“Grant, Almighty God, since we do not cease to provoke you by our sins that we may at length consider our wretched condition unless you govern us by your Spirit and subject us to yourself into obedience. And may we so desire to be reconciled to you that we may not flatter ourselves, but being altogether humbled and emptied of self, may we fly to your mercy with a true feeling of piety. And so find what is prepared for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.”

Another argument that the creationist advances is that its position explains better the sudden rise of geniuses than any other position, and, indeed, it is true that you find people who suddenly appears gifted in a very special way, sometimes issuing from parents whose achievements are undistinguished. We are not sufficiently aware of the ways in which excellency arises to be able to say very much on that subject. And how various genes may function together in the constitution of a new person is something that remains unexplored as far as our scientific understanding is concerned. Therefore, the explanation that a genius is a person that is suddenly gifted by God in a tremendous manner, as in the case of Moses, does not demand a creationist view, although the creationist view can properly explain it in terms of its own position.

Sometimes an argument is advanced that the creationist view explains better the sinlessness of Christ than the traducian view. But here the argument appears to me to be faulty because in any case in the birth of Christ, there is a supernatural element that is involved and Christ was supernaturally protected even as to His human nature from any stain of sin, not because of the process of natural descendants but precisely because the Holy Spirit intervened to safeguard the human nature of Christ from any stain of sin either in terms of the guilt of the Adamic race or in terms of the corruption that attaches to humanity from the start of its life. Since we have a miracle, therefore, in any case here, one
cannot insist that one position accords better than the other. The explanation of the nature of the miracle may differ slightly, but there is no argument that is significant to favor one or the other position.

One argument that is fairly significant is that the principle of the unity of the soul is maintained more strongly in the creationist view than in the traducian. The soul is not a divisible quantity, and therefore the question would arise, How does the soul originate and how can both father and mother have an input in relationship to the soul of their descendants? Here if you say only one of them is effective at this respect, it still remains that it is difficult to understand how the soul can proceed, whether it is by separation from mother or father and if it is asserted that both parents have a share in this, then you would have a combination at the level of the soul, which again can be understood readily in terms of the materiality of things but would not be understandable in terms of the spirituality of the soul. On this account, the traducian view has a difficulty because of its failure to give a proper account for the spirituality of the soul.

The creationist may have a certain latitude as to the time of the origination of a true human being. If body and soul are transmitted from the parents, then surely the time at which human life begins has to be conception, because after the conception the father has no further contact by which the soul might be imparted. And, therefore, a traducianist would have to say every human being that is conceived in the womb of the mother is not a lump of physical matter but is a true human being. This would have an impact on the question of the propriety or impropriety of abortion. The creationist on the other hand may assign various dates for the creation of the soul. It is not necessary to hold that it is implanted by God immediately upon conception. It is remarkable, however, that some of the people who have been more strongly advocates of a creationist view have also held that it is at conception that God creates the soul of newborn human beings. That is true particularly in the Roman Catholic Church. The great majority of Roman Catholic theologians are creationists, and there are certain affirmations of the popes which are not ex cathedra but which are made in encyclical letters and which would support that view also as being quasi of faith in the Roman Catholic Church.
Similarly, Reformed thinkers, who very commonly have advocated creationism, have also posited that this creation takes place not at some point in the pregnancy but at the very start of the conception of human beings. The creationist view was held very largely by the ancient Fathers, particularly Athanasius, and then it is generally presented by Reformed scholars and by the theologians of the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformed scholars have emphasized this particularly in relationship to the covenant principles and benefits of relationship with God of the parents, for there a special recognition is given to the unique value and significance of every new human being. The procreation is not simply something that proceeds without a particular action of God, but for each new human being there is a direct intervention of God who is the One who creates the soul.

Then the question arises, If that be so, how then is the corruption from the start of a human life be accounted for? I've just mentioned in discussing traducianism that it is not desirable to say that the soul is corrupted by contact with a corrupt body because that would imply a material origin for evil, and this is not a sound position in the Christian faith. What may be suggested here, and here I say suggested rather than posited because it is a matter that is under debate, is that it is by affiliation with the Adamic race that corruption enters into the human life by the permission of God. Here the soul’s created, certainly created pure, but by virtue of their connection with the race, then the burden of the sin of Adam falls to their share and as a result, therefore, the soul of the child is corrupted from the very beginning and sin is attached to the life even of a newborn, so that sin is not a development which occurs at some point in the consciousness of a human being, but it occurs at the very start by virtue of the sin of Adam of which we are all guilty. This matter will be discussed more fully when we discuss the difficult subject of original sin, but one can hold in advance the principles involved here, and they will be found again at the proper time.

It is not necessary to consider either creationists or traducianists to have violated any part of Scripture so that one position would have to be shunned and the other endorsed enthusiastically. There is a possibility of sound Christians holding one or the other view. It is interesting that Berkouwer, whose book I mentioned a moment ago, did in fact endorse traducianism, that which was rather surprising on the part of a man as thoroughly steeped in the Reformed view as he was when he wrote his book on God’s image and man. [The reference is to G. C. Berkouwer, Man: The
We do notice, however, in Berkouwer a tendency to distance himself somewhat from the traditional Reformed view, and this became more accentuated as time went on and is particularly found in his book on the doctrine of Holy Scripture.

We need to approach the very important subject of God’s image in humanity, and some of the books that I’ve mentioned earlier in dealing with theological anthropology show a special interest in this issue since even in the title you have the term “God’s image.” The distinguishing feature of humanity, according to the Scripture, is that humanity, Adam and Eve, were created in God’s image. And this appears already in Genesis 1, where God says in verse 26, “Let us create 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.” This was verse 26 and verse 27. “So God created man in His own image. In the image of God He created him, male and female He created them.” Here we have, therefore, two expressions, “image” and “likeness.” And we find echoes of both of these at other points in Scripture. The term “image” is found again in Genesis 5:3, where we read, “When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image, and he named him Seth.” And then again in Genesis 9:6, we have this statement that is made by God after the flood, we read, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God has God made man.” Then again we have the term “image” in 1 Corinthians 11:7, where we read that the man, here the male, is made in the image and is the glory of God. In Colossians 3:10, we read that we are renewed into the image of God in knowledge, and there are other passages where the word occurs, particularly in relationship to Christ Himself in Hebrews 1:3 where we read that Christ is the image and the express character of God, elevating Jesus Christ above all creation, as is the purpose of the author of Hebrews.

Now the word likeness also is found in a number of places. We found it in Genesis 5:1, the passage I just read, where again “image” and “likeness” are side by side. We find it again in Genesis 5:3, and we find it in James 3:9, where we read that with the tongue we praise God and with the tongue we curse human beings who are made in the image of God. James 3:9, “who are made in God’s likeness.” And so here we have a concept that is very basic for the whole of the Scripture and for our basic understanding of human nature. That which distinguishes humanity from all other forms
of creation, whether angelic, animal, or physical, is that peculiar distinguishing feature that humanity is presented as being in the image of God.

Incidentally, the passage of 1 Corinthians 11:7 might have been understood to apply this only to the male portion of humanity. But it is very clear that this is not the biblical outlook since in Genesis 1 it is stated, “Let us create man in our image, in our likeness. And so God created man in his image, male and female, he created them.” And then again the passage of Genesis 9 establishes that to murder a woman is also a murder, a sin against the image of God. The passage of James 3:9 refers to the wickedness of cursing human beings, male or female, and not merely those who are of the male type. Therefore, we would say that the image of God is the distinguishing characteristics of the whole of humanity, male and female, irrespective of sex or of age or of social class or of any other distinguishing elements that may be found within humanity.

In discussing this particular subject, theologians have been led to focus on certain special characteristics, in which some of them have seen the substance of the image of God to be lodged. I will enumerate a number of elements here, and my conclusion will be that rather than to be exclusive of others, a proper understanding of the total concept of God’s image is inclusive and relates probably to all of the characteristics that have been mentioned.

A first line of approach is to think that humanity physically is in the image of God, and this is at the root of the presentation, for instance, in art where God Himself is presented as having physical form that is like that of humanity. God appears, for instance, in the Sistine Chapel as creating Adam by His finger. He extends His finger, which moves on toward Adam, and God appears as a person of considerable age, an older man but full of vigor, and the resemblance, therefore, between God and Adam is to be seen as physical. We know from Scripture that God is a spirit, and He does not have ordinarily a physical form, although in theophanies He may appear in a guise of a physical person, as was the case in the theophany to Abraham, for instance, where we had the three guests that he received in chapter 18 of Genesis.

This is not to say that there is no reflection of divine perfections in the human body. One I think would be entitled to say that if there is one place where the supreme wisdom and astonishing resourcefulness of the Creator is made apparent in the physical
world, it is in the body of humanity. Our bodies are a very marvel of structure. Various functions which we have, like the function of seeing and hearing; extraordinarily wise and effective application of the principle of physics for the transmission of light and of sound. And those who make a special study of the human physiology and functioning are led to marvel at the exceptional correlation which is found in a human being and which gives us reason to recognize the special attention given there by God to this part of His creation. This is not to demean the significance of other elements of creation. The physical universe is a marvel; the constitution of the galaxies and the stars, the planets, the sun, and the satellites like the moon or the numerous satellites of Jupiter also is something that causes us to recognize the wisdom of God, the Creator. And vice versa in the microcausal, of the individual cell and atoms, we also recognize the wisdom of God. But perhaps in no place in all of creation is the marvel of divine wisdom made more apparent than even in the body of human beings and in the suitability of male and female in the total process of creation.

We would, therefore, not deny the reality of some reflection of the perfections of God in the physical structure of humanity. But we would also have to say that this is a peripheral element, rather than a central element in the consideration of God’s image in man. We need to be careful to avoid giving the impression of falling under the quip of Gaultier, who said, “God has created man in His image and man has returned the compliment ever since.” The image of God is something that goes far beyond our bodies, and there are elements which constitute the true nobility of humanity and which are not physical in nature.

Therefore we have a second line of approach in which some elements in the immaterial life of humanity, the elements launched in the soul of humanity can be seen to reflect certain perfections of God Himself, and first of all there are people who feel that the rational nature of humanity reflects the rational nature of God Himself who thinks and speaks. Indeed the rational nature of humanity is a very notable feature which is found from one end of the world to the other. A human being that is complete is a rational being. It is capable of forming concepts and of dealing with them in the way in which they are related and correlated to form a unity of thoughts.
This particular feature does reflect the supreme rationality of God. That same blessing is found also, as we can observe, in angelic creation. They, too, are rational creatures. They, too, are enabled by God at times to speak, and yet in humanity we find the presence of this characteristic in a way in which it is not found in animal creation. This is made apparent in the power of speech. I had a colleague in Gordon Institution who held that it is the power of speech that is the image of God in humanity. And the power to form concepts and to express this in articulate language is indeed something that is very remarkable, but this is also granted to angels as well as to human beings. Yet we need, I think, to recognize that even God Himself, the second person of the Trinity, is called Logos, the Word, and here indeed we have one of the magnificent perfections of God which finds its counterpart, its reflection, at the finite level in humanity, and there is no desire to restrict the appropriateness of recognizing rationality and the power to speak as an element in the image of God. But this element, notable as it is, does not exhaust the concept, and there are those who have pointed to the moral nature of humanity as being a reflection of the moral being of God. God is holy, He's righteous, He is the foundation of all morality. His nature and His will are supremely examples of that which is good and right in the moral sphere. This involves the power also to make decisions in view of motives, and God always makes decisions which are in perfect keeping with His own nature so that the propriety of any of His decisions can never be doubted.

In humanity the principle of a moral nature has been damaged by the incidence of sin, and this has darkened our perception of what is right and wrong, it has led us to act not always in keeping with our conscience which is dictating to us that we must do that which is right or that which we think is right and flee that which we think is wrong. Therefore the image of God at the level of our moral nature has indeed been very seriously damaged by the presence of sin in our lives. Nevertheless, the fact of having a moral nature is indeed a very notable reflection in humanity of the supreme morality of God Himself. Angels, incidentally, have also this same reflection in their being, for they too are moral beings, and those angels which are confirmed in holiness have a moral being that is completely submitted to the will of God. They are, therefore, the servants of God who never disobey His mandates. And wicked angels and Satan at their head have a moral nature, but they have resisted the will of God, and therefore they stand condemned and their moral nature has been abased and degraded by the presence and by the permanence and pervasive power of sin in their lives.
That pervasive power, which will not be overcome even in the eschaton, since there is no redemption that God has prepared for fallen angels.

Another element that is sometimes mentioned, an element that attaches especially to the soul, is the element of immortality, for God has given to humanity an existence that is permanent not only transient as long as the body lives, but there is an element in humanity that is prepared for eternal existence. The immortality that is supremely desirable is that which is accomplished and lived in the presence of God and in fellowship with Him. But even those who are not in fellowship with God do have an existence that is permanent, and therefore there is a sense in which immortality applies to the soul of human beings, whether they be in fellowship with God or not.

Angels also share in this aspect of the image of God, and so we need now to consider a fourth element in the soul, and that is spirituality; and human beings in being spiritual beings are in that respect also a reflection of God Himself who is a spirit. They are not pure spirits as God is, for they represent a combination of spirits and matter, but spirituality is one of the great advantages of humanity, and that too is shared by angelic existence. The elements, therefore, of the soul, which have been pointed to at times by those who have thought to explore the concept of the image of God, are shared alike by angelic creation. We need, therefore, to pursue further our investigation and see certain features which are not possessed by the angels and which are possessed by humanity.

One point that has been advanced, therefore, is that in the relationship of human beings to the nature of the creation and to nature around humanity there is something that reflects the image of God, and some scholars have thought that particularly it is the dominion that man has over created nature, which is the key of the concept of the image of God in humanity. We would have a pointer in this direction in Genesis 1:26, where, as I read earlier, God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let him 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 man definitely has been set as the head of the physical creation and as having a power of dominion over physical nature around him. This is a feature which does not appear to have been given in the same manner to angelic forms, although they may at times have an influence upon elements of
the physical creation by the special power of God. This dominion
over nature is not a feature that is so all encompassing that we
might be inclined to consider here that the whole of the image of
God consists in this. But surely the dominion which man is called
to exercise over creation does in some way reflect the supreme
authority and dominion that God possesses over everything that
exists, and at that point humanity as king and queen of creation
reflects the sovereignty of God over everything that He has called
into existence.

Another suggestion in the realm of relationship is that which has
been made particularly apparent in the great theology of Karl
Barth. In his third volume of the third section of his presentation,
volume 1, he discusses particularly the creation of humanity in
the image of God, and he places the essence of this image in a
relationship that humanity has and whereby husband and wife,
for instance, are made into one flesh so that particularly the
principle of personal relationship which is found in the institution
of marriage is seen as reflecting the personal relationship that
exists within the divine being between the three persons of the
Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And here, indeed, we have
again reference to the passage of Genesis where we read, “God
created man in his own image, in the image of God he created
him, male and female, he created them.” The male and female
relationship is seen here in immediate context with the passage
in which the term “image” is perhaps most strongly emphasized.
And similarly in Genesis 5:2, we read this, “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 Adam, man.” And so, once again, the sexual diversification,
particularly in relationship to its purpose for the institution of
marriage, is brought to the fall in an immediate context of the
term “the image of God.”

We need not take issue with Barth in recognizing that this
particular differentiation is part of the total concept and that there
is in the personal relationship that exists between human beings
and supremely between the closest union that exists in humanity,
the union of husband and wife, something that parallels the great
fellowship and communion that exists in the Godhead between
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We cannot help saying, however,
that in the union of marriage, the element of the number two is
foremost, while in the Trinity, it is the number three that needs
to be recognized. Therefore, we do not have a reflection of the
Trinitarian being of God in the union that marriage brings about.
And if people say, “Well, we have two in husband and wife, but when there is a child, now we have three.” But this would leave people who do not have progeny in some embarrassment, and it would raise questions concerning people who have more than one child. I would therefore say that the union of husband and wife in the great intimacy and closeness from person to person that is manifested there, especially in a home that is according to a pattern that God has established, does indeed reflect something of that personal union that exists between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But marriage is not in that sense a full reflection of the Trinity, and marriage is not the one way in which the image of God is reflected in humanity, and people who are single can very well reflect the image of God. This is surely true about Jesus Christ who in his human nature reflected perfectly the image of God as Adam or Eve singly must have done and yet He was not married and therefore the image of God cannot be seen to lie in the resemblance of marriage to the Trinity.

Some people have suggested that a dichotomous understanding of humanity does reflect the Trinity and it is there that the image of God is found in its substance. That, in my judgment, needs to be dismissed as an improper approach because precisely what we need is a union of three persons in one nature, and a dichotomous view, on the contrary, talks about the union of three natures or essences in the one person. Therefore, here we do not have a true analogy. It is precisely the reverse. What we might say is that the union of body and spirits may reflect something of the union of humanity and deity in the person of the incarnate Logos, but the presence of three substances, even if we accepted them, in the one nature of humanity would hardly be seen to be a reflection of God in humanity.

Another point that is brought to the fall is that it is in our moral likeness to God that the image of God resides. That is, when we are in moral perfection, there as human beings, we reflect the moral perfection of God Himself. The Roman Catholic Church particularly emphasized here a distinction between image of God that would relate to some metaphysical property of humanity and likeness to God which would reflect a moral concordance and reflection of the moral being of God and of His moral holiness. And surely for the image of God to be reflected in full, it is necessary to have a being that is completely in harmony with the moral nature of God. And so the moral likeness to God is surely an element in the total concept of the image of God. Unfortunately, this is the element that precisely that by virtue of sin we have lost. Other
parts of the image may still be remaining at least to some extent. These parts are damaged by the presence of sin, but they are not annihilated by this presence. Moral likeness to God, on the other hand, is annihilated by the fact of sin. And it is, therefore, the work of the Holy Spirit to renew us into the moral likeness to God so that ultimately when this is accomplished in glorification, we shall be again in full conformity with the being of God Himself as Adam and Eve were when they were created. With this distinction, that those who are redeemed in heaven, will not be subject to the possibility of falling.

Dr. Philip Hughes, in addition to all that has been said before, adds another feature that is of interest and that is that religion or religious instinct is a manifestation of the image of God in humanity. [The reference is to *The True Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989) in lecture 3.] And, indeed, there is no creature besides humanity that we see as endowed with a religious instinct and humanity has it wherever we find it. Therefore, this too might be as part of that glorious and overwhelming concept of God's image in humanity.