Since not every image is like the original type and, on the other hand, since the essential nature of *the image of God* in man could be understood differently, as the different opinions of the Fathers testify, God himself indicated how to find

[79]Gerhard, *The Doctrine of Man*, 66.
[80]*WA*, 42:51; *LW*, 34:177.
[81]*LW*, 1:337; italics added.
[82]*LW*, 1:339-340; italics added.
[83]*LW*, 15:339; italics added.

> its *true meaning*. By adding the word *likeness* he taught that man was originally made so that in him the image of the Creator should appear *in every respect like the Creator*.[84]

He also quotes approvingly Benedict Pererius, who said that the meaning of Gen. 1:26 is, "Let us make man so similar to us that he himself might be an image and a likeness reflecting our own nature, power, wisdom, etc."[85]

Irenaeus also understood the "image of God" as equivalent to "being like God," and taught, according to Hägglund, that "Salvation was accomplished for the same reason that God created: that man might *be like God*. Man was created in the image of God, but as a result of the Fall this similarity was lost. The meaning of salvation is that man might realize his destiny once again, that man might become the image of God according to the prototype discernible in Christ."[86]

To be made in the image of God is to be made in the likeness of God, which is to be made like God. Objections to this basic insight have little validity. Unless language is to lose all meaning, "likeness" must mean "to be like," just as "righteousness" means "to be righteous," or "powerfulness" means "to be powerful." If "likeness of God" does not mean "to be like God," then what can it mean? There is no valid reason to say it means "to be like God only in a few ways (e.g. in righteousness and spiritual knowledge), but not in others (e.g. in dominion and fertility)." Nothing in Scripture requires such a limited meaning of "the likeness of God." There is no valid reason to say it means "to have certain attributes (e.g. righteousness and spiritual knowledge) whether or not the attributes are like God." Nothing in linguistic studies supports such an understanding of "likeness." Scripture affirms that the noun "likeness" means the same thing as the verbal phrase "to be like" by interchanging the words in two equivalent passages: Jesus was "made in human likeness [ομοιωματι *noun*]" (Phil. 2:6-8; cf. Rom. 8:3); Jesus was "made like [ομοιωθηναι *verb*] his brothers in every way" (Heb. 2:17).

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[84]Gerhard, *The Doctrine of Man*, 34; italics added. This is not to suggest that Gerhard developed the full implications of his insight here or that he was consistent in his definition of the image of God as being like God "in every respect." See the discussion above on pages 47-48.

[85]Benedict Pererius, *Commentariorum et Disputationum in Genesim* 4:472, quoted in Gerhard, *The Doctrine of Man*, 32.

[86]Bengt Hägglund, *History of Theology*, Concordia Electronic Theological Library (CD-ROM; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), italics added.

Only one refinement of meaning of "likeness of God" is supported by grammar. The Hebrew phrase includes the idea that God is the author of the likeness, because "of God" is a subjective genitive. God provides the pattern from which the likeness is derived (see above, pp. 49–50). Thus a more precise definition of "likeness of God" is "to be like God" by derivation, with the Creator providing the pattern of likeness for His creation. This definition is compatible with a biblical passage that describes the eschatological dimension of the likeness of God: "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, *we shall be like him,* for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2, italics added).

For a more comprehensive test of the definition of "image of God" or "likeness of God" as "to be like God," we may see whether the definition can be substituted for the phrase wherever it occurs:

> Gen. 1:26-27 "Then God said, 'Let us make man *to be like us* [for "in our image"], *to be like us* [for "in our likeness"]; and let them rule over the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created man *to be like him* [for "in his own image"], *to be like God* [for "in the image of God"] he created him; male and female he created them."
>
> Gen. 5:1-3 "When God created man, he made him *to be like God* [for "in the likeness of God"]. He created them male and female, and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them 'man.' When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son *like himself* [for "in his own likeness"], *like himself* [for "in his own image"], and he named him Seth."
>
> Gen. 9:6 "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for *to be like God* [for "in the image of God"] has God made man."
>
> 1 Cor. 11:7 "A man ought not to cover his head, since he is *like God* [for "the image . . . of God"] and [is] the glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man."
>
> James 3:9 "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made *like God* [for "in God's likeness"]."
>
> Col. 1:15 "He is *like the invisible God* [for "the image of the invisible God"]."
>
> 2 Cor. 4:4 ". . . Christ . . . is *like God* [for "the image of God"]."
>
> Heb. 1:3 "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and *is like him* [for "the exact representation of his being"]."
>
> Phil. 2:5-6 "Christ Jesus . . . *being like God* [for "in the very nature (literally, *form of*) God"] . . . ."

> Rom. 8:29 "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to *be like his Son* [for "the likeness (literally, *image*) of his Son"], that he might be the first-born among many brothers."
>
> 1 Cor. 15:49 "And just as we have *been like the man of dust* [for "borne the likeness (literally, *image*) of the earthly man"], so shall we *be like the man of heaven* [for "bear the likeness (literally, *image*) of the man from heaven"]."
>
> Phil. 3:20-21 "Christ . . . will transform our lowly bodies so that they will *be like* his glorious body."
>
> 2 Cor. 3:18 "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being *made like him* [for "transformed into his likeness"] with ever-increasing glory."

It is clearly impossible to substitute the more restricted rival definitions of the image of God in all the preceding passages, such as "righteousness," or "memory, intellect, and will," or "Christ," or "resurrected body," but the definition "to be like God" works.

c) People who are like God can be called "gods"

One affirmation that people are like God is provided by Scripture when it calls certain people "gods." Lest there be any misunderstanding, Scripture clarifies that there is only one true God and that no created thing can ever become God. Many passages echo the clarion words of God, "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me" (Isa. 46:9). Yet Scripture often calls human beings "gods," and that method of speaking is entirely consistent with the definition of the "image of God" as "being like God." Because people are like God, they can properly be called "gods" even though they are not the one true God. The biblical examples of such speech follow.

Rulers are called "gods": "God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the 'gods': 'How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked?'" (Ps. 82:1-2); "I said 'You are "gods": you are all sons of the Most High.' But you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler" (Ps. 82:6-7); "I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; before the 'gods' I will sing your praise" (Ps. 138:1); "I handed it over to the ruler of the nations [literally, *the god of the nations*, i.e., Nabopolassar or Nebuchadnezzar] for him to deal with according to its wickedness" (Ezek. 31:11). Jesus defended the correctness of speaking in this way when He said, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'? [Ps. 82:6]. If He called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken—what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world?" (John 10:34-36).

In order to teach that rulers are like God as they participate with him in His dominion over the world, the Bible calls rulers "gods" and says that they are "like God" ("On that day . . . the house of David will be like God" [Zech. 12:8]).

It is quite likely that rulers were originally called "gods" in other passages as well, but the fear of idolatry may have caused ancient scribes to alter these passages ever so slightly. By adding, or reading as if added, a *yod,* the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the scribes could change the meaning of the word without changing its pronunciation. An original "gods" *elim* could easily be changed to read "rams" *eliym.* These "rams" could then be understood abstractly as the human leaders of their "flocks," or nations: "leaders [literally, *rams/gods]* of Moab" (Ex. 15:15); "the chief men [literally, *rams/gods]* of the land" (2 Kings 24:15); "the chief men [literally, *rams/gods]* of the land" (Ezek. 17:13); "the mighty chiefs [literally, *gods of mighty men]*" (Ezek. 32:21).

Judges are also called "gods" in Scripture, but it is difficult to see this in the English translations and in some passages it is not clear whether the intention is to refer to judges or to God Himself: "But if the servant declares, 'I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,' then his master must take him before the judges [literally, *the gods, or God]*" (Ex. 21:5-6); "But if the thief is not found, the owner of the house must appear before the judges [literally, *the gods, or God]*. . . . Both parties are to bring their cases before the judges [literally, *the gods, or God]*" (Ex. 22:8-9); "Do not blaspheme God [or *Do not revile the gods* = the judges]" (Ex. 22:28); "If a man sins against another man, God [or *the gods* = the judges] may mediate for him" (1 Sam. 2:25).

Prophets can be called "gods," as was Moses: "He [Aaron] will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him [literally, *he will become (or serve as) your mouth and you will become (or serve as) his god]*" (Ex. 4:16); "See, I have made you like God [literally, *I have appointed you god]* to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet" (Ex. 7:1). A number of ancient extra-biblical documents remarked on Moses being called god, as the following examples illustrate:

> Beloved of God and men was Moses (may his mention bring good), and He honored him as God, and kept him strong in the heavens.[87]
>
> Did not he [Moses] enjoy an even greater partnership with the Father and Creator of all things, having been found worthy of [being called by] the same form of address? For he was named God and king of the entire nation.[88]

[87]Sir 45:1-2.

> And He made him as God over the mighty ones, and as a cause of reeling to Pharaoh.[89]
>
> And so that law-giving [of the torah], being believed to come from God, has caused this man [Moses] to be ranked higher than his own [human] nature.[90]
>
> He said, "Moses, Moses." He revealed to him that he was to wear divinity and prophecy. . . . He said [to Moses]: I am the God of your fathers. Take divinity from Me, and with it make your prophecy strong. . . . The peace of the Lord be on Moses, the man who arrived at a level to which no other man attained. . . . He went up from the domain of humanity to the domain of the angels. . . . A holy prophet that went up from the level of men to the level of God."[91]
>
> [The Lord of Hosts] is called "God," yet He called Moses "God," as it says, "Behold, I have made you a God to Pharaoh."[92]
>
> God said to Moses: Wicked Pharaoh has made himself into a god, as it is said, "[Pharaoh declares:] The Nile is mine, I made [it] myself" [Ezek. 29:3], therefore, let him see you [Moses] and say that you are indeed a god [by comparison, that is, when you bring the plagues on Egypt].[93]

Prophets are commonly called "man of God" (1 Sam. 9:6-10; Deut. 33:1; etc.), or "servant of God" (1 Chron. 6:49; Neh. 10:29; etc.), which reinforces the idea that prophets were God's representatives, standing in the place of God as they spoke God's word.

Mighty or highly honored people can be called "gods": "When he [leviathan] rises up, the mighty [literally, *gods]* are terrified; they retreat before his thrashing" (Job 41:25); "Both high [literally, *gods]* and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings" (Ps. 36:7). *In general, it is those people who have some power, whether civil, spiritual, or physical, who are called "gods" in Scripture.*

The fact that people can be called "gods" in Scripture when they participate with God in His work of dominion or when they share His attribute of power correlates well with the fact that man has been made in the image of God, that is, to be like God. Correlative phrases such as "sons of God" and "children of God" are also used in Scripture and help to establish that some people are like God with respect to spiritual discernment (1 John 3:1-2), communion with Christ (John 1:12),

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[88]Philo, *Life of Moses* 1.1, 158.
[89]4Q374 *Apocryphon of Moses* A.
[90]Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 3.320.
[91]*Tibat Marqa* 4b, 5b, 265b, 91b.
[92]*Midrash Tanhuma, Beha'alotekha* 9.
[93]*Exodus Rabba* 8:1.

communion with the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14, 16), holiness (Phil. 2:15), and peacemaking (Matt. 5:9). Paul taught the Ephesians that being a child of God includes being like God: "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children" (Eph. 5:1). The same thought is behind the statement of Jesus, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). Also Augustine linked being children of God with being like God: "We have therefore even now begun to be like him, having the first-fruits of the Spirit; but yet we are still unlike him by reason of the vestiges of the old nature. *Insofar then as we are like him, to that degree are we sons of God* by the regenerating Spirit; but insofar as we are unlike him to that degree we are the children of the flesh and of the world."[94]

2. Usefulness of this definition for various questions

a) Inadequacy of previous definitions

The definition of the image of God as "to be like God" is both simpler and broader than the definitions that have commonly been proposed in the past. As the discussion at the beginning of this study illustrates, no one definition has been accepted by the Christian church as the standard, or traditional definition of the image of God, but many definitions have been proposed and used throughout the centuries. One cannot simply avoid the question by saying, "What is wrong with the traditional definition?" since there is no single definition that has achieved consensus. Some definitions emphasize the "narrower" or "proper" sense of the image of God, the spiritual attributes lost in the fall and regained in Christ, to the point of omitting or denying the "wider" sense. For example, the LCMS "Explanation of the Small Catechism" says in its brief discussion, "Do people still have the image of God? No, this image was lost when our first parents disobeyed God and fell into sin. Their will and intellect lost the ability to know and please God" (see p. 8 of this article for the full quotation). Likewise Pieper prefers to deny the "wider" sense of the image of God (see the discussion of Pieper on pp. 9–11). These restrictive statements are helpful in directing attention to an important dimension of the image of God, but risk caricaturing the breadth of Lutheran teaching on the topic. Other definitions emphasize the "wider" sense, the natural attributes retained after the fall, and risk devaluing the tremendous effect that the fall had on the image of God in man, and the need for salvation by grace alone.

Even the definitions that acknowledge both the narrower and the wider senses of the image of God are not completely satisfactory. The problem

[94]Augustine, *De Pecc. et Remiss.*, 2.10; italics added.

with such definitions is that a wider sense should include the narrower sense and other elements external to the narrower sense; in other words, the narrower sense should be a subset of the wider sense. An example of this is the wider and narrower senses of the word "gospel" found in Scripture. The wider sense includes all of God's revelation, both what is properly called law and what is properly called gospel, while the narrower sense is a subset containing only the good news of what Christ has done for us, what is properly called gospel, i.e.,

Gospel—wider sense (all of God's revelation) ***includes***
Gospel—narrower sense (what Christ has done for us) ***and***
Law—narrower sense (what we must do for God)

In the case of the image and likeness of God, however, the "wider" sense *does not include* the "narrower" sense, *but is actually a different "narrower" sense*. The natural attributes retained after the fall do not include the spiritual attributes lost in the fall; they are distinct. If the terminology of "wider" and "narrower" senses is to be retained, it should properly follow the analogy above, i.e.,

Image of God—wider sense (to be like God) ***includes***
Image of God—narrower sense #1 (godlike spiritual attributes lost in the fall, regained in Christ) ***and***
Image of God—narrower sense #2 (godlike natural attributes retained after the fall).

In other words, what would be needed in order to retain a workable terminology of "wider" and "narrower" senses is a new, truly wider definition of the image of God, and a reclassification of the previous "wider sense" as "narrower sense #2" to show that it is merely one of the two narrower senses that together make up a truly wider sense.

Such a proliferation of meanings for the term "image of God," however, would surely lead to confusion, especially since two different "narrower" senses for the same term would need to be distinguished. Another problem with retaining the terminology of "narrower and wider senses" is that it does not include any way to indicate comparative differences of likeness to God, ranging from Christ's complete, essential likeness to our partial likeness. It may therefore be best to abandon the terminology of "wider and narrower senses" of the image of God, and to speak instead of various ways in which people are like God.

b) Resolving apparent contradictions

One problem with the various definitions of the image of God examined at the beginning of this study is that they do not adequately address *all*

that the Bible has to say about the topic, but concentrate on this or that passage to the exclusion of others. Is the image of God righteousness alone? Then, since unbelievers do not possess it, what was to prevent Noah from killing and eating them like other animals (cf. Gen. 9:6)? Is the image of God what distinguishes human beings from animals? Then what does it mean that the "new man," *found only in Christians,* is "created to be like God" (Eph. 4:22-24) or "renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Col. 3:10)?

Exegetical scholars have achieved remarkable consensus on the interpretation of individual passages that teach about the image of God. For instance, they generally agree that some passages teach that the image of God affects both body and soul, and that it remains in some sense in all people even after the fall. However, exegetes have spent much less effort on what the Bible as a whole teaches about the image of God. Many modern exegetes have long since abandoned the belief in the unity of Scripture. When they find passages that apparently contradict each other, with some teaching that only Christians are made in the image of God and others teaching that all people are made in the image of God, these scholars are likely to decide that the Bible actually contradicts itself. They conclude that a unified biblical theology of the image of God does not exist.

The definition of the image of God as being like God is a definition that affirms *all* that the Bible teaches about the image of God, in a unified way. It does not ignore passages that are "inconvenient," but integrates them into the definition. For instance, understanding that the image of God is to be like God helps to explain how the Bible can affirm and deny that the same groups of people are the image of God in different contexts. Both Christians and non-Christians are like God in having intellects that distinguish them from animals, but only Christians are like God in having true knowledge of God. Both Christians and non-Christians are like God in being able to make moral choices, but only Christians are like God in having righteousness and holiness. Men and women together are like God in having dominion over the earth, but only men are like God in being the head of the family. If a Christian woman is married to a non-Christian man, the husband is like God with respect to having authority over his wife, but the wife is like God with respect to knowing God and being righteous and holy. Both Christians on earth and Christians in heaven are like God spiritually, but only Christians in heaven are as much like God as is possible for human beings. Both Christians and Christ are like God in many ways, but only Christ is like him in such a way that He is true God Himself. *Any definition of the image of God that cannot resolve these apparent*

contradictions by acknowledging such unities and distinctions is not a comprehensive definition based on all the biblical evidence.

c) Applicability to wide range of topics

To understand the image and likeness of God as being like God in various ways is useful with respect to many topics raised in connection with the image of God. At the fall, man became unlike God by becoming unrighteous. This reaffirms the traditionally well-developed Lutheran emphasis on the loss of the image of God in the "narrower sense" as a result of the fall, and is the decisive aspect of the image of God for questions relating to salvation.

Yet man remained man in distinction from animals, and did not completely lose the capabilities or gifts with which God had endowed him, though he did suffer the results of their corruption. This reaffirms the traditionally less well-developed Lutheran understanding of the image of God in the "wider sense" that is corrupted or marred as a result of the fall, but is still retained by all human beings, and is a useful aspect of the image of God for questions relating to the human condition.

When man is reborn through faith in Christ, he becomes more like God as he is clothed with Christ's righteousness and begins to reclaim fuller use of his created gifts. Finally, at the resurrection, he comes as close to the likeness of God as is humanly possible. His natural body, which is perishable, dishonorable, weak, and mortal, is raised as a spiritual body, which is imperishable, glorified, powerful, and immortal. He no longer bears the likeness of the earthly Adam, but of the heavenly Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 15:42-54). As Luther says, "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."[95] This reaffirms the christological and eschatological aspects of the image of God, and is useful for questions relating to ultimate destinies.

Because Scripture equates the image of God to the likeness of God, and because the likeness of God is the same as being like God, there is no biblical reason to restrict "the image of God" exclusively to one of the aspects discussed above. In fact, a careful reading of Scripture and the Confessions encourages that the concept *not* be limited exclusively to one aspect of the broader whole.

[95] *LW*, 1:65.

Deciding which likenesses of God should receive primary attention depends on which question is being asked. The conclusion of this study is that the image of God is broad enough to be applied to different types of questions, and that the various "senses" of the image of God that have been proposed in the past are valid aspects of the same broad reality, that man has been made like God in various ways. *The important question, therefore, is not whether someone is an image of God, but in what way someone is an image of God, and in relation to whom.* This shift in focus correlates well with what the CTCR has said about how God's representatives (that is, His images) use the gifts God has given them in various ways in relation to various people:

> As we face creation and one another as God's representatives, the job descriptions that set forth our duties and responsibilities are given in and with the orders and structures of creation itself. God has given each person a "location" or "place" where each can use his or her gifts for others. In fact, each person will stand in one or more locations at any given time. We may be parents and children, husbands or wives, neighbors and friends, employers or employees, officials and citizens.[96]

The breadth of the image of God in all its aspects, and its character as a gift from God, also correlate well with the teaching of Luther that the gift that God has given to His children is Himself. The gift of the Father includes "all that he is and has," but becomes "obscured and useless through Adam's fall," so that it must be given again by Christ and the Holy Spirit:

> These are the three persons and one God, who has given himself to us all wholly and completely, with all that he is and has. The Father gives himself to us. . . . But this gift has become obscured and useless through Adam's fall. Therefore the Son himself subsequently gave himself and bestowed all his works, sufferings, wisdom, and righteousness, and reconciled us to the Father, in order that restored to life and righteousness, we might also know and have the Father and his gifts. But because this grace would benefit no one if it remained so profoundly hidden and could not come to us, the Holy Spirit comes and gives himself to us also, wholly and completely. He teaches us to understand this deed of Christ which has been manifested to us, helps us receive and preserve it, use it to our advantage and impart it to others, increase and extend it. He does this both inwardly and outwardly—inwardly by means of faith and other spiritual gifts, outwardly through the gospel, baptism, and the sacrament of the altar, through which as through three means or methods

[96]"Spiritual Gifts," A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1995), 51.

> he comes to us and inculcates the sufferings of Christ for the benefit of our salvation.[97]

It follows that in order to learn more about human beings as God intended them to be, it is instructive to study God, in whose image man has been made. The following sections will illustrate that all who have been created in the image of God are united in some ways and distinct in others, and that they are created in ordered relationships. All these characteristics are part of God's created order. This is to be expected in a creation that bears the image of its Creator, since the Creator has unity, distinction, and ordered relationships within Himself.

II. UNITY, DISTINCTION, AND ORDERED RELATIONSHIPS IN GOD

A. Three persons in one God

The possibility that God could have both unity and distinction in Himself is suggested already in the opening words of the Hebrew text of Genesis, which contain a subject in the plural form (*elohim* "God") and a verb in the singular form (*bara* "created"). The mixture of plural and singular in God reaches a crescendo later in the same chapter; God says, "Let *us* make man in *our* image, in *our* likeness," and then God "created man in *his* own image, in the image of God he created him" (Gen. 1:26-27). In some mysterious way, the one true God is not merely one person. He is not only a unity, but a unity of distinct persons. The substance or essence of God must never be divided; otherwise, there would be more than one God. Neither must the persons be merged or confused, otherwise there would be no Trinity. The attempt to explain how there can be one essence in three persons can never be fully successful because human analogies always break down before this mystery. The distinction between the three persons can be seen by their different relationships to each other, by their "work" within the Trinity (*opera ad intra*), i.e., the Father eternally begets the Son, and the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. The unity of the three persons can be seen by their united action upon what is outside the Trinity (*opera ad extra*), i.e., creation, judgment, redemption, sanctification, and glorification.

As one aspect of the distinction between the three persons, it is proper to speak of an ordered relationship within the Trinity. Pieper explains,

> The ecclesiastical terminology "the Father is the First, the Son is the Second, and the Holy Spirit is the Third Person" is Scriptural. According to the

[97] *LW*, 37:366.

> Scriptures, the Father is called the First Person, because He is not of another, but of Himself. The Son is called the Second Person, because He has the divine essence from the Father. The Holy Spirit is called the Third Person because He is not of Himself, but has the divine essence from the Father and the Son and because another does not proceed from Him. The dogmaticians call this an order of natural enumeration. . . .
>
> As there is an order of Persons . . . so there is also an order of operation. . . . As the Son has His divine essence from the Father, so also His operation: "the Son can do nothing of Himself but what He seeth the Father do" (John 5:19). Likewise the Holy Spirit has from the Father and the Son both His Godhead and His operation, so the Holy Ghost "shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak. . . . He shall receive of Mine" (John 16:13-15).[98]

B. Two natures in one Christ

The mystery of the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity provides another example of unity, distinction, and ordered relationships. When the Son of God became incarnate as Jesus, God and man were united in one person. Yet the two natures remained distinct and ordered, as the Athanasian Creed itself says, "[Christ is] equal to the Father as touching his Godhead and inferior to the Father as touching his manhood."

The Lutheran Church has historically emphasized the true union of the divine and human natures in Christ, especially in its defense of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. The doctrine of the "communication of attributes" describes how it is that the human and divine natures share their attributes in the one person of Christ. The Lutheran Confessions teach that the two natures are not equal; although both natures communicate their attributes to the one person, only the divine nature communicates its attributes to the human nature, not vice versa: "Nothing was added to or detracted from the essence and properties of the divine nature in Christ. . . . The human nature of Christ . . . received . . . majesty, glory, power, and might. . . ."[99]

The two natures do not blend into one but are in an ordered relationship, "For only according to the divine nature is Christ equal with the Father, but according to the assumed human nature he is below God." The full quotation follows:

> In this matter we have not developed a new doctrine of our own, but we accept and repeat the statements which the ancient orthodox church made

[98]Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 1:391.

[99]FCSD VIII, 49-51, in Tappert, 600-601.

> herein on the basis of sound passages of the Holy Scriptures, namely, that such divine power, life, might, majesty, and glory were not given to Christ's assumed human nature in the same way in which the Father communicated his own essence and all the divine properties from eternity to the Son according to the divine nature so that he is of one essence with the Father and equal with God. For only according to the divine nature is Christ equal with the Father, but according to the assumed human nature he is below God.

The Confessions later explain,

> Nor do we believe that in its substance and essence the human nature allegedly received equal majesty, separated or divided from the nature and essence of the Son of God, as when water, wine, or oil is poured from one container into another. For the human nature, like every other creature in heaven or on earth, is not capable of the omnipotence of God in such a way that it would become an omnipotent essence intrinsically or have omnipotent properties intrinsically. Thereby Christ's human nature would be denied and completely transformed into the Godhead.[100]

The Confessions thus agree with the Scriptural passages that teach that all creation is subordinate to God, and that therefore Christ's created human nature is subordinate to, or ordered below, His divine nature. Yet at the same time, the passages that teach that there is but one Christ teach that this ordered distinction is unified in one person. One might say that in Christ a distinction of order is found in the relationship between the two natures, the work of communicating attributes to the inside (*opera ad intra,* so to speak), but complete unity is found in the work of salvation directed toward the outside (*opera ad extra,* so to speak).

The church fathers, pondering the unity and distinction of the two natures of Christ, spoke about them as if they were like the unity and distinction of male and female in marriage:

> "The Flesh of Christ is the Spouse of the Son of God," says Methodius (*The Banquet of the Ten Virgins,* vii, 8). "It is a nuptial union," says St. Augustine, "and its bridal chamber is the womb of the Virgin. For flesh itself was conjoined to the Word: wherefore it is also said [Matt. xix. 5; Eph. v. 31] 'Now not two, but one flesh'" (*Enarr. in Psalm.,* xliv, 3 [P. L., xxxvi, col. 495]; cf. *In Psalm.,* xviii, 2 [P. L. vi, col. 161]). St. Thomas repeats the same words, stating that the womb of our Lady is the bridal chamber of this marriage (*In Joann.,* ii, lect. i, I). Says St. Gregory the Great: "God the Father made a wedding for his Son at the time when he joined him in the womb of the Virgin to human nature" (*Hom. in Evang. II,* hom. xxxviii, 3 [P. L., lxxvi, col. 1283]).[101]

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[100]FCSD VIII, 61, in Tappert, 602; FCSD VIII, 71, in Tappert, 605.

[101]Vincent Wilkin, *The Image of God in Sex* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1955), 23.

III. UNITY, DISTINCTION, AND ORDERED RELATIONSHIPS IN MAN

A. The unity of man and woman as the image of God

The unity and distinction in God, with respect to the three persons of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ, provides a pattern for the unity and distinction in man as male and female, created in the image of God. When God created man as male and female, He created a unity in His image. Although there was the distinction of two sexes, the woman was formed from the substance of man and the two were intended to be "one flesh" from the beginning (Gen. 2:21-24). God's blessings were given to them as a unity, His commands were intended for them as a unity, and the punishment of death and the promise of life after the fall affected them as a unity. This shows that mankind as a unity has a special relationship with God, a relationship possible only because God makes man to be like Himself in various ways. In terms of man's relationship with God, Scripture teaches that no distinctions should be made between male and female. They are equally capable of the knowledge of God, righteousness, moral discernment, proper worship, adoption as the children of God, and immortality. In their relationship with God, in the context of baptism, "in Christ Jesus," "there is neither . . . male nor female" (Gal. 3:28).

Man as male and female also stands as a unity in relation to the rest of creation. When God created man, He showed the surpassing glory of this creation by His deliberate planning (Gen. 1:26), by His technique of forming man specially from the dust of the earth and breathing life into his nostrils (Gen. 2:7), by His gift of moral responsibility (Gen. 2:17), by His building the woman from the man's rib (Gen. 2:22), and by His blessing them with dominion over all other creatures (Gen. 1:28). With respect to the rest of creation, man as male and female was created to stand in the place of God, to reflect and represent God, to be the regent who works with and manages other creatures according to God's will. He is able to do this because he was made to be like God at creation, having intelligence, reason, glory and honor. With respect to having dominion over other creatures on account of the natural gifts given to man, Scripture treats man as a unity, without distinctions between male and female. *They* are to have dominion over every living thing, subdue the earth, and eat from its produce (Gen. 1:26-30).

In the case of the three persons of the Trinity, a helpful concept through which to understand their unity and distinction is that their *unity* is apparent in the "works to the outside," *opera ad extra*, while their *distinction* is apparent in the "works to the inside," *opera ad intra*. The same concept is

helpful in the case of the two sexes of man. In their relation to what is outside themselves (*opera ad extra,* so to speak), i.e., in their relation to God and nature, they are united as man, while in their relation to each other (*opera ad intra,* so to speak), they are distinct as male and female. This way of thinking of the two sexes of man is compatible with the following quotation from the CTCR, which stresses the equality of man and woman in relationship to God and nature without denying the distinctive order of creation in their relationship to each other:

> To be sure, this spiritual equality does not preclude a distinction in identities between man and woman. Genesis 2 takes up also this matter, and its teaching is discussed later in this report under the concept of "order of creation." However, any such differentiation does not impair the validity of the clear principle laid down in the inspired record of creation: *Man and woman are equal in having the same relationship to God and to nature.*[102]

The unity of male and female that is apparent in their relationship to God and nature affects even the relationship to each other. They are not two species, one human and the other more or less than human. They are man, male and female. It was not by chance that God created man as a unity of distinct sexes, as if creation could have been complete without the two sexes. The second account of creation records God saying, "It is *not good* for the man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18, italics added). This is in stark contrast to the constant refrain in the first account of creation, that everything God created was *good* (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). The second account of creation clarifies that creation was not complete, that it could not finally be called good, until woman was created. Though Adam was created in the image of God from the very beginning, man was incomplete without woman.

Knowing that male and female together are united as man and that each is the image of God leads them to acknowledge each other with mutual respect, and to search for ways of expressing their unity with each other. Normally, but not always, this leads to a "one flesh" relationship in marriage and to a mutual participation in the blessing of fertility, which is a participation in God's act of creation.

B. The distinction between man and woman as the image of God

1. Biblical authority

God created man as male and female, in two sexes, and any attempt to find a human nature that is not enfleshed in one of the sexes is unbiblical. Because human nature is always particularized in one of two sexes, it is

[102]"Women in the Church," 19-20; italics original.

important to understand how and to what extent sexual differences affect the reflection of the attributes of God in the men and women created in His image.

Some scholars believe that the biblical texts on the image of God contradict themselves or other biblical texts on the relationship between man and woman. There are attempts to treat Gen. 1:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them," in a one-sided egalitarian way:

> The parallelism between *hā 'ādām* [man] and "male and female" shows further that sexual differentiation does not mean hierarchy but rather equality. Created simultaneously, male and female are not superior and subordinate. Neither has power over the other; in fact, both are given equal power. Though the parallelism within the poem alone suggests this latter point, the context substantiates it. As we have seen in the verse immediately preceding, God proposes, by using a plural verb form, that *'ādām* be given dominion over all the earth: "let *them* have dominion" (1:26, RSV). Moreover, in the verses that follow our poem God blesses male and female, using the plural "them," and the deity consistently speaks "to them" with plural verb forms (1:28-29). Specifically, God reaffirms the power which they both have over the earth: "And God said to *them* . . . have dominion" (RSV). Throughout this section, then, male and female are treated equally. In plural pronouns and verbs, both are present and both have equal power over the earth. At the same time, neither is given dominion over the other.[103]

Such exclusively egalitarian interpretations come into conflict with more "hierarchical" texts such as 1 Corinthians 11:3, 7, "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. . . . A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man." Any text that teaches an ordered relationship between man and woman is thought to contradict Paul's words in Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." To understand these passages as contradictory, however, is to misunderstand the Bible. *The Bible teaches not only that male and female are a unity, but also that they are distinct, and in an ordered relationship.*

Some feminist scholars who are themselves strongly committed to egalitarian relationships between men and women acknowledge that the biblical doctrine of the image of God is not egalitarian. Two "solutions" that have been proposed are to "discard the authority of the Bible

[103]Trible, *Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 18-19.

altogether," or to reinterpret it in ways that deliberately change its originally intended meaning:

> How does such a feminist view, that starts with human experience and then constructs morally appropriate understandings of God, relate to Biblical authority? What is the authority of the Bible for feminist hermeneutics? I believe that the studies in this volume have basically indicated that the modern claim that the image of God is an egalitarian concept cannot be substantiated as an accurate account of the meaning of this text in Hebrew Scripture or in its New Testament interpretation. . . . Either we must discard the authority of the Bible altogether, or else we must claim the right to reinterpret Biblical ideas in a way that appropriates, not only changes in past tradition, but also new insights today as well.[104]

These "solutions" are not viable options for those who base their doctrine on Scripture alone.

2. Biblical linkage of the image of God and the distinction between the sexes

a) Genesis 1:27 & 5:1-2

The biblical teaching that male and female are a unity but also are distinct and in ordered relationships can be found "in many and various ways" throughout Scripture. The question that has been asked with some frequency in recent discussions is whether that teaching is unrelated to the teaching that man is made in the image of God, or whether the two teachings are related but antithetical, or whether they are related and compatible, even mutually supportive.

That the two teachings are related and compatible, even mutually supportive, is suggested by the biblical texts that speak directly about man being created in the image or likeness of God (Gen. 1:27; 5:2; 9:6; James 3:9; 1 Cor. 11:7). These passages are discussed at greater length earlier in this study, but here it is instructive to note what they teach about the unity and distinction of the two sexes. Three of the five texts make explicit reference to each sex. Two texts say that when God created man in His image or likeness, He created them male and female:

> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. [Gen. 1:27]

> When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female . . . [Gen. 5:1-2]

[104]Ruether, "*Imago Dei*," in Børresen, *The Image of God*, 287.

Though neither of these passages goes on to explain *how* male and female are distinguished, it is significant that they explicitly mention male and female rather than merely subsuming them both under one designation. Similarly, passages that mention the distinct persons of the Trinity are significant for Trinitarian doctrine even when the passages do not go on to explain *how* the persons are to be distinguished. For instance, one key Trinitarian passage says, "Therefore go and made disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). In such passages, mentioning the distinct persons of the Trinity, like mentioning the distinct sexes of man, is a way of teaching that there are *distinct components* within the *unity* of God or man.

The recognition that the basic definition of man in Gen. 1:27 includes both the unity and distinction of the two sexes governs the following statement from the CTCR. In our view the statement leans too heavily on the Swiss theologian Karl Barth when it makes the hyperbolic assertion that "to be human simply *is* to exist in this male-female duality." Nevertheless, the statement makes a strong case for the necessity of seeing both the unity and distinction of the two sexes. After quoting Gen. 1:27, the statement says,

> The suggestion here is that it is impossible to come to know the significance of our humanity without reference to the sexual differentiation between male and female. To be human simply *is* to exist in this male-female duality. Consequently, it will be insufficient to say that God has created two kinds of human beings, male and female. Rather, we should say that God has created human beings for fellowship and that the male-female polarity is a basic form of this fellowship. To stress that human beings are created for community as male *and* female necessarily involves an equally firm insistence that they are male *or* female.[105]

b) 1 Corinthians 11:7

One "image of God" text goes beyond the basic affirmation that man is a unity composed of distinct sexes, and teaches that there are God-pleasing sexual distinctions in the context of worship: "A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man." [1 Cor. 11:7]

This passage teaches that the sexes are *distinguished* with respect to the image of God, even though their *unity* is stressed in the following verses:

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[105]"Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective," A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1981), 6-7; italics original.

"In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God." [1 Cor. 11:11-12]

This passage is thus very helpful to prove that the image of God is related to, compatible with, and even supportive of, both the unity and distinction between the sexes. The doctrines themselves are taught also elsewhere, but their relatedness to each other is portrayed most directly here.

c) Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9

The two texts that do not explicitly mention both sexes are the ones that forbid murder and cursing because all people have been made in the image and likeness of God:

> Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man. [Gen. 9:6]
>
> With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. [James 3:9]

Though these two texts do not explicitly mention the two sexes, the text from Genesis is in a context that forcefully implies both sexes. The following verse switches to a pronoun marked as plural in the Hebrew language ("As for *you*"), and includes imperatives marked as plural in the Hebrew language ("be fruitful and increase in number"). The simple facts of biology demand that both male and female are being addressed here, and there is an unmistakable parallel between this verse and the verse of blessing that God gave to the first male and female at the time of their creation, "Be fruitful and increase in number" (Gen. 1:28). This leaves only the text from James without reference, explicit or implicit, to both sexes. James's silence contributes nothing to the current question of whether or not the image of God is linked to sexual distinctions.

If the image of God cannot be linked to any distinction between the sexes, it is difficult to understand why four of the five texts that directly address the image of God should explicitly or implicitly mention both sexes. The answer often proposed, that both sexes are mentioned to confirm that there is no distinction between the sexes with respect to the image of God, does not adequately explain why the biblical authors felt the need to use the sexually discriminating terms "male" and "female" when describing the unity created in the image of God. Even if the main point was to teach that male and female are united, the words that are used teach a unity of distinct components. Nor does the common answer

adequately come to grips with the teaching of 1 Cor. 11:7, that the sexes are distinguished with respect to the image of God.

The passages that teach about the image of God generally mention both sexes and include a statement distinguishing the sexes with respect to the image of God. No passage denies that sexual distinctions can be made with respect to the image of God, saying, for instance, "There is neither male nor female, for you are all created in the image of God." Therefore one must conclude that the image of God provides an appropriate framework from which to discuss not only the unity of male and female, but also the distinction between them. Because the biblical texts themselves link the image of God and the two sexes, theologians of the church have often placed their comments on the relationship between the sexes under the general heading of the image of God.

d) Opera ad extra *and* opera ad intra, *so to speak*

Although the unity of male and female is evident in how they relate to God and nature, or what is outside themselves (*opera ad extra,* so to speak), it is especially in the relationship between male and female, in the operations within their own unity (*opera ad intra,* so to speak), that the God-created distinctions between the sexes become apparent. Just as it is wrong to deny the distinctions between the three persons of the Trinity and merge them into one (Unitarianism), so it is wrong to deny the distinctions between the two sexes and merge them into one (androgyny). It would be as wrong to deny the distinction between the sexes as it would be to deny the unity that they form according to Scripture.

Sexual distinctions, then, are not foreign to the image of God or contrary to it. In fact, the ordered relationships between the two sexes serve as a point of correspondence to the ordered relationships within God Himself, and to the order of His creation. Notice how Luther understands the relationship of man and wife as embracing both the unity of one body in relation to others, and yet differentiation of order or leadership in relation to each other:

> When the man and the woman are joined together in physical marriage, one body is formed, the goods are in common, the children and everything are common property. The wife is just as much mistress over the goods of her husband as the husband himself, and *in nothing is she differentiated from her husband, except that the husband is lord of the wife. In other respects that do not pertain to the husband, the wife is mistress of everything, just as much as the man.*

He uses similar words in his commentary on Genesis:

> 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. Thus even today the woman is the partaker of the future life, just as Peter says that they are joint heirs of the same grace (1 Peter 3:7). In the household the wife is a partner in the management and has a common interest in the children and the property, and yet there is a great difference between the sexes. The male is like the sun in heaven, the female like the moon, the animals like the stars, over which sun and moon have dominion. In the first place, therefore, let us note from this passage that it was written that *this sex may not be excluded from any glory of the human creature, although it is inferior to the male sex.*[106]

C. Living as the image of God, also in ordered relationships

1. Living as the image of God: vocation as "mask of God"

Living as the image of God is a great privilege of man as male and female. Having been made in His likeness, we represent him to the rest of the world and participate with him in His work. The CTCR suggests various ways in which we represent God to the world:

> As we face creation and one another as God's representatives, the job descriptions that set forth our duties and responsibilities are given in and with the orders and structures of creation itself. God has given each person a "location" or "place" where each can use his or her gifts for others. In fact, each person will stand in one or more locations at any given time. We may be parents and children, husbands or wives, neighbors and friends, employers or employees, officials and citizens.[107]

Those who have been made to be like God participate in God's work in the world, some willingly, others unwillingly. There are as many ways of participating in the work of God as there are good works. The knowledge that their work is God's work not only provides comfort to God's children, but also gives their work a dignity and value that it would otherwise lack:

> It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. [Phil 2:13]
>
> We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. [Eph. 2:10]
>
> Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. [1 Cor. 15:58]

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[106] *LW*, 12:260; italics added. *LW*, 1:69; italics added. Cf. also Luther's *Predigten über das erste Buch Mose, gehalten 1523 und 1524 (Declamationes in Genesin, 1523-24)*, *WA* sec. 1, v. 14, pp. 127-128.

[107] "Spiritual Gifts," 51.

> Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it. [Mark 16:20]
>
> As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. [2 Cor. 6:1]
>
> And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe. [1 Thess. 2:13]

The doctrine of "vocation," that God calls (Latin *vocat*) His children to do His work in the world, is closely related to this thought. Those who are the images of God perform actions that are the "masks of God, behind which He wants to remain concealed and do all things." Luther says,

> What else is all our work to God—whether in the fields, in the garden, in the city, in the house, in war, or in government . . .? These are the masks of God, behind which He wants to remain concealed and do all things. Had Gideon done nothing but take the field against Midian, the Midianites would not have been beaten; and God could certainly have beaten them without Gideon. He could give children without using men and women. But He does not want to do this. Instead, He joins man and woman so that it appears to be the work of man and woman, and yet He does it under the cover of such masks. We have the saying: "God gives every good thing, but not just by waving a wand." God gives all good gifts; but you must lend a hand and take the bull by the horns; that is, you must work and thus give God good cause and a mask.[108]

Because they participate in *God's* work, the work they do leads people to glorify *God* rather than themselves: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). The two works of God that were explicitly entrusted to man when God created him in His image are the works of producing life and of exercising loving dominion (Gen. 1:28). Because the current study is primarily about how the image of God affects the ordered relationship between men and women rather than about how it affects their work in producing children, the following sections will concentrate on order and dominion rather than on fertility.

2. Godly order in the world

When God created the world, He set up ordered relationships so that the various creatures would live in harmony under His loving dominion, and under the loving dominion of His earthly representatives, human beings.

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[108] *LW*, 14:114-115. See the treatment of this topic by Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg; reprinted Evansville, Indiana: Ballast Press, 1994).

God says, "Let them rule over the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Gen. 1:26). Following the lead of this passage, the CTCR has linked the image of God with representing God and exercising dominion: "The image of God (Gen. 1:26-28) not only differentiates God's human creatures from the rest of creation. It entitles them to represent God on earth and to manage as benevolent kings of the earthly estate established by the Creator."[109]

Another way in which Adam was originally like God was by being in harmony with him, acknowledging God's loving dominion in his life and following His commandments. Later, he became "like God" by taking upon himself a divine prerogative, the right to decide what is good and evil. Adam rejected God's definition of good and evil and decided that it was good for him to eat from the tree in the middle of the garden. By taking this right upon himself, he showed that he considered "equality with God something to be grasped," something the Second Adam refused to do (cf. Phil. 2:6). It is true that Adam became "like God" in this forbidden way, causing God to say, "The man has now become *like one of us, knowing good and evil* . . ." (Gen. 3:22, italics added). However, by the same act Adam became *unlike* God in a more fundamental way, becoming unrighteous, "so the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden" (Gen. 3:23).

To refuse to be subject to God and to the authorities He has put in place is to rebel against God's created order and purpose. To be made in the image of God includes being placed in relationships that include distinction and order, while at the same time promoting unity, in accordance with God's will. That such ordered relationships can and do exist without sin is shown not only by the example of Adam before the fall, but also by the angels, who are placed in ordered relationships under archangels (ruling angels) even though sin has no part in their existence. The Bible specifically identifies one archangel by name: "But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" (Jude 1:9; cf. "Michael and *his* angels" Rev. 12:7). Since Gabriel is the only other angel named in the Bible, and since he "stands in the presence of God" (Luke 1:19), he is generally considered to be another archangel. The "seven angels who stand before God" may all be archangels (Rev. 8:2, 6; 15:1, 6; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9). In extra-biblical literature from as early as the third century B. C., seven archangels were identified by

[109]"Spiritual Gifts," 50.

name: Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Sariel, Gabriel, and Remiel (1 Enoch 20). The biblical cherubim and seraphim may be orders of angels under the archangels. These various angels are not corrupted by sin, but still live in ordered relationships. Therefore order and authority must not be judged to be part of God's curse for sin, but should be welcomed as a gift of God for His creation.

Thomas Aquinas explains the difference between ordered relations with and without the corruption of sin: "Subjection is twofold. One is servile, by virtue of which a superior makes use of a subject for his own benefit, and this kind of subjection began after sin. There is another kind of subjection, which is called economic or civil, whereby the superior makes use of his subjects for their own benefit and good; and this kind of subjection existed even before sin."[110]

A proper understanding of the image of God, then, does not necessarily lead to egalitarianism, or destroy order within society. It makes no more sense for one member of society to refuse to submit to another member because they are both created in the image of God than to refuse to submit because they are both human. According to God's plan, one may be like God with respect to exercising authority over another, while another may be like God with respect to submitting to the authority that God has placed over him. Both seek to promote God's purpose in their lives. Living peacefully under ordered relationships is not only a civil duty, but also a spiritual exercise that promotes God's creative design and purpose. This is why the Bible speaks of submitting to people in authority as submitting to God, and of rebelling against people in authority as rebelling against God:

> [The Lord] has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us? [Ex. 16:7-8]
>
> It is against the Lord that you and all your followers have banded together. Who is Aaron that you should grumble against him? [Num. 16:11]
>
> Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. [Rom. 13:1-2]
>
> Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. [Eph. 5:22]
>
> Children, obey your parents in the Lord. [Eph. 6:1]

[110]Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1.92.1.

> Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. [Eph. 6:5-6]

3. Godly order in society at large

In society at large, kings and other rulers are like God with respect to exercising authority over their subjects. They have been given authority by God Himself, and so are ruling according to His will (cf. Dan. 2:37; Rom. 13:1-7). They are the category of human beings that are most often called "gods" in Scripture (see above, pp. 52–55). Broadly speaking, what the Bible teaches by calling rulers "gods," Melanchthon teaches by urging rulers to be "the image of God": "And rulers must be urged and entreated to remember their duty under the command of God, to understand that God is chaste and righteous, and that they have been put in the position of divine service so that they may be the image of God, that they may be chaste and upright, and uphold chastity and righteousness among the people."[111]

To have authority over another is not the same thing as to have greater worth than another. This is proved by the example of Jesus, who though He was true God, yet submitted to the governing authorities and validated the God-given nature of their power over him. Scripture says that Pilate learned that "Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction" (Luke 23:7), and Jesus said to Pilate, "You would have no power over me *if it were not given to you from above*" (John 19:11, italics added). In his Large Catechism, Luther speaks of people in authority, like parents and civil rulers, as people "who occupy the place of God," "God's representatives," "adorned and clothed with the majesty and glory of God," who do the work of God:

> It [the Fifth Commandment] forbids anger except, as we have said, to *persons who occupy the place of God*, that is, parents and rulers. Anger, reproof, and punishment are the prerogatives of God and *his representatives*, and they are to be exercised upon those who transgress this and the other commandments.[112]

> Therefore, we constantly teach that the sacraments and all the external things ordained and instituted by God should be regarded not according to the gross, external mask (as we see the shell of a nut) but as that in which God's Word is enclosed. In the same way we speak about the parental estate and civil authority. If we regard these persons with reference to their noses, eyes, skin and hair, flesh and bones, they look no different from Turks and heathen.

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[111]Melanchthon, *Loci Communes 1543, Appendix: Marriage: The Ruler's Duty to Uphold the Laws of Marriage.*

[112]LC I, 182, in Tappert, 389; italics added.

> Someone might come and say, 'Why should I think more of this person than of others?' But because the commandment is added, 'You shall honor father and mother,' I see another man, *adorned and clothed with the majesty and glory of God.* This commandment, I say, is the golden chain about his neck, yes, the crown on his head, which shows me how and why I should honor this particular flesh and blood.[113]
>
> Through civil rulers, as through our own parents, God gives us food, house and home, protection and security.[114]

The authority that God has given leaders in society shows that it is His will for people to be in ordered relationships, even though all are created in the image of God and are therefore of equal worth in God's eyes.

It is not clear whether it is necessary to preserve distinctions between the sexes in exercising authority over society at large. Since there are no biblical statements that directly teach that women should not rule in society, it is best to speak with some caution. Luther's categorical rejection of female rulers in society was undoubtedly influenced by social conditions of his day, and it would be hard to prove his assertion, without explicit confirmation from God, that "never has there been divine permission for a woman to rule." One wonders how Luther would have spoken if he had lived in a country ruled by a queen. In spite of the reservations that one may have about Luther's assertions, he makes a serious effort to apply biblical teachings, historical lessons, and what appears to him to be common sense, to this question:

> As a creature of God, a woman is to be looked upon with reverence. For she was created to be around the man, to care for children and to bring them up in an honest and godly way, and to be subject to the man. Men, on the other hand, are commanded to govern and have the rule over women and the rest of the household. But if a woman forsakes her office and assumes authority over her husband, she is no longer doing her own work, for which she was created, but a work that comes from her own fault and from evil. For God did not create this sex for ruling, and therefore they never rule successfully.
>
> In opposition to this one could cite the histories about the Amazons, celebrated by Greek writers. They are said to have exercised authority and to have waged war. For my part, however, I believe that what is said of them is a fable. The Ethiopians select women as both kings and princes, as is their custom; thus Candace, the queen of Ethiopia, is mentioned in the Book of Acts (Acts 8:27). But this is a foolish thing to do, as foolish princes are often put in charge of a kingdom. Never has there been divine permission for a woman to rule. Of course, it can happen that she is put into the place of the king and of the

[113]LC IV, 19-20, in Tappert, 438-439; italics added.

[114]LC I, 150, in Tappert, 385.

> kingdom; but then she always has a senate of leading men, by whose counsel everything should be administered. Therefore even though a woman may occupy the king's place, this does not confirm the right of women to rule. For the text is clear (Gen. 3:16): "You shall be under the power of your husband, and he shall rule over you." The woman was created for her special purpose, namely, to use prudence and reason in the rearing of children. For everyone functions most efficiently in that for which he was created. A woman can handle a child better with her little finger than a man can with both fists. Therefore let everyone remain in that work to which he has been called and ordained by God.[115]

The major theological question raised by Luther's treatment is whether it is legitimate to use biblical teachings about wives being under the authority of their husbands to prove that women should never rule in society at large. Changing social conditions have made it necessary for theologians to reexamine these teachings, and it is no longer as clear as it once seemed that such an application is proper. Luther's conclusions on this matter have not been formally adopted as the public doctrine of the Lutheran church.

4. Godly order in the family

a) Husband and wife

That God desires people to be in ordered relationships in society at large is also reflected in His will for the family, in relationships between husband and wife, and parents and children. Here the New Testament teaches that the husband is like God with respect to being the head of the wife, and he is called upon to exercise loving authority:

> I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man. [1 Cor. 11:3]
>
> Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. . . . Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. . . . [Eph. 5:22-23]
>
> Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. [Col. 3:18-19]
>
> Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands . . . . For this is the way the holy women of the past . . . were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. [1 Peter 3:1, 5-6]
>
> [Young women should be trained] to be subject to their husbands. . . . [Titus 2:5]

[115] *LW*, 15:130-131.

The authority of the husband over the wife was widely acknowledged also in Old Testament times. King Xerxes "sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language, proclaiming in each people's tongue that every man should be ruler over his own household" (Esther 1:22).

The relationship between husband and wife is ordered, not reciprocal, as if husband and wife could interchange their identities. "According to the order of creation, God assigned individual identities to each sex. He 'from the beginning, made them male and female' (Matt. 19:4). The identities and functions of each are not interchangeable; they must remain distinct."[116]

The authority that man has over woman is part of God's created order rather than a consequence of sin, "for Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Tim. 2:13); "neither was man created for woman, but woman for man" (1 Cor. 11:9). Although the account of creation says little about how authority was expressed before sin corrupted it, most interpreters agree that it was an exercise of authority for Adam to name the animals and the woman (Gen. 2:20, 23). The CTCR, in its report "Women in the Church," agrees that the subordination of woman to man began at creation rather than at the fall:

> When the New Testament talks about the origin of the subordination of woman to man, it does so on the basis of Genesis 2 and not on the basis of Genesis 3. The foundation for this teaching is not the "curse" of the fall but the original purpose of God in creation. Genesis 3 describes the disruption and distortion of the order of creation brought about by the fall into sin. The "curse" pronounced in Gen. 3:16 ["Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you"] does not institute subordination as such, but it does make this relationship irksome for both parties. Man was woman's head from the first moment of her creation, but after the fall the will to self-assertion distorts this relationship into domination and/or independence.[117]

See also the following resolution from the 1965 Convention of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod:

> On the basis of 1 Cor. 14: 34, 35 and 1 Tim. 2:11-15 we hold that God forbids women publicly to preach and teach the Word to men and to hold any office or vote in the church where this involves exercising authority over men with respect to the public administration of the Office of the Keys. We regard this principle as of binding force also today because 1 Tim. 2:11-15 refers to what God established at creation. In Gal. 3:28 St. Paul speaks of the redeemed

[116]"Women in the Church," 21.

[117]"Women in the Church," 24; bold original. The report includes further helpful comments on this topic (see pp. 21-27).

> children of God and their blessed relationship with Christ and with one another. This blessed relationship through faith does not cancel the order God has established at the time of creation but sanctifies and hallows it.[118]

Compare also the conclusion of another CTCR report: "The intent of the words to Timothy [1 Tim. 2:11-15] is to insist that God's order of creation was not invalidated by mankind's fall into sin."[119] This is also the conclusion of Pieper: "Scripture teaches that woman in her relation to man occupied a position of subordination even before the Fall."[120]

One passage of Scripture has often been seen as being either a contradiction or at least a significant challenge to the basic principle that wives should be subordinate to their husbands. Paul says that Christians should "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21). But to see this passage as a contradiction or even a significant challenge to the passages quoted above is to misinterpret the passage. There is now good evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls that shows that to "submit to one another" means that each member of a community is to be subject to the other members of the community that have authority over him. As we have remarked elsewhere:

> The New Testament describes the early Church as a communal society, which repudiated some common social distinctions in an attempt to promote unity. Therefore it is not surprising that the exhortation "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21), is often misunderstood as a call to a peculiar virtue of "mutual subjection" or "mutual submission." It is not clear how such a virtue would operate in society; solutions that reinterpret "be subject" as if it meant "love," "serve," or "honor" have, in effect, rewritten the passage to eliminate the difficulty, and those that suggest that the mutuality of subjection comes from taking turns obeying each other have difficulty with the examples of subjection or obedience that follow this verse (wives to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to masters).
>
> The correct interpretation of the verse hangs on the meaning of the Greek phrase υποτασσομενοι αλληλοις, "be subject to one another." The Greek leaves the identity of αλληλοις ("to one another") unspecified, and therefore has been misunderstood to mean that husband and wife are supposed to be subject *to each other*. The Hebrew parallels from 1QS 5:23 [a Dead Sea Scroll] at last provides the diagnostic tool that identifies who should be subject to whom when an entire community is exhorted to be subject to one another. The Hebrew phrase is להשמע הכול איש לרעהו הקטן לנדול, "They shall all be obedient to

[118]1965 Resolution 2-36 "To Adopt Statement on Woman Suffrage in the Church" (1965 *Convention Proceedings*, 103).

[119]"Woman Suffrage in the Church," A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1968), 9.

[120]Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 1:524.

one another; the lower one (in rank being obedient) to the higher one (in rank)." The identity of איש לרעהו ("to one another") is specified by הקטן לגדול ("the lower one [in rank being obedient] to the higher one [in rank]"). This shows that when an entire community is exhorted to be subject or subordinate or obedient to one another, each member is to be subordinate to any other member who occupies a higher rank of authority.

The "mutuality" of subordination, then, does not consist in the subordination of two members *to each other*, but rather in each member being subordinate to whoever is above him in authority. Though both the communal societies of Qumran and of the early Church promoted unity among their members by repudiating some common social distinctions, neither urged its members to disregard all traces of order.[121]

The CTCR came to a similar conclusion in an earlier report, based on theological reasoning rather than on extra-biblical evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls:

> The apostle's exhortation that husbands and wives "be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21) must not be interpreted to mean that there ceases to be hierarchy within marriage. . . . The Christian claim that a hierarchy of function—with wife subordinate to husband—is appropriate in marriage proceeds from the Christian view of male and female. Husband and wife are not interchangeable members of a contractual association. They are members of a body, a union. Their personhood is protected not by stressing that both are persons but by emphasizing the difference which is fundamental to the fellowship in which they come to know themselves as man and woman, in which, that is, they realize their identity. Such a union in love cannot come to fruition unless the different roles of husband and wife are recognized. Without a willingness to complement each other in this way, a power struggle must ensue whenever disputed matters arise. Without, that is, a recognition by both husband and wife of legitimate authority within their union, the permanence of that union is endangered. The insight of Ephesians 5 goes deepest after all: Permanence and hierarchy imply each other.[122]

b) Parents and children

Though the concept of the image of God supports ordered relationships, it also encourages such relationships to be grounded in unity. With respect to being parents, husband and wife *together* are like God, called upon to

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[121]Nathan Jastram, "Hierarchy at Qumran," in *Legal Texts & Legal Issues: Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Published in Honour of Joseph M. Baumgarten* (Vol. 23 of *Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah*, edited by M. Bernstein, F. García Martínez, and J. Kampen; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 360-362.

[122]"Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective," A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1981), 29-31.

exercise loving authority, and their children need to honor and obey *both* of them

> Honor your father and your mother. . . . [Ex. 20:12 (= Deut. 5:16; Matt. 15:4; 19:19; Mark 7:10; 10:19; Luke 18:20)]
>
> Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. [Prov. 1:8 (similarly Prov. 6:20; 23:22)]
>
> Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. [Eph. 6:1 (similarly Col. 3:20)]
>
> Anyone who attacks his father or his mother must be put to death. [Ex. 21:15]
>
> Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death. [Ex. 21:17 (similarly Lev. 20:9; Prov. 20:20)]
>
> Each of you must respect his mother and father. . . . [Lev. 19:3]
>
> If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother . . . all the men of his town shall stone him to death. [Deut. 21:18-21]
>
> Cursed is the man who dishonors his father or his mother. [Deut. 27:16]
>
> The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures. [Prov. 30:17]

Philo teaches that parents have divine authority to make oaths for their children, "for parents are likenesses and copies of the divine power."[123] He also suggests that parents are like God because of their fertility: "One set of enactments [i.e., the first table of the Ten Commandments according to Philo's system] begins with God the father and maker of all, and ends with parents, who copy His nature by begetting particular persons." When Philo debates why the commandment about honoring parents was placed in the midst of the other commandments, he says, "I believe the reason to be this: the very nature of parenthood places it on the borderline between the immortal and the mortal, the mortal because they [that is, parents] belong to [the class of] men and other animals through the perishability of the body; the immortal because the act of generation assimilates them to God, the parent of all."[124]

The Talmud also teaches that parents are like God, but ties the likeness to honor or authority rather than to fertility:

> Our Rabbis taught: It is said, *Honour thy father and thy mother* [Ex 20:12]; and it is also said, *Honour the Lord with thy substance* [Prv 3:9]; thus the Writ assimilates the honour due to parents to that of the Omnipresent. It is said, "*Ye*

[123]Philo, *Special Laws*, 2:2.

[124]Philo, *Decalogue* 50-51; 106-107.

> *shall fear every man his father, and his mother,"* and it is also said, *The Lord thy God thou shalt fear, and him thou shalt serve* [Dt 6:13]; thus the Writ assimilates the fear of parents to the fear of God. It is said, *And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death* [Ex 21:17]; and it is also said, *Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin* [Lv 24:15]; thus the Writ assimilates blessing [cursing] of parents to that of the Omnipresent.[125]

Luther calls parents God's representatives, with God-given authority, and explains how equality and distinction must both be affirmed for parents and their children:

> Young people must therefore be taught to revere their parents as God's representatives, and to remember that, however lowly, poor, feeble, and eccentric they may be, they are their own father and mother, given them by God. They are not to be deprived of their honor because of their ways or failings. Therefore, we are not to think of their persons, whatever they are, but of the will of God, who has created and ordained them to be our parents. In other respects, indeed, we are all equal in the sight of God, but among ourselves there must be this sort of inequality and proper distinctions. God therefore commands you to be careful to obey me as your father and to acknowledge my authority.[126]

Once again, the example of Jesus being obedient to His parents as a child illustrates that the God-pleasing ordered relationship between parents and children need have nothing to do with the comparative intrinsic value of the individuals involved ("Then he [Jesus] went down to Nazareth with them [Mary and Joseph] and was obedient to them" Luke 2:51).

5. Godly order in the church

Also within the church, in the company of those who have been renewed in the image of God, God has established ordered relationships. Indeed, that God gives certain people an office of authority in the church is well-attested in Scripture: "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority" (Heb. 13:17). The apostle Paul speaks of his own authority in terms that leave no doubt about its power, but at the same time stress its loving purpose: "This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down" (2 Cor. 13:10).

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[125]Tractate Kiddushin (Vol. 15 in the Soncino Babylonian Talmud), 30b; italics original.

[126]LC I, 108, in Tappert, 379-380.

a) The pastoral office

(1) Authority

Pastors, especially, occupy an office of authority in the church.[127] Two passages reveal this quite clearly:

> Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. [1 Peter 5:2-4]

> Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. [Acts 20:28]

In the first passage, pastors are described as "serving as overseers," and in the second they are called "overseers" who have been placed over a flock by the Holy Spirit and are responsible for watching over it. Furthermore, in the 1 Peter passage, they are admonished to do their work without "lording it over" the flock—an admonition that would have no force if authority were not part of their office.

(2) Representing Christ and participating in His work

In fact, what we have said concerning pastors, ordered relationship, and authority can be seen in these two passages when approached from another point of view. Pastors are like Christ; their person and work are characterized with the same nouns and verbs which characterize the person and work of Christ. Christ, the Good Shepherd (John 10:11),[128] tells Peter to shepherd His sheep (John 21:16); Peter, in turn, exhorts his fellow "elders" (1 Peter 5:1) to shepherd their flocks (1 Peter 5:2). Paul's admonition to the Ephesian "elders" (Acts 20:17) is virtually identical (Acts 20:28). The term "elders" in passages such as this is commonly understood to be a term designating holders of the pastoral office, because "elder," "overseer," and "shepherd" seem to be used virtually interchangeably in such passages:

> From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the *elders* of the church. . . . 'Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you *overseers*. Be *shepherds* of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. [Acts 20:17, 28, italics added]

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[127]James Voelz has been especially helpful for the following two paragraphs.

[128]Christ is also called the chief shepherd (1 Peter 5:4) and the great shepherd (Heb. 13:20).

> To the *elders* among you, I appeal as a fellow *elder*, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be *shepherds* of God's flock that is under your care, serving as *overseers*. . . . [1 Peter 5:1-2, italics added]

Pastors participate in Christ's work, so that their work is His work. Luther says in his Large Catechism, "To be baptized in God's name is to be baptized not by men but by God himself. Although it is performed by men's hands, it is nevertheless truly God's own act."[129] Again, in his explanation of Confession and Absolution in the Small Catechism he says: ". . .we receive absolution, that is forgiveness, from the pastor as from God himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven."[130] This understanding is behind the form of questioning the pastor is to use before pronouncing the Absolution: "Do you believe that this forgiveness is the forgiveness of God?"[131] Because they have been given their authority by God, and because they participate with him in His work, they are representatives of God with respect to leading the flock over which they have been placed. For this reason, prophets were sometimes likened to God in the Old Testament (see discussion on pp. 53–54).

(3) Necessary qualifications

One of the distinctions that God teaches in His Word is that the position of leading His flock is not open to all who desire it, as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram learned to their destruction. In their attempt to take over leadership of the congregation, they say to Moses and Aaron, "You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the Lord's assembly?" (Num. 16:3). They attempted to use the priesthood of all believers against the ordered relationships God had instituted in the church.

This is illegitimate for at least three reasons, two of which we mention here, and one in the following section. First, God has required certain qualifications of those who would be leaders (see 1 Tim. 3:1-7), qualifications that are not universally shared by the priesthood of all believers. Second, only those who have specifically been called by God to occupy the office can do so according to His will.

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[129]LC IV, 10, in Tappert, 437.

[130]SC V, 16, in Tappert, 349-350.

[131]SC V, 27, in Tappert, 351.

One necessary qualification for entry into the office of authority in the church is specifically the sex of the candidate. Scripture excludes women from entering this office, saying, "As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says" (1 Cor. 14:33-34); and again, "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent" (1 Tim. 2:11-12). These passages deserve detailed study beyond what is possible in this document. Nevertheless they do show that the Bible teaches sexual distinctions are to be maintained with respect to the office of authority in the church.

It has become common in many Christian denominations to deny that sexual distinctions should be maintained with respect to the office of authority in the church. The prevailing attitude is well exemplified by the comments of former President Jimmy Carter contained in the following news report:

> Former President Jimmy Carter—a Sunday school teacher since he was 18—said he was cutting ties with the Southern Baptist Convention because he finds it increasingly "rigid," particularly toward women. . . . Carter said he had been feeling "increasingly uncomfortable and somewhat excluded" from the church for years. The final straw came in June, when the group declared that women should no longer serve as pastors. . . . "I'm familiar with the verses they have quoted about wives being subjugated to their husbands," said Carter, 76. "In my opinion, this is a distortion of Scripture. I personally feel the Bible says all people are equal in the eyes of God. I personally feel that women should play an absolutely equal role in service of Christ in the church."[132]

(4) *Opera ad extra* and *opera ad intra,* so to speak

To return to a concept that has helped clarify the unity and distinction of the three persons of the Trinity, and that also has been used in this paper to clarify the unity and distinction of the two sexes of man, one could say that also in the church various unities and distinctions can be clarified by distinguishing between "works to the outside," *opera ad extra,* and "works to the inside," *opera ad intra.* To apply these distinctions to the church is complex because the church is more than one unity. As the bride of Christ, it is united with him in a spiritual marriage and rules over the rest of the world as a unity with him. In their work to the outside (*opera ad extra,* so to speak), there is no distinction between Christ and His bride:

> "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." The seventy-two returned with joy and

[132]Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Sat., Oct. 21, 2000.

> said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you." [Luke 10:16-20].
>
> Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. [Rev. 20:6]
>
> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. [1 Peter 2:9]

The latter quotations show that the teaching of the priesthood of all believers should be related to the unity that all believers have with Christ in their work directed to the rest of the world. Like husband and wife who share dominion over the visible creation, Christ and His bride the church share in their dominion over the rest of the world, a dominion characterized by declaring the praises of God. This in no way negates the distinction between Christ and His churchly bride when their relationship with each other is under consideration; he alone is Savior, and His churchly bride alone receives His gift of salvation. On this level, the unity and distinction is between Christ and the entire church, and there is no consideration of distinctions *within* the church. This is the picture taught in the well-known passage about Christ and the church:

> Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. . . . Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. . . . "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. [Eph. 5:23-32]

On another level, however, the church itself is a unity of shepherd and flock, pastor and laity. People speak of a pastor being "married" to his congregation, or of the "honeymoon period" when a pastor accepts a call to a new congregation. On this level the pastor and laity are united in their relationship outside themselves (*opera ad extra*, so to speak), to Christ and the world, but distinct in their relationship within themselves (*opera ad intra*, so to speak), as pastor and laity. Here is where the passages belong that speak of the distinctive office that pastors have within the church, and the passages that treat pastors as representatives of Christ to the laity.

The dual role of a pastor, as a unity with his congregation and as a distinct office holder who represents Christ to the congregation, is pictured visibly in the liturgy. The pastor turns toward the altar to pray in the name

of the congregation, and his prayers are the prayers of the united church. But when he turns toward the congregation to preach Christ's word or to distribute the sacraments, he fulfills his distinct office within the church by representing Christ to the congregation. It is only when the two levels of unities and distinctions in the church are mixed together that the priesthood of all believers appears to clash with the distinct office of the pastor. This is the third reason why it is illegitimate to use the priesthood of all believers against the ordered relationships that God has established for His church. (For the other two reasons, see the discussion in the preceding section).

If one restricts his consideration of the unities and distinctions of the church to the first level, that the church and Christ are united in marriage, there is no discernable reason for the biblical teaching that women should not be pastors, since men and women together compose the church. If, however, one considers also the second level of unities and distinctions, that pastors and laity are united in one church as a shepherd with his flock, then there is a discernable reason for the teaching that women should not be pastors, since the shepherd represents Christ and occupies an office of authority within the church.

Can women represent Christ as shepherds of His flock? Fritz Zerbst poses the following dilemma: "In this matter of woman and the office, therefore, it is necessary to determine whether or not the office which proclaims the Word and administers the Sacraments can be conferred upon woman without contradiction of the message which the church proclaims with regard to the position assigned to woman in creation."[133] Zerbst concludes that it is not possible for women to hold the office of Word and Sacrament without contradicting the church's message.

Similar conclusions have been reached by Roman Catholic theologians, and may provide fertile ground for future ecumenical discussions. Laying aside for a moment the supposed sacramental nature of the priesthood, the following reasoning of Bonaventura is congruent with the reasoning proposed above:

> The reason for this [that women should not be priests] is not so much the church's decision as the non-congruity of priesthood with the female sex. In this sacrament the person who is ordained signifies Christ as mediator. Because this mediator existed only in the male sex, He can be signified only through the male sex. In consequence, only men have the possibility of receiving priestly ordination, since they alone can naturally represent and

[133]Fritz Zerbst, *The Office of Woman in the Church: A Study in Practical Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), 109.

> actually carry the sign of the mediator by receiving the sacramental character.[134]

Thomas Aquinas uses similar reasoning to explain why the ordination of a serf was valid while the ordination of a woman was invalid, even though both ordinations were judged to be unlawful at the time. Laying aside, again, the supposed sacramental character of the priesthood, notice the similar reasoning:

> It must be said that sacramental signs [e.g. ordination] represent by natural likeness. Woman has subjection from nature, the serf has not. Therefore the case is not similar. . . . The nature of the sacrament requires certain properties in a person who receives it, the lack of which impedes the reception, both of the sacrament as such (*sacramentum*) and its effects (*res sacramenti*). Other properties are required, not by the nature of the sacrament, but by law in conformity with the excellence of the sacrament, but not its effects. Consequently, the male sex is indispensable not only to fulfill the second group of requirements, but also the first. Therefore, even if a woman were to go through all the ceremonies connected with ordination, she would not thereby receive the sacrament of priesthood. Since a sacrament is a sign, the execution of a sacrament requires not only the thing (*res*), but the signification of the thing (*significatio rei*). This is exemplified by the necessity of a sick person to signify the need of healing in the sacrament of extreme unction. Because woman is in a state of subjection, it is impossible to signify eminence of rank through the female sex. Consequently, a woman cannot receive the sacrament of priesthood. . . . Prophecy is not a sacrament, but a gift of God. Therefore it does not need any symbolism, but only charismatic actualization. Because woman does not differ from man in the reality of the soul, and sometimes a woman is better in her soul than many men are, she may well receive the gift of prophecy and other like gifts, but she cannot receive priestly ordination.[135]

The same reasoning could be used to explain why it may be valid for laymen, but not laywomen, to help with the distribution of the Lord's Supper, since men can signify realities that women cannot. On the other hand, the latter portion of the quotation helps to explain how God can approve of women prophetesses in the Bible without approving of women pastors. Douglass' summary of Calvin explains how also Calvin could speak of prophetesses and other women with authority in the Bible as not invalidating the general rule that women should not have authority over men:

> Calvin then briefly refers to the objection that could be made that Deborah and other women are said by Scripture to have been placed in authority to rule

[134]Bonaventura, *Sententiarum* 4.25.2.1, in Børresen, *The Image of God*, 220.

[135]Aquinas, *Supplementum* 39.1.3, in Børresen, *The Image of God*, 225-226.

> over the people "by the command of God." His response is "easy": "the common polity [governance] to which God wishes us to be bound is not to be overturned by the extraordinary acts of God" [*Com. I Tim. 2:11*]. Calvin admits that women have held offices of prophesying and teaching, and that they were called to them by the Spirit of God who is "free from all law. But because this action is extraordinary, it is not in opposition to continuing and customary polity [governance]" [*Com. I Tim. 2:11*]. Calvin also considers the fact that subjection does not necessarily preclude authority to teach, since prophets and teachers are subject to kings and other magistrates. But he thinks woman's situation is different because "by nature (that is, by the ordinary law of God) she is born to obey." . . . Therefore it would be like a mixing of heaven and earth if women were to seize for themselves the right to teach. Paul commands them to be silent, to confine themselves to their own rank [*Com. I Tim. 2:11*].[136]

b) Voting in the church

(1) An unchanging principle

Although sexual distinctions in the church are being eradicated in many Christian denominations, there has been consistent support within the LCMS to maintain these distinctions. The basic principle that women should not have authority over men in the church has been affirmed again and again by the synod in convention:

> It is a general principle of the Holy Scripture that woman should not usurp authority over men in the home and in the church.[137]

> The committee [on woman's suffrage] . . . emphatically warns against any anti-Scriptural practice whereby the headship of man to woman in the affairs of the church would be surrendered.[138]

> God forbids women publicly to preach and teach the Word to men and to hold any office or vote in the church where this involves exercising authority over men with respect to the public administration of the Office of the Keys.[139]

> When it comes to the matter of holding office in church, the Detroit convention already resolved that women are not to hold any such offices in the congregation as directly involve women in "the public administration of the Office of the Keys," (*Proceedings*, p. 103; Res. 2-36). This stricture would apply specifically to the pastoral office and membership on the board of elders. To this point we would need to add the observation that *some offices in the*

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[136]Jane Douglass, "The Image of God in Women as Seen by Luther and Calvin," in Børresen, *The Image of God*, 256-257.

[137]1953 Resolution 27 "Woman Suffrage in the Church" (1953 *Convention Proceedings*, 483-484).

[138]"Report of the Committee on Woman's Suffrage" (1956 *Convention Workbook*, 570).

[139]1965 Resolution 2-36 "To Adopt Statement on Woman Suffrage in the Church" (1965 *Convention Proceedings*, 103).

congregation implicitly expect the exercise of authority over others, including men. Holding such offices might indeed be in violation of what has been called the order of creation or of preservation.[140]

(2) A changed application

In its earlier years, the synod was convinced that the basic principle that women should not have authority over men meant that it was contrary to God's word for woman to vote in congregational meetings or to occupy the pastoral office or perform its distinctive functions, since such activities were considered to be exercises of authority. When the LCMS voted to allow women suffrage,[141] some interpreted that as an indication that the church no longer supported the basic principle that women should not have authority over men, and openly wondered when the synod would also allow women into the pastoral office. Both before and after the suffrage vote, however, the CTCR explicitly reaffirmed the basic principle that women should not have authority over men, and suggested that the critical question was how to apply that unchanging principle to particular situations. If suffrage is viewed as an opportunity for service rather than as an exercise of authority, then the principle that women should not have authority over men does not apply to the question of whether women should vote:

> The basic recommendation of the commission is forwarded to the convention on the fundamental assumption that both the exercise of the franchise and the holding of church office, whether by men or women, are to be viewed as opportunities for service rather than occasions for an insistence on individual rights. . . . It is also evident from the definition of the franchise that it does not give to those who have the right of suffrage the power to lord it over others. . . . We would need to add the observation that some offices in the congregation implicitly expect the exercise of authority over others, including men. Holding such offices might indeed be in violation of what has been called the order of creation or of preservation.[142]

> The historical fact that in the past the Synod restricted woman suffrage does not mean that the 1969 report or the present one rests on a changed understanding of Scriptural authority or the principle of the subordination of women in the church. To a greater extent what is reflected is a changed understanding of the nature and function of the franchise as practiced in the

[140]"Women in the Church," 10; italics added.

[141]1969 Resolution 2-17 "To Grant Woman Suffrage and Board Membership" (1969 *Convention Proceedings*, 158).

[142]"Woman Suffrage in the Church," 3, 10.

contemporary congregation. See 1972 opinion of the CTCR on "Woman Suffrage," 1973 Convention Workbook, pp. 37-38.[143]

Likewise, the Commission on Constitutional Matters reaffirmed the basic principle by suggesting the following wording for congregational constitutions and bylaws, which is here reproduced with bold font added for emphasis and with the original footnotes italicized in brackets:

> Privileges of Women: Women who have reached the age of *[the age given shall be at least the majority age established by state law]* may hold voting membership in the congregation and serve as officers and as members of boards and committees as long as these positions are not directly involved in the specific functions of the pastoral office (preaching, the public administration of the sacraments, church discipline) **and as long as this service does not violate the order of creation (usurping authority over men).** Accordingly, they shall not serve as pastor, as a member of *[here shall be listed the board of elders or corresponding board directly involved in the functions of the pastoral office]* as chairman or vice-chairman of the congregation, or as chairman of *[here the congregation may list at its discretion those major policy and decision-making boards or standing committees, if any, whose chairmanship the congregation might wish to restrict to men].*[144]

The synod itself explicitly denied that when it changed its position on women voting that it also changed its commitment to the basic principle that women should not exercise authority over men:

> We therefore conclude that the Synod itself and the congregations of the Synod are at liberty to alter their policies and practices in regard to women's involvement in the work of the church according to these declarations, provided the polity developed conforms to the general Scriptural principles that women neither hold the pastoral office *nor "exercise authority over men."*[145]

c) Current controversies

It is not surprising that the changed application of the principle has provoked controversy within the LCMS, leading some pastors to file formal protests and leading various conventions to call for further study. The CTCR found itself in the midst of the controversy. In its 1994 report, "The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices," a divided CTCR treated the authority that women are forbidden to have over men as no more and no less than the authority that pastors have in their "authoritative public teaching office in the church." According to this

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[143]"Women in the Church," 44, footnote 64.

[144]1971 *Convention Workbook*, 244.

[145]1969 Resolution 2-17 "To Grant Woman Suffrage and Board Membership" (1969 *Convention Proceedings*, p. 158), italics added.

understanding, the "*only* stricture," the *only* "Scriptural restriction" on women's service in the church, is that women should not perform "the distinctive functions of the pastoral office":

> In keeping with what the Scriptures teach about the service of women with respect to the pastoral office, women may not assume responsibility for or carry out in behalf of the congregation (that is *"publicly"*), and in the stead of Christ, those functions in the local congregation that would involve them in the *exercise of authority inherent in this authoritative public teaching office in the church. This remains the only stricture.* . . . If the duties prescribed for the offices of chairman and vice chairman in the congregation do not allow for the assumption of the *distinctive functions of the pastoral office*, women are free to hold this office *without any Scriptural restriction.* . . .[146]

From the perspective of our current study, the preceding statement replaces a basic principle with one of its applications. The basic biblical principle that women should not have authority over men is replaced with one application of that principle, that women should not become pastors. Once the basic principle has been replaced with one of its applications, then it becomes possible to deny the basic principle in other applications, so that women can have authority over men in the church as chairman of the congregation as long as they do not do so as pastor of the congregation. This approach invalidates any meaningful debate on women suffrage in the church. Whatever suffrage is, it is not an exercise of pastoral authority, and hence, according to this approach, it is not prohibited to women in Scripture. The disadvantage of such a "solution" is that it brings into question whether there is one basic principle that governs not only the male pastorate but also male headship within the family.

Because this move by the CTCR not only changes some applications of a basic principle, but also brings into doubt the basic principle itself, the synodical president objected to the report, saying that it "suggests a modification in the present position of the Synod."[147] The members of the CTCR who were theological professors, four from the seminaries and one from Concordia Irvine, also objected to the report, publishing their own minority report that faulted the majority report for not adequately addressing the "order of creation," including the basic principle that

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[146]"The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices," A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, in *The Reporter* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, December 1994), italics added. Also published in the 1995 *Convention Workbook*, 310-311.

[147]"Letter on CTCR Report from Synod President A. L. Barry," in *The Reporter* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, December 1994).

women should not exercise authority over men.[148] The next synodical convention, in 1995, saw a flurry of overtures objecting to the report and calling for the CTCR to be disbanded. In the end, the synod voted to continue the CTCR but directed it to review its procedures and to continue studying the question. Specifically, it asked that a comprehensive study be conducted on the Scriptural relationship of man and woman, including the doctrine of creation in the image of God, its implications for dominion and subordination, and its application to the service of women in the church, including suffrage and ordination.[149]

The executive committee of the CTCR responded to the minority report by publishing its "Response to the Dissenting Opinion on *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices.*"[150] Two aspects of the response are particularly interesting for the implications they have for the present study. To support the teaching that the authority forbidden to women is no more and no less than the authority of the pastoral office, the "Response" says:

> The CTCR's 1985 report *[Women in the Church]* also discusses the term *authentein* and its context in 1 Timothy 2, concluding that "the authority forbidden women here is that of the pastoral office" (p. 35). Do the signers of the minority report believe that this passage prohibits women from exercising *any and all* authority over men? If so, what implications does this have, e.g., for questions such as woman suffrage (not only in the church, but also in society)? The questions raised in this section of the minority report have profound implications for the position on the role of women in the church which the Synod has taken since 1969.[151]

As further support for the teaching that the authority forbidden to women is no more and no less than the authority of the pastoral office, the "Response" includes as an appendix the 1969 Resolution 2-17 "To Grant Woman Suffrage and Board Membership," which includes the following statement: "Those statements of Scripture which direct women to keep silence in the church and which prohibit them to teach and to exercise authority over men, we understand to mean that women ought not to hold

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[148]"Dissenting Opinion on Women in Congregational Offices," in *The Reporter* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, December 1994). Also published in the 1995 *Convention Workbook*, 312-313.

[149]1995 Resolution 3-10 "To Prepare a Comprehensive Study of the Scriptural Relationship of Man and Woman" (1995 *Convention Proceedings*, 123-124).

[150]1995 *Convention Workbook*, 314-317.

[151]1995 *Convention Workbook*, 315; italics original.

the pastoral office or serve in any other capacity involving the distinctive functions of this office."[152]

One reason why such support appears weak to some members of the church is that the quotations above are used in a way that fails to distinguish between *simple* statements and *exclusive* statements. While it is true that 1 Timothy 2 teaches that women should not exercise the authority of the pastoral office (simple statement), it need not follow that that is the *only* authority women should not exercise (exclusive statement). Thus when phrases like "this remains the *only* stricture," or "without *any* Scriptural restriction," are used in the quotation cited earlier from "The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices," the report goes beyond previous synodical resolutions and commended studies. It effectively short-circuits any meaningful theological discussion about the appropriateness of any role for women in the church apart from the role of pastor. Authority and the pastoral office are certainly *linked* in 1 Timothy 2, but they are not *equated,* to the exclusion of other links. Indeed, the reason given for the basic principle about authority in 1 Timothy 2 is that Adam was formed first, and then Eve. Surely the authority that Adam had over Eve *was not exclusively or even primarily pastoral, but marital.* This means that the principle that women should not exercise authority over men cannot be restricted exclusively to the pastoral office. Thus it is possible to agree with the simple statement of the synodical resolution and the 1985 CTCR report "Women in the Church," that 1 Timothy 2 means women should not be pastors, without agreeing with the "Response" that that is *all* that it means.

Second, the "Response" shows a troubling shift in the understanding of women suffrage and its relationship to the principle that women should not exercise authority over men. As noted above, the 1968 CTCR study on women suffrage was careful to view suffrage as an opportunity for service rather than as an exercise of authority, and *therefore* found no Scriptural prohibition against women voting. The "Response," however, views suffrage as an exercise of authority, and *therefore* uses the 1969 decision for women suffrage as support for teaching that women may have authority over men in the church as long as the authority is not pastoral. It is easy to see why many in the LCMS have called for a comprehensive study that would resolve the mixed messages they have received. What is debatable is whether it is still possible, in view of the current controversies, for the church to produce a comprehensive study that not only resolves these issues but also leads to a consensus on both the basic principle itself and on its applications to church life.

[152] 1995 *Convention Workbook,* 316.

The present study does not claim to answer the many specific questions that have been raised about the role of women in the church. It does, however, maintain that there are legitimate reasons at least *to discuss* whether various roles violate the basic principle that women should not have authority over men, or to discuss how the basic principle should be applied to various situations. It would be far simpler to assert that such questions are off the table because the *only* biblical restriction is that women should not be pastors. The problem is that such an assertion is ultimately impossible to support. Nor is it accurate to caricature those who believe that there is a basic principle that women should not have authority over men as believing that women should *never* have *any* authority over men, as does the "Response" when it asks, "Do the signers of the minority report believe that this passage prohibits women from exercising *any and all* authority over men?" The Bible clearly shows that some women have exercised some authority over some men in some situations by God's command. The actual question is whether women can exercise God-pleasing authority in this or that case. Likewise, the question is not whether women can *ever* represent Christ as His image to others. Both male and female are created in the image of God, and represent him to others in various ways. The actual question is whether women can represent Christ as His image in this or that aspect, in this or that relation. These are the careful considerations that must be part of studies that will truly help the church.

d) Conclusion

Having briefly considered the current controversies surrounding the service of women in the church, it is now possible to suggest a contribution that a proper understanding of the image of God can bring to the questions. One of the original questions posed in the introduction to this study asked, "*In what way* is the image of God linked to sexual distinctions?" This final subsection of the study, "Godly order in the church," cites Scripture passages, Confessional writings, and a small sampling of theologians to show that *with respect to the exercise of God-given authority within the church, the sex of the individual is one of the factors that determine whether he may be like God* ***with respect to leading the congregation at large.*** With respect to other activities of the universal priesthood of all believers, such as showing mercy, living a holy life, or teaching children, the sex of the individual who performs such God-pleasing activities is irrelevant. Although this conclusion does not answer all the questions that are being asked in the church, it does set a basic foundation from which other questions may be approached.

Nothing in the doctrine of the image of God contradicts this teaching from Scripture. Indeed, to understand the image of God as being like God in various ways helps to illuminate how there can be ordered relationships between distinct individuals and offices within a united body such as the Christian church. *A proper understanding of the image of God embraces both the ordered distinctions between, and the unity of, the people of God, whether in society at large, the family, or the church. It contributes toward an understanding that love and order are not mutually exclusive, even though love unites and order distinguishes. It also carries connotations of loving relationships based on respect for the worth of others, and the implication of being united in service to God.*

CONCLUSION

This study began with four goals. The first was to define the image of God as it is taught in Scripture. After considering the relevant Scriptural texts and the contributions of many scholars who have studied these texts, the conclusion is that the image of God is equivalent to the likeness of God, that is, to be like God. Because people can be like God in some ways and unlike him in others, the Bible can affirm and deny that the same groups of people are the image of God, depending on the specific context.

The second goal was to establish the relevance of the image of God to questions about the distinction between male and female. If the image of God is defined solely in terms of righteousness, then it is irrelevant for questions about sexual distinctions because in baptism, "there is neither . . . male nor female" (Gal. 3:28). On the other hand, if the preceding conclusion about the broadness of the image of God is correct, then the image of God embraces not only righteousness, but also a wide variety of likenesses that God bestows upon people. Distinctions can be made between the likeness one person has over against the likeness another person has, even though both people are united as the one body of Christ. It is *in this way* that the image of God is relevant to sexual distinctions.

The third goal was to consider the implications of the unity and distinction in God for those who are created in His image. Once again, if the image of God is defined solely in terms of righteousness, then the only attribute of God that would have any implications for those who are created in His image would be His righteousness. But if the image of God embraces the entire breadth of being like God in various ways, then other aspects of the Trinity also become patterns to be reflected in those who are created in His image. This study concludes that the mystery of the unity of distinct persons in the Trinity, and of the equality they share within an ordered relationship, is reflected in the unity of man who is male and female. Equality and order are not mutually exclusive terms, but may be

applied to different aspects of a single relationship. Nor need true unity be destroyed by radical distinctions of order, as shown by the personal union of the two natures in Christ.

The final goal was to examine whether the Scriptural guidelines for ordered relationships between men and women depend originally on God's creative design rather than merely on social custom, which might be misguided, time-bound, or even sinful. If it could be shown that the image of God is not compatible with ordered relationships, but rather demands egalitarianism, then a strong case could be made for rejecting the Scriptural texts that speak of ordered relationships between men and women, in favor of pursuing more egalitarian goals. On the contrary, the conclusion of this study is that the image of God is compatible with ordered relationships, and indeed, that the exercise of loving authority or submission to authority is one way in which people who are created in the image of God show that they are like him. To see the exercise of loving authority as being compatible with the image of God leads to the conclusion that love and order are not mutually exclusive terms, but are intended by God to be found in unison.

As God's children seek to live as the image of God, then, they do so with a sense of humble awe that they have been created to be like God to live according to His will, and to be His representatives on earth. As they learn more about their Creator, they learn more about themselves, and seek to become more like God. One aspect of becoming more like God, the one with which this study is most directly concerned, is learning how to be a unified body composed of distinct members, how to live so that ordered relationships are knit together with love and equality, to learn what it means to be created as "man, male and female." Only when this is learned will men and women rediscover the great joy that God intended for their relationships with each other, with the rest of creation, and most of all with their Creator.