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THE BODY AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

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In the summer of 2020, as most people in the world were dealing with the implications of COVID-19, Ghislaine Maxwell was arrested for her involvement in the sexual abuse scandal surrounding Jeffrey Epstein, who had been arrested in 2019 and committed suicide in prison shortly thereafter. Specifically, Maxwell was charged with, "six counts, including transportation of a minor with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity."[1] There is no doubt that these accusations are morally reprehensible, but some of the intrigue of this case has less to do with the activities themselves and more to do with the possible clients to whom Epstein and Maxwell trafficked these people. Supposedly there are high-powered and powerful men and women from around the globe who were involved in these serious sexual escapades. So, interest is found among such varying groups as those who want to topple political foes, those who are interested in gossip, and those who are fighting to end sexual abuse and sex trafficking. This high-profile case illustrates our culture's attitude, in a variety of ways, on the idea of sex itself.

Yet whatever moral outrage one finds in the situation with Epstein/Maxwell, it is interesting that our culture is not affected enough to change how it views the practices of sex in general. Though research has proven that we are a highly sexualized society,[2] it does not take rigorous statistical analysis to see that sex and sexuality are ever present in American culture. From movies to advertisements to political platforms, sex and sexuality are central topics. This, of course, would be a necessary claim for any culture of any time if humanity

[1]Nicole Hong, Benjamin Weiser and Mihir Zaveri, "Ghislaine Maxwell, Associate of Jeffrey Epstein, Is Arrested," *New York Times*, July 2, 2020, updated July 22, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/02/nyregion/ghislaine-maxwell-arrest-jeffrey-epstein.html.

[2]https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr088.pdf.

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is to exist beyond one generation. It would need procreative activities for such a longevity, which would include the accompanying motivations for such procreation. For the present culture, however, we have largely embraced a particular approach to sex and sexuality that seems incongruous with the moral outrage over the Epstein/Maxwell scandal. For instance, more and more teenagers are engaging in sexual activity apart from any emotional commitment. Even in evangelical circles campaigns such as True Love Waits created an environment wherein sexuality outside of the moral standard was not discussed or, worse, where engagements in sexual activity added further guilt and shame to those involved. For some, this led to a cleavage in their ethics between Christianity and sexuality, leading to what has been termed by some as sexual atheism.[3] How is it that the culture, inclusive of evangelical Christianity, can be evermore progressive and open to sexuality and sexual acts yet simultaneously find outrage over certain sexual acts? The answer to this question is complicated and has many variables, but I believe that in part it has to do with the way in which people consider, or ignore, their bodies in relation to their whole person.

The purpose of this essay is to investigate the relation of the body to the person to see how, and to what extent, we as human persons are holistically connected with our bodies. This of course includes specific sexual activities but also relates to the broader context of sexuality. To understand this important relation between sexuality, the body, and personhood we will first examine what it means to be a person, then examine how our bodies relate to that personhood, and finally present specific implications for a sexuality that sees persons as embodied.

I. THE BODY AND HUMAN CONSTITUTION

Defining the term "person" is fundamental to our task. At first glance, such a definition seems simple since the term is common and used in everyday speech. Given that we commonly use "person"

[3]Sexual atheism is the thought that one's Christianity (with all its ethical convictions) does not have anything to say about one's sexuality. Therefore, one's sexual choices are not normed by one's religious affinity. For instance, see, Kenny Luck, "Sexual Atheism: Christian Dating Data Reveals a Deeper Spiritual Malaise," *The Christian Post*, April 10, 2014, https://www.christianpost.com/news/sexual-atheism-christian-dating-data-reveals-a-deeper-spiritual-malaise.html. This, also, is not to be confused with "sexual atheist," which is popularly used to define someone who does not think he or she will ever engage sexually.

in relation to ourselves it should be fairly simple to define what a person is. However, that task is not so simple; in fact, it can be quite "vexing." As Andreas Kemmerling notes,

> Personhood is independent of what one takes oneself to be, or what others take one to be. Even if it should be somehow rationally inevitable for a human being to assume that he himself, or she herself, is a person (or, over above that, that all of his or her fellow creatures are persons), this itself wouldn't be what makes any of us persons.[4]

Just because we *think* we know a person (and not a better person to know than ourselves), we cannot assume that the understanding of the data on that person is enough for us to actually know that person (or even ourselves). So, the concept of person, and with it humanity, is much more complicated. Jürgen Moltmann rightly quips about this, "Our knowledge of the stars is a matter of indifference to the stars themselves, but our knowledge of man [humans] is not without consequences for the very being of man [humans]."[5] We, as humans, are forever caught in the quandary of trying to know ourselves without actually ceasing to be ourselves—we cannot escape the subjective element.

We can, however, know something of ourselves from the realm of both general and special revelation. From both of these we can begin to discern what it is to be a person and from that to know what constitutes that person in the forms of immaterial and material "parts." It is important to see that question formed this way. We first need to understand what a person is (i.e., holistically) before making judgment about the parts of a person (e.g., the body). To the question of person, and its related term personhood, we now turn.

II. WHAT IS A PERSON?

In defining what a person is, we can come across a variety of other questions that get at the heart of what it means for me to be me and

[4]Andreas Kemmerling, "Why is Personhood Conceptually Difficult?" in *The Depth of the Human Person: A Multidisciplinary Approach*," ed. Michael Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 23.

[5]Jürgen Moltmann, *Man: Christian Anthropology in the Conflicts of the Present*, trans. John Sturdy (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), x.

for you to be you. It is important to note this distinction and not simply posit that it is a human, or anthropological question, but something more than that. For in answering the question "What is a person?" we have to discern the particular identity we have in mind when we think of "person." Are we just referencing a living being, a mental state, something immaterial like a soul, or a mixture of these? The identity of a person is complicated further by the language that is used for personal identity. We often hear someone claim, "I am not that person anymore." What does this claim actually mean? Do we transition from person to person throughout life or is there some sense of a persistence to our identity? If there is a persistence, then to what degree do we persist? To put it another way, how can my children look at pictures of me when I was their age and recognize me as the same person?

These and many other questions have been raised for many years about the nature of human identity, self, or personhood. Eric Olson helpfully introduces the concept of "Personal Identity" in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* and offers an introductory definition of what it means to be a person as one who has "certain special mental properties" or is "capable of acquiring those properties," or belongs "to a kind whose members typically have them when healthy and mature."[6] These definitions are helpful insofar as we can determine what is a nonperson, such as my dog, as well as be able to identify other beings who share in this thing called personhood. However, it does not settle the question of when one becomes a person or, if possible, ceases to be a person. Olson utilizes the examples of an embryo or a person in a vegetative state to question if the mental properties necessary to call one a person may be lacking in these examples. This raises the question of the necessary properties of personhood for other human beings. For instance, if mental properties are necessary for personhood, one would need to distinguish between what is human, and mental, and that which is just animal. This approach could define personhood so mentally that one's physical being becomes nonessential to personhood, the self, or who you are.

As Olson addresses the question "What am I?" he is able to present a list of possible answers to the question of personhood that have

[6]Eric T. Olson, "Personal Identity," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2019 edition, ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/identity-personal/.

been held throughout the ages:

- We are biological organisms.
- We are material things "constituted by" organisms: a person made of the same matter as a certain animal, but they are different things because what it takes for them to persist is different.
- We are temporal parts of animals: each of us stands to an organism as your childhood stands to your life as a whole.
- We are spatial parts of animals: brains perhaps, or temporal parts of brains.
- We are partless immaterial substances—souls—as Plato, Descartes, and Leibniz thought, or compound things made up of an immaterial soul and a material body.
- We are collections of mental states or events: "bundles of perceptions," as Hume said.
- There is nothing that we are: we don't really exist at all.[7]

He concludes with this important affirmation about personhood: "There is no consensus or even a dominant view on this question."[8] So, if it is the case that there is not a consensus, why should we try to understand what we mean by person? Could we not simply state that humans have bodies and these bodies are necessary parts to who they are? The reason for not punting on this question is the same reason why there are so many works written on the subject of self or personhood: it matters because we believe that we matter, that I matter, and that you matter. But if that I or you do not matter essentially bodily (or in some strongly connected way), then whatever is done with or to our bodies might not actually be done with or to us, me, or you.

So, it is imperative that we think of the person and understand what that is so that we can rightly understand who we are. Historically we can think of human beings as those animals that have rational ability. Boethius's dictum *naturae rationalis individua substantia*

[7]Olson is drawing here from his larger research and cites many particular works in which each of these positions are presented. See Olson, "Personal Identity."

[8]Olson, "Personal Identity."

still is helpful in distinguishing persons from nonpersons.[9] Kevin Vanhoozer also supports this distinction of humans from the rest of creation. He says, "Human beings are not only sentient but sapient, able not only to have sensations and experiences but to reflect on and interpret them. What distinguishes *homo sapiens* from other creatures is rationality."[10] Robert Spaemann's distinction of a person as *someone* over against *something* is also a helpful clarification. He states that "human beings are connected to everything else the world contains at a deeper level than other things to each other. That is what it means to say that they are persons."[11]

This sense of personhood needs to take into account a few issues that, as we have seen, are debated. It is not my purpose to engage these ideas beyond presenting some initial concerns; so, in short, we are introducing the concept so that we are aware of the foundations that exist in these discussions. First is the issue of person (or self) in relation to the biology of the human.[12] Many concepts of personhood are defined in relation to the mental or psychological abilities. Here a person is one who has consciousness or mental abilities and these may be disassociated from one's biological being. As mentioned above, this raises the question of personhood for embryos or humans in a vegetative state. It might also ask if personhood persists when one is sleeping and consciousness is not present.

A second major concern of personhood is persistence. Olson summarizes this concern, "The question is roughly what is necessary and sufficient for a past or future being to be someone existing now."[13] In short, are "you," who exist here and now as you read this sentence, the same "you" that existed ten years ago or will exist ten years in the future? If so, what criterion are you utilizing to assert that type of persistence? This becomes more complicated when one thinks of one who is suffering from memory loss, dementia, or the like.

A third important question to consider in personhood is the basis for thinking of what a person is. Are we to think of a person primarily

[9]Boethius defined a person as "an individual nature of a rational substance."

[10]Kevin Vanhoozer, "Human Being, Individual and Social," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 160.

[11]Robert Spaemann, *Persons: The Differences between "Someone" and "Something,"* trans. Oliver O'Donovan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4.

[12]The language of "body–soul" is not being used here purposely given the spectrum of beliefs on human constitution.

[13]Olson, "Personal Identity."

as an individual or should we only think of persons in relation to other persons. This raises the social and communal understanding of what a person is. Alistair McFayden states, "The basis of a dialogical understanding of personhood is that we are what we are in ourselves only through relation to others."[14] In short, can you examine your own personhood independently of others or is there a need for a community to even know that you exist as a person?

Clearly there are major considerations that go into defining what is a person and what is not. Spaemann helpfully summarizes why this complicated task is important in our own time:

> Now its function [defining a person] has been reversed. Suddenly the term "person" has come to play a key role in *demolishing* the idea that human beings, *qua* human beings, have some kind of rights before other human beings. Only human beings can have human rights, and human beings can have them only as persons. The argument then runs: but not all human beings *are* persons; and those that are, are not persons in every stage of life or in every state of consciousness. They are not persons if from the first moment of their lives they are refused admission to the community of recognition, for that is what makes human beings persons. And they are not persons if, as individuals, they lack the features that ground our talk of human beings as persons in general, i.e., if they never acquire or lose, temporarily or permanently, the relevant capacities. Small children are not persons, for example; neither are the severely handicapped and the senile.[15]

How we define personhood is greatly connected to how we respond to persons. Nonpersons are not given the same rights that persons are given; they are not treated equally with those who are deemed to be persons. So, what we define as a person has great significance.

So far this discussion has been more philosophical than biblical

[14]Alistair I. McFayden, *The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 9.

[15]Spaemann, *Persons*, 2.

or theological, but that does not mean that Christians are not concerned with this question. In fact, we should be greatly concerned, in part due to the considerations presented above but also due to the biblical and theological data on what it means to be a human and therefore a person.

III. WHAT IS A HUMAN?

Like the broader philosophical ideas of what personhood entails, Christianity also does not confess a singular understanding of what it means to be a person. However, for Christianity the definition of personhood is more tightly connected to the question of what it means to be human. In this section, we will briefly look at how Christians conceive of personhood by means of theological anthropology, then consider how humanity and personhood relate to human bodies, and, ultimately, illustrate this personhood (and humanity) in the image par excellence in Jesus Christ.

In Psalm 8, David briefly presents the juxtaposition between God and humans and asks "what is a human being that you remember him, a son of man that you look after him?" (Ps 8:4).[16] This indeed is the question we are interested in, and though David does not provide a fully orbed anthropology here, he does highlight some larger biblical and theological concepts of what it means to be human. For our purposes let me present two that show the proper place of humanity, and from them we can see the importance of what it means to be a person.

1. *Imago Dei*. David presents the idea that God is personally aware of (remembrance) and actively cares for (looks after) humankind. The psalm presents the grandeur of this relationship given the glory due to God as Creator (who has set in place creation as evidenced by the moon and the stars). The further amazement is that God would deem part of his creation worthy of "glory and honor." The effect of this understanding should lead to humility in humanity and praise to God. David is expressing the relationship that exists between God and humanity that was established from the beginning in the concept of the "image of God."

Genesis 1:26 says, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, *according to our likeness*.'" This last phrase has created quite a

[16]Translations of Scripture are either from the CSB or my own translation.

few points of discussion as to what it means. This is due to the fact that the statement exhibits the important relationship that exists between God and humanity since humanity is created (constituted) in God's image. Marc Cortez comments,

> At the beginning of a work founded on the belief in an invisible God who cannot be depicted by images and who transcends human understanding, God declares his intent to image himself in finite, physical, and imperfect human beings…. Consequently, this statement has been understood by many theologians to stand at the very center of a properly Christian concept of what it means to be human, and the starting point of theological anthropology.[17]

In Genesis 5:1 and 9:6 it is reiterated that humanity is created in the image of God. In the NT we find this thought in a variety of places (e.g., 1 Cor 11:7; Eph 4:4; Jas 3:9). The biblical data on the *imago Dei*, as well as the theological concept, covers the breadth of the Bible. Humanity's connection to God is an important aspect of what it means to be a human, a person, and it is something in which we find identity and worth.

Though the concept of the *imago Dei* is typically divided into different camps (i.e., structural, functional, or relational),[18] as to what the concept means, it is important to see that the image is foundational for what it means to be human, at least from a Christian perspective. That foundation is that our humanity is directly connected to God's divinity in some way that relates to our identity as persons. Joshua Farris argues this connection and claims that "the *imago Dei* has primarily to do with human identity reflected in creaturely and divine ways…."[19] That identity sets humans apart from the rest of creation and relates humanity to God. There is something of worth and dignity that is afforded humans that the rest of

[17]Marc Cortez, *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Guides for the Perplexed (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 14.

[18]See Joshua R. Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 84–89; see also Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 18–27.

[19]Farris, *Theological Anthropology*, 80.

creation is lacking. This is something that David describes as being crowned with glory and honor, and it is intricately connected with the ability to be in God's image. This image also exists universally so that any human would necessarily exist in the *imago Dei*. This point is important to note in conjunction to who is human and to what extent personal identity is connected to humanness. If one is a human, biologically, then one is created in God's image and thus crowned with glory and honor, having worth and dignity.

2. *Distinct in creation*. A second point David makes in Psalm 8 has to do with the relation of humanity to the rest of creation. Though humans are lower than God, they are only just so, meaning that they are above the rest of creation. The second part of Genesis 1:26 highlights this aspect of humanity to creation: "They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth." Or as Psalm 8:6 says, "You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet." Being human means that there is a distinction between the rest of creation and fellow humans. Humans clearly are not God, but because they are created in his likeness, they exist in creation differently than other earthly creatures. This means that our identity as persons is distinct from other creatures such that we recognize that there is a higher value to another human over against an animal. This does not mean that all of creation is not to be valued but that the uniqueness of humanity exists in such a way that its identity should be valued more than other creatures (e.g., a pet such as a dog).

If this is the case, what is the way to think about this distinction of being below God yet above the rest of creation? What is it in our constitution that makes humans persons? As Christians we need to evaluate the variety of options presented on personal identity connected with basic theological anthropology. Farris, following others, simplifies these positions into four categories: "the body view, the brain view, the memory or character view, and the simple view."[20] Given these options one is led to make conclusions about what it means to be a human. Are we basically material (a body or brain), or is there something essentially immaterial to humans (a mind, soul, or spirit)?

[20]See Farris, *Theological Anthropology*, 30–39.

Scripture indicates that the human composition is comprised of both a material (body) and immaterial component (soul or spirit). This has led some to propose that the human is dichotomous or dualistic. Building on this, others have looked to Scripture to see if there are other parts and have posited three or more parts (body-soul-spirit or even flesh-body-heart-soul-spirit).[21] These later positions attempt to take the biblical text seriously and utilize the language and contours of the Bible without unnecessarily asserting philosophical categories. In doing so, we find the richness of what it means to be a person but we must not theologize the person in such a way that we lose sight of the unity of the person in the midst of these biblical images of the self. I agree with Cortez that as we consider humans as *embodied souls*, asserting the biblical language of the physical and spiritual, "they actually should be understood as referring to the human person as a whole, albeit from different perspectives."[22] In short, when we come across anthropological language in the Bible (body, soul, etc.) we are not to think in terms of parts but of personhood—of identity.

That identity of the human person clearly has physical and spiritual moments. There is a great deal of debate about what essentially is the person in the Christian tradition. That is, can we say with Vanhoozer that a "[h]uman being is a psycho-physical creature, an embodied soul or ensouled body"?[23] Or, given the intermediate state, wherein it seems most reasonable to assume that there is a temporary disruption of the union of body and soul,[24] can we say that essentially

[21]For example, see James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, 4th ed., vol. 1 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 513–18; and, Michael Welker, "Flesh-Body-Heart-Soul-Spirit: Paul's Anthropology as an interdisciplinary Bridge-Theory," in *The Depth of the Human Person: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 45–57.

[22]Cortez explains further, "So, for example, 'soul' does not refer primarily to the immaterial essence of a human person but to the whole human person as a living being. Similarly, 'flesh' denotes not simply the physical shell of the person but the whole person as a creaturely being. Thus, although we will see that there are important differences in how scholars understand the nuances of these terms and the biblical ontology that underlies their use, both OT and NT scholars agree that the biblical texts focus primarily on the human person as a whole, psychophysical being." Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 70.

[23]Vanhoozer, "Human being," 164. Note also the language of "psycho-physical" in Cortez's treatment as well. Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 70.

[24]There have been other views posited that do not account for an intermediate state such as psychopannychism or soul sleep. It is defined as "the view that there is a period between one's death and the final resurrection in which one's self (soul) is in an unconscious state." Donald K. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 2nd ed., (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 300.

our identity is found in our souls, as Farris argues with his version of substance dualism?[25] For the sake of our argument, we do not need to come to a conclusion about whether a human is essentially a soul and accidentally a body or essentially both a body and a spirit. Unless one were to posit a particular form of substance dualism that conceives of disembodied persons, most positions state that humans do have bodies and those bodies are important to who they are.

To conclude this section on Christian anthropology, it is helpful to situate our understanding of the human person in relationship to the truest form of human personal identity: Jesus Christ. When we look at the person of the incarnated Son of God, we find the ideal human person. He is the new humanity through which atonement for humanity is made (Rom 5:15–16, 1 Cor 15:47–49). That atonement was particularly human, which is inclusive of a body. This is particularly acute in the doctrines of the incarnation and the resurrection in relation to broader Christology.

Jesus Christ is "born of a woman" (Gal 4:4), "born according to flesh" (Rom 1:3), and understood as "the word become flesh" (John 1:14). His incarnation highlights the importance of understanding that Jesus Christ is fully human. The major creeds also assert this humanity. For example, the Nicene Creed states that he, "for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man."[26] Also note the formula of Chalcedon: "in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the mother of God, according to the Manhood."[27] So Jesus is fully a human, which explicitly means that he also had a body. This particularly is evidenced by the way in which he experienced bodily life as other humans do, seen in things like eating and drinking (e.g., the Last Supper, Matt 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, 1 Cor 11). Orthodox theology condemns the belief that Jesus only appeared to have a body, and though it could be posited that Jesus had a body that was similar but not exactly like us, even that position does not negate that he had a real, physical body and that his body was exceptionally meaningful.

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[25]See Farris, *Theological Anthropology*, 29. Farris's work is quite helpful in laying out the major positions on constitution from physicalism to hylomorphism to substance dualism. See Farris, *Theological Anthropology*, 28–29.

[26]Nicene Creed, *Historic Creeds and Confessions*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Lexham, 1997).

[27]Formula of Chalcedon, *Historic Creeds and Confessions*.

The meaningfulness of this body is most clearly evidenced in the resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15 we see the importance of the resurrection in the allusions to the many appearances of Jesus after his resurrection. This resurrection is the raising to life of the deceased Jesus. "Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say, 'There is no resurrection of the dead'? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised" (1 Cor 15:12–13). If there is no resurrection, then there is no Christianity. The bodily resurrection of Jesus is necessary for the Christian faith that believes Jesus has defeated death. This resurrection is not merely spiritual, for we find that the post-resurrected Christ is doing bodily things. The clearest example of this bodily resurrection is with Thomas who was able to put his hands into the wounds of Jesus (John 20:27). It is clear that Jesus also did many things that our bodies do not do (e.g., walk on water or appear in locked rooms), but none of these instances necessitates that he did not have a body. The resurrection not only provides evidence for him having a body, it also provides evidence for the importance of our bodies. Romans 6 points to the connection of Christ's resurrection and our resurrection. "For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be in the likeness of his resurrection" (Rom 6:5). This resurrection for us will be in the end (Rev 20), and it will be bodily. It is this thought of a future bodily resurrection that is confessed in the Apostle's Creed: "I believe in the resurrection."[28] Stanley Grenz summarizes this point clearly: "The resurrection offers the ultimate critique of all dualist anthropologies, for it declares that the body is essential to human personhood."[29]

Jesus Christ is not merely the example; he is the image into which we are being transformed as 2 Corinthians 3:18 references. As we are created in the image of God in our old humanity, we are being transformed into the new humanity by means of Jesus Christ. This image includes our bodies. We are not merely spiritually being saved but bodily so. We are embodied souls and as such we should rightly understand that our bodies are important to us as humans and as persons.

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[28]The Apostle's Creed, *Historic Creeds and Confessions*.

[29]Stanley J. Grenz, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 25.

IV. SEXUALITY IN RELATION TO BODY

I have argued that the concept of person and personhood is connected with the idea of the identity of the self—who I am. Further, we have argued that that identity is connected to what it means to be human, and being human means, at least in the present, that we have bodies that are important (if not essential) to who we are as human persons. In this section we will investigate to what extent one's sexuality is connected to one's body and all the identifying connections that come along with it.

The usage of the term "sex" or "sexuality" can be confusing for societies in the twenty-first century given the separation of the biology of sex from concepts like gender. For instance, Dennis Hollinger, in *The Meaning of Sex*, draws a distinction, "By *sex* we mean particular acts of physical intimacy. By *sexuality* we refer to our maleness and femaleness as human beings."[30] Of course even this distinction is not as clear as it could be in the current discussions. Stanley Grenz noted in 1990 that "many psychologists differentiate between 'affective' and 'genital' sexuality, a differentiation that dates to Freud."[31] Farris notes even more categories such as "chromosomal sex," "gonadal sex," and "fetal hormonal sex."[32] These are biological categories, though many of these authors see that sex itself is more than biological. Adding to this is the connection of gender that sometimes is equated with one's sex/sexuality, is marginally connected to it, or is disconnected all together. This is because it is proposed that one's sex may be biological but one's gender is socially formed. A disconnected relationship between biological sex and gender then leads to a decision to be made about the role of biological sex and personhood. Though one should not discount that there are social factors that may help define what is masculine or feminine, the understanding of gender cannot solely come from communal formulations. Biological sex is connected to gender, or as Farris argues, it becomes "unclear why we should assign any fixedness to a person's being either male or female."[33]

So, clearly the discussion on sex, sexuality, and gender is quite diverse, but what can we learn from the Bible to help us parse out

[30]Dennis P. Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex: Christian Ethics and the Moral Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 15.

[31]Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*, 17.

[32]Farris, *Theological Anthropology*, 208.

[33]Farris, *Theological Anthropology*, 206.

these terms in relationship to one's identity? The beginning point should be in Genesis 1:27 again, for here we not only find that there is the creation of human persons in relation to God and creation but that creation is both male and female. "So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them *male and female*." There is a binary existence of humanity from the very beginning of humanity in Scripture. In Genesis 2:23–24 we find a clearer description of the relationship between this male and female: "And the man said: This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called 'woman,' for she was taken from man. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh." Here we find that there is a similarity between both the man and woman in that they share in flesh, but there is also a distinction between them since the woman is "taken" or separated from man. This relationship between man and woman is restated in Genesis 5:1–2: "On the day that God created man, he made him in the likeness of God; he created them male and female. When they were created, he blessed them and called them mankind." Here, again, man and woman are created in a similarity that is in relation to the image of God but are dissimilar in sexual ways that are distinguished by being male or female. Both are integral to what it means to be human.

The differences in the sexuality of humanity in Genesis are also seen in the purposes of humankind, especially in the ruling capacity for humanity over creation. Part of the ruling over creation is connected to the procreative agency of humankind's sexuality. The subduing of the creation is closely connected to the mandate to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28). This is found in the relationship that exists between a man and a woman as they engage in sexual activity in the confines of a covenantal marriage union. Genesis 2:24 highlights this union: "This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh." This unitive partnership is bodily in nature and provides for the marriage covenant that, as Farris states, "depends on the procreative complementarity of the sexes to fulfil God's covenantal designs for the world."[34] This is why later biblical texts speak negatively about divorce (Mal 2:13–16; Matt 19; Mark 10; Luke 16:18).

[34]Farris, *Theological Anthropology*, 214.

Sex, sexuality, and gender are connected in close ways to one's humanity and personhood. Farris makes the claim that "it is even arguable that gender is essential to the human story and essential to what it means to be human."[35] If that is the case, and if there is a close connection between gender and biological sex, then at minimum our sexual bodies are highly important properties of our human personhood. Grenz helpfully summarizes this point: "There is no other way to be a created human, to exist as a human being, except as an embodied person. An embodiment means existence as a sexual being, as male or female."[36]

V. IMPLICATIONS

I have attempted to show, however briefly, that personhood is connected to one's self identity and that personhood is connected to one's humanity, which exists with a body that includes sex and sexuality. Therefore, there is a connection of one's biological sexuality to one's personhood. To the extent that as one's body is encountered sexually, so too is one's personhood. There are many implications to this thesis that could be examined (even beyond specific sexual connections), but to illustrate this point we will consider issues with sexual abuse, gender, and marriage.

A helpful work in this regard is Nancy Pearcey's *Love Thy Body* wherein she addresses many issues of morality and the body but in particular critiques "personhood theory" as a belief that "entails a two-level dualism that sets the body *against* the person, as though they were two separate things merely stuck together."[37] Here personhood is seen as something nonbiological, and therefore the body is not only not essential or important but could be working against one's personhood. This leads to sexual behavior that operates divorced from the reality of one's identity, such as a belief in sexual atheism where one's faith is disconnected from one's bodily sexual choices. This means that "what you do with your body sexually need not have any connection to who you are as a whole person."[38] However, since the body is connected to you as a person, then sexual activity

[35]Farris, *Theological Anthropology,* 220.

[36]Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*, 27.

[37]Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 21.

[38]Pearcey, *Love They Body*, 27.

and ideas have implications for personhood. I will consider two such implications—marriage and sexual activity.

In our present western culture, where for many marriage seems to have lost its covenantal nature of "'til death do us part," we clearly see a diminished view of marriage from previous generations. For Christians in particular, this is also a common practice as many churches have been modifying their stance on divorce for decades. The, at one time, taboo of divorce for any church member has turned into questions of what compelling reasons are there to prohibit hiring a minister who has been divorced. Clearly, marriage and divorce are greatly spiritual and emotional issues, but do they have direct consequences for one's personhood via the body? In *Humanae Vitae* Pope John Paul II makes the claim that marriage "is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act."[39] Note the two elements of his teaching on sexual activity in marriage: unitive and procreative. The unitive aspect of marriage is found not merely in a spiritual connection between persons but explicitly so in bodily form as man and wife engage in sexual intercourse. This intercourse also results, though not always, in procreation. Marriage according to this view is seen as an activity that exclusively engages in bodily activities that help promote and prolong the marriage and the family.

As theological and reasonable as this sounds, is this teaching found in the Bible? We can again look to Genesis 2:24 to see that marriage results in a one flesh union between husband and wife. This verse is appealed to by Jesus in Matthew 19 and Mark 10 where Jesus is answering the question about divorce concluding that "what God has joined together no one should separate" (Matt 19:6, cf. Mark 10:9). In addition, Paul appeals to this verse in Ephesians 5 where he compares the union between husband and wife to that of Christ and the church. In 1 Corinthians 6:16 Paul again references this passage as he addresses the specific sexual immorality of joining oneself to a prostitute, which is a bodily, sexual activity unifying a person with a prostitute. In the next chapter he further relates the union of husband and wife in that they are to "not deprive one another" as they exclusively have sexual relations within one another (see 1 Cor

[39]Pope John Paul II, *Humanae Vitae*, II.12.

7:1–7). In summary, sexual activity, as especially taught in the NT, is such that it is not only exclusive to the marriage bonds between a man and a woman but it also establishes a unity, a one-fleshness, between the man and woman in the activity itself. The misuse of this loving unitive activity of sexual intercourse leads to a misuse of the marriage itself such that depriving one another of sex or forcing oneself upon another leads to a misuse of the person to whom one is married.

The misuse of sexual activity is not only found within marriage but is also found outside of marriage. When this misuse (meaning that which is outside of biblical sexual parameters) occurs it does not merely affect one's body distinct from one's person. This bodily misuse is most clearly seen in sexual abuse cases where bodily violation and subsequent trauma have occurred. Not only has violence been done to their bodies, but that bodily violence has continuing effects on their whole being. Less violently and consensually, misuse of sexual activity is illustrated by the prevalent sexual expression found in "hookup culture." Pearcey engages this culture in depth and defines a hookup as "any level of physical involvement, from kissing to sexual intercourse. According to the rules of the game, you are not to become emotionally attached."[40] There is an assumption that there is a separation between the bodily, sexual activity and the emotional state in which a self resides. However, this culture proves to be detrimental as well. Pearcey claims, "Sex is cast as a purely recreational activity that can be enjoyed apart from any hint of commitment. All that matters is consent."[41] This bifurcation between one's body and one's self (i.e. person) in a sexual activity never truly occurs because the human person exists as an embodied soul such that any sexual activity that occurs will have an effect upon the whole person. Sexual abuse, fornication, adultery, prostitution, pornography, homosexuality etc., all are sexual activities that harm the body and as such harm the person. The implications of all of these misuses of sex and sexuality go well beyond the specific moment of activity of the body; they affect one's whole personhood.

[40]Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 118.
[41]Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 119.

VI. CONCLUSION

The biblical view of a person is one created in the image of God that is male and female. This includes our bodies. Humans are wonderfully made, and we must recognize that our bodies are integral to that composition and not of secondary concern. As such we must consider that what happens to a person bodily affects one's person—his or her. Though the implications of this are well beyond sexual activities, we must not forget that any sexual activity will either have felicitous or deleterious effects on a person depending on the biblical and ethical appropriateness of the activity. As Christians we must live as whole persons in such a way that corresponds with Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 6:13: "However, the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body."