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The Doctrine of Humankind





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EDITORIAL

Nearly two decades ago at a major bioethics conference, I heard a significant presentation from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary alumnus C. Ben Mitchell. In his talk, Mitchell asked the question, “What does it mean to be human?” The way he framed the conversation was profound. Though I had taken courses in and taught courses about Christian anthropology, I began to reflect on this vitally important question in ways that I confess I had not previously done. Realizing the importance of this question and the various implications for our lives and ministries, we have invited a group of thoughtful theologians and ethicists to help us think carefully and wisely about these challenging issues.

Building on the overarching theme for this issue, “The Doctrine of Humankind,” Rhyne Putman, director of worldview formation at Williams Baptist University and author of *The Method of Christian Theology* (Nashville: B&H, 2021), has, with the goal of doctrinal disciple-making in mind, attempted to answer the question: “Who Does God Say I Am?” John Hammett, the seasoned theologian at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, who is co-authoring the volume on Christian anthropology for the *Theology for the People of God* series (forthcoming from B&H), has engagingly written on what it means for men and women to be created in the image of God. Katie McCoy, who serves in a number of roles at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and who is Hammett’s co-author for the Christian anthropology volume, has offered a well-written article, which addresses some of the key cultural issues of our day titled, “God Created Them, Male and Female.”

A type of Gnosticism regarding the human body seems to have returned to the thinking of many in the twenty-first century.

Countering these false notions, Gregg Allison, professor of Christian theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, has authored an insightful piece “A Theology of Human Embodiment.” W. Madison Grace II, associate professor of Baptist Heritage at Southwestern Seminary, extends Allison’s thoughts in the article on “The Body and Human Sexuality.”

Carl Bradford serves as assistant professor of evangelism at Southwestern. This devoted churchman has provided the readers of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* with a grace-filled piece on racial reconciliation. Clearly grounded in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, Bradford has authored “A Gospel-Centered Approach to the Issue of Racism.” “Race and Racism in the Southern Baptist Convention,” by O. S. Hawkins, president of GuideStone Financial Resources, explores two approaches to these important issues in the life of ministry of two SBC icons, George W. Truett and W. A. Criswell.

Jacob Shatzer, associate professor at Union University and author of *Transhumanism and the Image of God: Today’s Technology and the Future of Christian Discipleship* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2019) wrestles with future-oriented ethical questions in his contribution to this issue. We are grateful for Shatzer’s work on “Fake and Future ‘Humans’: Artificial Intelligence, Transhumanism, and the Question of the Person.”

A number of substantive book reviews conclude the issue. I am grateful for the quality work from the authors of these fine articles and the book reviewers as well. The editorial work by Wang Yong Lee, Alex Sibley, James A. Smith Sr., Katie McCoy, and Andrew Streett is certainly worthy of commendation, as is true for the design team as well. I especially want to express my appreciation for the extraordinary efforts of Andrew Streett to help us get this volume to press in a timely fashion.

In December of 2020, an announcement was made regarding the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*’s initial Book of the Year Awards. The faculty of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary voted on these choices, which may be found at the back of this issue. We offer hearty words of congratulations to Professor Carl R. Trueman, of Grove City College in Pennsylvania, whose book on *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive*

Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020) was selected as the overall book of the year.

Soli Deo Gloria

David S. Dockery



WHO DOES GOD SAY I AM?: Theological Anthropology for Doctrinal Disciple-Making

Rhyne R. Putman*

“Who am I?” When strung together in this sequence, these three simple, monosyllabic words form one of the most perplexing questions known to man, a question that each of us must wrestle with at some point or another in our lifetimes. All of us struggle with what it means to be a human, who or what defines us, and how we relate to others in this world. Crises like global pandemics, racial tensions, and heated political rivalries bring these weighty philosophical questions down to earth and remind us that the human struggle for self-definition colors everything we do.

Disciples of Jesus are always in need of a robust theological anthropology that will help them see themselves and their neighbors through the lens of God’s Word. This was true in the era in which chattel slavery was a regular part of American life; it was true in the Jim Crow South; and it is true in a time when thousands of unborn children are terminated daily in the name of “convenience.” The critical study of the Christian doctrine of humanity is crucial for the life and ministry of the church. After all, the study of Christian theology is more than an academic exercise intended to maintain universities, seminaries, and divinity schools. Theologians who live under the lordship of Jesus Christ are ultimately concerned with building God’s kingdom by fulfilling the Great Commission. This conviction influences the way I define systematic theology as a critical academic discipline and doctrine as the biblical teaching of the local church:

systematic theology is critical and organized reflection
on God’s self-revelation for the purposes of growing in

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Christ and making disciples.

and

Christian doctrines are faithful and true teachings derived from Scripture and used to grow God's people in knowledge, spiritual maturity, and obedience¹

Done well, the academic study of Christian theology always serves discipleship ministries in the local church, even if indirectly. Christian doctrine in the local church is about forming the whole disciple, "teaching them to observe everything" Jesus has commanded us (Matt. 28:20a). Doctrine not only provides the *cognitive content* of our beliefs; it also provides *practical* and *affective content* which guides what we should do and how we should feel.

Effective doctrinal teaching can alter every aspect of our worldviews: (1) the grand narrative we tell, (2) the way we come to terms with existential questions about ourselves and our world, (3) our practices, and (4) our feelings.² Theological anthropology plays an important formative role in the self-understanding of the disciple, the development of his practices and ethics, and the shaping of his affections and attitudes toward fellow image bearers. With this understanding of the Christian theological task in mind, I see four primary purposes in the study of theological anthropology. Our doctrine of humanity:

1. rehearses the *grand narrative* of Scripture and helps us as human beings understand our place in it;
2. helps answer our existential questions about our origin, our meaning, and our destiny with theological *truth* derived from Scripture;
3. provides wisdom for how we *practice* our faith or live in the world as image-bearers, especially our ethics; and

¹Rhyne R. Putman, *The Method of Christian Theology: A Basic Introduction* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2021), 44.

²The four worldview elements I use in my *Method of Christian Theology* build on the respective projects of N. T. Wright and James K. A. Smith. The categories of story, ultimate questions, and praxis can be found in Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 122–26. Smith highlights the affective dimension of worldviews in his *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009) and *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016).

4. stirs our *affections*, forming in us a deeper love for God and other image-bearers.

Disciples of Jesus do not look to themselves, the culture, or the academy for their true identity. Our ultimate identity does not come from our politics, our sexual preferences and behaviors, our nationality, or the color of our skin. Instead, we are defined by who God created us to be and what God in Christ has done to bring us back to himself. These four worldview elements relate to one another symbiotically: our stories shape the way we understand existential truths, which in turn shape our affections and practices. But these worldview elements do not relate to one another in a singular direction; our affections and practices can give rise to our beliefs about reality just as much as our beliefs about reality can give rise to our practices and affections.

I. HUMANITY IN THE GRAND NARRATIVE: THE BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL TASK

Every worldview has a grand narrative that forms the beliefs, practices, and affections of its adherents. Every grand narrative, also known as a “metanarrative” or “controlling story,” addresses questions about human origins or human destiny. For example, in the atheistic metanarrative often ironically called “secular humanism,” human beings are merely highly evolved animals who emerged from the long and chaotic process of natural evolution. In the secular story, humans are not special in the universe. They exist for a moment and without objective meaning. Humanity will eventually be extinct, regardless of whether they bring about their own destruction or whether it happens by natural means outside of their control. Other worldviews present alternate accounts of human existence; in many Eastern religions, human beings are one-and-the-same with creation around them (i.e., pantheistic monism) and stuck in an endless cycle of death and rebirth (i.e., reincarnation).

As N. T. Wright has observed, “human writing is... *the telling of stories which bring worldviews into articulation.*”³ Christians under biblical authority look to the Bible to provide the framework for their understanding of the grand narrative and humanity’s place in it. Organizing the theological content of the Bible along the contours

³Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 65.

of the canonical narrative is one of the key tasks of biblical theology as evangelical theologians have practiced it. This storying task of biblical theology is a necessary first step for framing the doctrines of Scripture because it keeps doctrines like our doctrine of humanity from being reduced to abstract propositions disconnected from Scripture or human history.

The overarching story revealed in Scripture is ultimately God's story, but those who are made in his image are more than minor players in this divine drama. Human beings play a pivotal role in every "act" of the unfolding story: the creation and the fall of humanity (act 1), the election and mission of Israel (act 2), the redemptive activity of Jesus Christ (act 3), the church age (act 4), and the future consummation of God's kingdom in the renewal of creation (act 5). In act 1, God created human beings in his image, but misusing their God-given freedom, these image bearers rebelled against the Creator and brought all creation under a curse. In act 2, God chose and made covenants with the people of Israel, who would act as his representatives in the world. In act 3, God took on true humanity in order to rescue humanity from sin and judgment. In act 4, the act of the story in which we presently find ourselves, God created a new "chosen race" of humanity in the church who acts on his behalf in the world, carrying out the ministry of reconciliation. In the fifth and final act, God will renew and restore humanity to his original design for them, forever bringing them out of their sin and misery and into his glorious presence.⁴

1. *The creation and fall of humanity in act 1—mankind's beginning.* The account of creation in Genesis ends with the creation of human beings (Gen 1:1–2:3; 2:4–25). The more detailed account of the creation of man in Genesis 2:4–25 describes the Lord God as the giver of human life, breathing "the breath of life into his nostrils" (2:7). Humans are created on the final day in the six-day sequence, but as Robert Letham observes, their creation is distinct from the creation of the other land animals on the sixth day because it is the only one described in the narrative with divine self-deliberation: "*Let us make man* in our image" (Gen 1:26). For Letham, "this section

⁴I here follow the five-act structure of the divine drama presented in Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 2–3.

stands out in bold relief, highlighted as a distinct element, a pointer to the significance of the whole account.⁵ The choice of the triune God to create human beings in the image of God set them apart from the rest of creation. These image bearers were created male and female (Gen 1:27) to complement one another, because “it is not good for the man to be alone” (2:18).

God assigned human beings dominion over creation. They were called to “fill the earth” and “subdue it,” to “the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth” (Gen 1:28). As the psalmist observes, this dominion over creation means human beings are made a little less than God or a little lower than God:

When I observe your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you set in place,
what is a human being that you remember him,
a son of man that you look after him?
You made him little less than God
and crowned him with glory and honor.
You made him ruler over the works of your hands;
you put everything under his feet (Ps 8:3–6).

The God-given task of human beings to rule the earth is not itself the image of God in the narrative but a clear consequence of being an image-bearer. Being qualitatively different from the rest of the created order, human beings were given stewardship over it.

Yet the beautiful story God was writing in act 1 took a tragic turn when the man and woman rebelled against God. Deceived by the serpent, the man and the woman ate fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent told a half-truth when he said, “God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:4). Adam and Eve have, in a sense, become like God in their knowledge of evil and suffering. Previously they were in blissful ignorance, but now, ashamed of their nakedness, they were painfully aware of the

⁵Robert Letham, *Systematic Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 319.

difference between good and evil. This turn of events introduces humanity to the world they will know until the fifth act of the grand narrative: a world with shame, toil, suffering, alienation, and death.

2. *Chosen humanity in act 2—the election and mission of Israel.* Though God expresses remorse and sorrow for human wickedness (Gen 6:5–7), he sees glimmers of hope for the human experiment in persons like Noah who have found favor with him (Gen 6:8). God “resets” the world by destroying it with the flood and then makes a covenant with Noah, promising never to destroy every living creature again in this manner (Gen 9:12–17). But when the descendants of Noah attempt to make a name for themselves at Babel (Gen 11:4), the Lord God confuses their language and scatters them throughout the earth (Gen 11:7–9).

God initiates a new stage in the drama when he calls Abram, a descendant of Noah’s son Shem (Gen 11:10–32), to be the father of a new nation through whom he will bless all the peoples of the world (Gen 12:1–3; 15:4–6). After the descendants of Abraham are enslaved in Egypt for four centuries, God dramatically rescues them from bondage and renews (or establishes) his covenant with them in the Law. On Sinai, the Lord gives Moses this instruction:

This is what you must say to the house of Jacob and explain to the Israelites: “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you will carefully listen to me and keep my covenant, you will be my own possession out of all the peoples, although the whole earth is mine, and you will be my kingdom of priests and my holy nation.” These are the words that you are to say to the Israelites (Exod 19:4–6).

Out of faithfulness to the promise he made to Abraham, the Lord God chose this tribe, though small in number, to be a “holy people . . . his own possession out of all the peoples on the face of the earth” (Deut 7:6).

Israel received “the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the temple service, and the promises. . . . and from them, by physical descent, came the Christ, who is God over all” (Rom

9:4–5). Israel had a God-given mission to live as a holy and set apart people unto the Lord so that they could make the name he revealed to them known. Yet as most of the OT bears witness, act 2 is a story with epic highs and catastrophic lows. The people of Israel often vacillated between faithfulness to the Lord and waywardness and disobedience. Still, God remained ever faithful to his people, knowing full well that this small population of the human race would be the means by which he could rescue all humanity.

3. *The model of true humanity in act 3—the redemptive activity of Jesus Christ.* The third act—the incarnate ministry of Jesus Christ—is the climax of the grand narrative. In this act, the Word of God assumes a true human nature in order to redeem humanity from sin. Christ, who himself is the perfect “image of God” (2 Cor 4:4), makes the character of God known (John 1:14, 16–18; Col 1:15; Heb 1:2), but he also reveals God’s purpose for true humanity. The incarnate Son grew mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially (Luke 2:52). He felt physical hunger and thirst (Matt 4:2; John 19:28). He expressed genuine human emotions like frustration (Mark 3:5), distress (Luke 12:50), and compassion (Mark 10:21). He was tempted like us but never succumbed to sin (Heb 4:15). Yet in everything, Jesus modeled perfect service to God and to others (Phil 2:7).

The question is sometimes asked whether Jesus was truly human if he did not and could not sin. To this challenge, Millard Erickson makes note that Jesus, not us, is the true starting point of any inquiry into the doctrine of humanity:

Instead of asking, “Is Jesus as human as we are?” we might better ask, “Are we as human as Jesus?” For the type of human nature that each of us possesses is not pure human nature. The true humanity created by God has in our case been corrupted and spoiled.... Our humanity is not a standard by which we are to measure his. His humanity, true and unadulterated, is the standard by which we are to be measured.⁶

4. *Spirit-empowered humanity in act 4—the church age.* In disciple-making, we encourage believers to see themselves as part of God’s

⁶Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 657–58.

overarching story in history. This is, for the moment, our part of God's story and mission as the body of Christ: the age of the church. In this still incomplete fourth act, "the church lives between the definitive event of Jesus and the concluding event of the eschaton, poised between memory and hope."⁷ For the doctrine of humanity, the church represents a new way to live as human beings in this world.

The church age is, in some respects, a continuation of the mission given to Israel: a human people called to be set apart for the mission God has given them in making his name known among the nations. The church redeemed by Jesus is different from Israel in three crucial ways. First, the work of Christ has removed ethnic and national distinctions between his people: "There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:28–29). Much of the tension in NT churches came from Jews and Gentiles, long separated, learning to live together as reconciled co-heirs in Christ.

Second, human beings can now act in the New Covenant power and ministry of the Holy Spirit experienced by Jesus (Acts 1:8; 2:1–12; cf. Luke 4:1; Acts 10:38; Rom 15:13). Those believers who have been justified by faith in Christ enter into the ongoing work of the Spirit in sanctification, by which the Spirit aids them in conforming to the image and likeness of Christ over time. Our human natures "are being transformed into the same image [of the glory of the Lord] from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18). Following Pentecost, believers in Christ now have the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 3:16–17; Eph 1:13), the teaching ministry of the Spirit (John 14:26), and the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:4–11).

Most importantly, redeemed humanity plays a pivotal role in God's ongoing redemptive project in the world. The completed work of Christ still needs to be communicated to a lost and dying world. This is the mission Paul assigns to every Christ-follower in 2 Corinthians 5:18–21:

Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of

⁷Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 3.

reconciliation. That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed the message of reconciliation to us. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God." He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God has reconciled humanity to himself through Christ, but he has also tasked us with "the ministry of reconciliation" (v. 18). Because he has "committed the message of reconciliation" to us (v. 19), he makes "his appeal through us" (v. 20). Redeemed humanity becomes the chief instrument of God in the world for carrying the message of reconciliation to those who have not yet heard it.

5. *Resurrected and glorified humanity in act 5—the eschaton.* Christian interpreters of the Bible disagree about the sequence of events in the fifth act (i.e., the return of Christ, judgment, tribulation, etc.), but agree the future of humanity is resurrection. The biblical story of resurrection is not the story of immortal souls whose true lives begin with death, but essentially embodied creatures whose future destinies involve the re-creation and redemption of our bodies. Our resurrection coincides with the new creation in which God makes all things new (Isa 43:18–19; 65:17; Rev 21:5). With all of creation, "we also groan" about our present, broken state, "eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom 8:23). We will not be rescued from our bodies (as many Greco-Roman philosophers hoped). Instead, our present, lowly physical bodies will be transformed to be like Christ's glorious, spiritual resurrection body: Christ himself "will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of his glorious body" (Phil 3:21; cf. 1 Cor 15:42–44; 2 Cor 5:4–5).

Just as our bodies will be perfected and glorified, so too will the intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of our humanity be made complete by Christ. In our future glorification, all our knowledge will be freed from sinful thoughts and creaturely imperfections. While it is unlikely we will have godlike omniscience, the present hinderances to our knowledge will be removed and we will have a more complete knowledge of God and his world (1 Cor 13:12;

2 Cor 4:3–4; 1 John 3:2; Rev 22:4).⁸ Our glorification is also the culmination of the sanctifying work of the Spirit that began with the Christian life (2 Cor 3:18). We will no longer experience sin (Rev 21:27), nor will we suffer its agonizing consequences (Rev 21:4).

II. HUMANITY IN CHRISTIAN TRUTH: THE SYSTEMATIC-THEOLOGICAL TASK

The systematic-theological task involves critical and organized reflection on the theological content of the Bible. The systematic theologian reflects on the content of the grand story of the Bible and organizes its key themes into a coherent framework of thought which can be employed in the process of Christian discipleship. The systematic formulations of Christian theology articulate how Christians answer the basic worldview question, “Who am I?” Evangelical theologians are in broad agreement on major biblical-theological themes related to the doctrine of humanity but disagree on secondary and tertiary interpretive elements of these themes.

1. *I am a human being purposely and purposefully created by God.* God created humanity for his pleasure (Rev 4:11), his glory (Isa 43:7), and his praise (Isa 43:21). We were created *through Christ* and *for Christ* (Col 1:16). We are special and distinct creatures created by God in his image to accomplish his purposes in the world (Gen 1:27–28). We are loved by God and are valuable to him (Ps 8:1–8; John 3:16–17; Rom 5:8).

Since the advent of Darwinism, some theologians have cast doubt on the existence of a historical Adam, preferring to think of the account of the first pair in Genesis 2–4 as merely figurative or symbolic. Most contemporary evangelical theologians reject this notion, presuming Adam and Eve were literal, historical persons directly created by God without the use of another creature or creative process. This view is easiest to reconcile with biblical genealogies which include Adam as the progenitor of the human race (Gen 5:1–4; 1 Chr 1:1; Luke 3:38). More importantly, Paul clearly believed in a literal Adam and Eve (1 Tim 2:13–14), and this belief was foundational for his doctrines of sin, Christ, and salvation (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:22, 45). Yet, even among evangelicals who affirm the special, direct

⁸For a further exploration of this theme, see my book, *When Doctrine Divides the People of God: An Evangelical Approach to Theological Diversity* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 64–65.

creation of Adam there is disagreement about the age of creation and the age of humanity.

2. *I am a human being created in God's image.* Christian theologians universally affirm the biblical description of the image of God in humanity (Gen 1:26–27; 5:1–2; 9:6–7; 1 Cor 11:7–9; Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:10) but disagree about the nature of the image itself. Theologians often group together views on the nature of the image into one of three major categories: *substantive* views, *relational* views, and *functional* views.⁹

Substantive views have been the predominant interpretation of the image throughout church history, though Christian thinkers have conceived of the substance in several ways. What substantive views have in common is the belief that the image is “some quality or characteristic within the makeup of humanity that is shared with God.”¹⁰ A minority view in this category presents the image as physical or corporeal, related to the upright posture of human beings.¹¹ A more common substantive view is one like that of Irenaeus, who asserted the image is the rational soul of humans,¹² which is directly linked to free will and decision making.¹³ Because human beings are distinguished from other creatures by their ability to reason, this ability is properly associated with the image of God. Thomas Aquinas also held this belief, insisting the “image of God is not found even in the rational creature except in the mind.”¹⁴ For Calvin, “the proper seat of [God’s] image is in the soul.”¹⁵ Theologians in the substantive camp also disagree about whether the image was lost, marred, or unaffected by the fall of humanity.¹⁶

⁹Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 460–67.

¹⁰Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 658.

¹¹Some biblical scholars, like Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932), suggested that the early Israelites worshiped a corporeal god who had human-like physical features. Mormons have held similar views of God and the image. See James Leo Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL, 2007), 454–55.

¹²Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.6.1.

¹³Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.4.3.

¹⁴Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 1.93.6.

¹⁵John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1, ed. John T. McNeil (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 186 (1.15.3).

¹⁶John F. Kilner offers a masterful biblical and historical treatment of this issue in *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity and the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 134–76; cf. Kilner, “Humanity in God’s Image: Is the Image Really Damaged?” *JETS* 53, no. 3 (Sept. 2010): 601–17. Kilner argues that the biblical teaching does not explicitly teach the marring or damaging of

Neo-orthodox theologians like Emil Brunner and Karl Barth advocated relational views of the image of God, denying the claim of the substantive view that the image is something a human being possesses in his nature. According to this relational view, the image is not something human beings are or possess but something that can be found in the relationships human beings have with one another (the horizontal dimension of the image) and more importantly, the relationship human beings can have with God (the vertical dimension of the image). This view rightly stresses God's design for human beings to be in relationship to one another and, more importantly, in relationship to God, but it fails to account for "what it is about humans that enables them to have this relationship no other creature is able to have."¹⁷ Furthermore, despite Barth's and Brunner's claims to the contrary, it is difficult to grasp how every human being bears the image of God if the image is the human relationship to God yet many people "are living in total indifference to God, or even in hostile rebellion against him."¹⁸

A third view, the functional view, does not emphasize metaphysics like the substantive view or existential relations like the relational view. Instead, advocates of the functional view primarily understand the image in the divine mandate for human beings to have dominion over creation (Gen 1:28; Ps 8:3–6). The NT scholar Michael Bird further develops the functional model in his "royal view" of the image. Bird argues that in the ancient Near Eastern context in which Genesis 1:26–27 was written, kings and pharaohs appointed vice-regents who would bear their image and act as representatives of their rule. For Bird, the image is a "function, a royal vocation for humanity to reflect the reign of God in their stewardship over creation."¹⁹

3. *I am more than but not less than the body God created for me.* God created human beings as embodied creatures with spiritual dimensions. While theologians disagree about the precise nature of the human constitution, the broader Christian tradition has historically

the image as many, like Calvin and Luther, presupposed. He also contends that language of the "damaged" *imago Dei* can have disastrous consequences for Christian ethics and the dehumanization of others.

¹⁷Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 468.

¹⁸Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 468.

¹⁹Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 661.

recognized human beings as complex creatures who are more, but not less, than their bodies. Jesus warned his disciples not to “fear those who kill the body [*sōma*] but are not able to kill the soul [*psychē*]” (Matt 10:28). Paul also distinguishes between body and soul and/or body, soul, and spirit. He closed 1 Thessalonians with this exhortation, which drops hints of his view of the human constitution: “Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. And may *your whole spirit* [*holoklēron humōn to pneuma*], *[your] soul* [*hē psychē*], and *[your] body* [*to sōma*] be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 5:23). While Paul’s primary purpose here is not to offer a systematic view of the human constitution, he does not give a blessing like this in a vacuum.²⁰

What is the relationship between the body and the soul, or between the brain and the mind? Christian theologians debate the human constitution similar to those of philosophers. Are human beings essentially material beings, non-material beings, or creatures composed of material and non-material elements? Christian *monists*, like their philosophical *materialist* counterparts, deny the existence of a soul or mind distinct from physical bodies. Because monists believe human beings to be essentially physical, they often advocate for a “soul sleep” eschatology in which the human “soul” lies dormant as long as the physical body is dead. Monists have no concept of an “intermediate state” between death and the resurrection. In the future resurrection from the dead, human beings will be restored to everlasting physical life. While monists agree on the substantial unity of human beings, they disagree over what makes us essentially human, whether we are free or causally determined by our brains, and what gives a human being his or her identity over time.²¹

The vast majority of Christian theologians throughout church history have embraced one form of *anthropological dualism* or another.

²⁰See Udo Schnelle, *The Human Condition: Anthropology in the Teachings of Jesus, Paul, and John*, trans. O. C. Dean, Jr. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 44–55. Schnelle contends Paul’s use of *pneuma* describes a fundamentally new way of being human in Christ. Union to Christ (which Schnelle places at the baptism event) results in human beings receiving a *pneuma* from the Spirit of God that enables them to live in a new spiritual reality in the presence of God.

²¹See Nancy Murphy, “Nonreductive Physicalism,” in *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem*, ed. Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005), 115–38; Nancy Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Kevin Corcoran, “The Constitution View of Human Persons,” in *In Search of the Soul*, 153–176; Kevin Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature: A Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

The NT data in support of this position is manifold. Many of the arguments for Christian dualism are based on eschatological texts in the NT which describe a conscious state for the dead even after disembodiment (Luke 16:19–31; 23:42–43; 2 Cor 5:1–10; Phil 1:21–24; 1 Thess 4:13–18; 1 Pet 3:19–20; Rev 6:9–11). And as John W. Cooper has observed, “an intermediate state presupposes dualism.”²²

Christian dualists have disagreed about whether human beings have one or two non-material dimensions. *Trichotomists* contend human beings consist of three substances: body, soul, and spirit. Trichotomists appeal to passages where these terms are listed together to defend this position (Rom 8:10; 1 Thess 5:23). Notable trichotomists include early figures like Irenaeus and Origen, who argued for a “spirit” unique to Christians. Irenaeus believed the human spirit was lost or corrupted in the fall but restored in salvation.²³ *Dichotomists*, by contrast, argue that soul and spirit are interchangeable terms for the same nonmaterial referent (e.g., Job 7:11; Luke 1:46–47). Dichotomists reject the idea that the fall somehow eliminates or disables the human spirit, finding this concept to be without any biblical basis.²⁴

Some theologians reject the choice between a monism that emphasizes the body and a substance dualism that labels the soul the true human being, arguing for a mediating position that associates true humanity with body *and* soul, not one or the other. Erickson describes his view of the human constitution as a “conditional unity” in which “the normal state of a human is as an embodied unitary being.”²⁵ Death temporarily breaks this conditional unity, but the resurrection will restore it. Michael Horton takes a similar position that he calls *psychosomatic holism*. Distinguishing his position from Platonic dualism, Horton writes, “Platonism sees *embodiment* as a curse, while biblical faith understands *disembodiment* to be a curse.... We are not saved from our bodies, but with them, in the general resurrection of the dead.”²⁶ While there is good reason not

²²See John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 104–6.

²³Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.6.1.

²⁴John Frame, *Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013), 801.

²⁵Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 491.

²⁶Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 378–79.

to overemphasize the differences in the material and non-material aspects of the human being, it is important for us to remember that embodied creatures like ourselves have a need for relationships with other embodied creatures and an even greater need for God. Human beings alone are capable of relating to God in this way because of their spiritual natures.

4. *I am a human being who is responsible for my moral choices.* Christian theologians disagree about whether human beings can be truly free and be under the determining influence of God's providence. Those who argue that divine determinism and human freedom are compatible call themselves *compatibilists*. Others argue for non-compatibilism or *libertarian freedom*, insisting that human beings may be influenced by God but are ultimately self-determining free creatures. Though theologians have significant disagreements in this area, virtually all Christians agree that God is not the author of sin (Jas 1:14; 1 John 2:16) and that human beings are ultimately responsible for their moral choices.

III. HUMANITY IN CHRISTIAN PRACTICE: THE TASK OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Christian ethics takes its primary directives from special revelation, not philosophical speculation. For this reason, theology and ethics are closely related.²⁷ While we can make a formal distinction between the two disciplines, Christian ethics builds on the foundations of Christian theology. Christian ethics is the application of theological convictions to human practice and behavior. The *indicatives* of a Christian theological anthropology outline the *imperatives* of Christian ethical practice. In other words, our belief that human beings are image bearers is foundational to what we do in the practice of Christian ethics.

1. *All image-bearers have a right to life.* Nowhere does this issue become more controversial in ethics than the issue of human abortion and the so-called "right to choose." The Bible does not directly address abortion, but it does provide the worldview that guides our ethical decisions. Scripture strictly prohibits the murder of humans made in the image of God (Gen 9:5–6; cf. Exod 20:13). Repeatedly

²⁷See James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Ethics: Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002).

we are told that it is God who forms us in the womb (Ps 139:13–14; Jer 1:4). Unborn children are capable of feeling and expressing joy (Luke 1:41–44).

2. *All image-bearers have intrinsic value to God and are entitled to basic human dignity.* This dignity means that all persons have value attributed to them by virtue of who they are. As creatures who “think, feel, will, and relate” to one another, human beings are afforded more value than any other creature in the created order.²⁸ Basic human dignity, not age, ethnicity, nationality, legal status, social status, gender, or education, is the foundation for all inalienable human rights.²⁹ Chief among our basic human rights is the freedom of the human being to worship and obey the God who created him. Every other human right flows from this one. On abortion issues, this means the unborn has the right to life. Human slavery and trafficking also goes against this fundamental right of every human being. Economic liberty enables humans to obey God with generosity and a clear conscience.

3. *Image-bearers must express care for other image bearers in word and deed.* Paul charged the Philippians to follow the example of the incarnate Lord and practice selflessness in their interactions with others: “Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others” (Phil.2:4). This call to selflessness begins with the family. Paul regards a refusal to meet the needs of family members as tantamount to apostasy: “But if anyone does not provide for *his own family, especially for his own household*, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim 5:8). This call to care for the natural family also extends to the family of God: “Let us work for the good of all, *especially for those who belong to the household of faith*” (Gal 6:10). The Bible also repeatedly instructs us to care for those who are incapable of caring for themselves: orphans, widows, and resident aliens (Deut 10:18; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:17–21; 27:19; Ps 146:9; Isa 1:17, 23; 9:17; Jer 7:6; 22:3; Ezek 22:7; Zech 7:10; 1 Tim 5:3; Jas 1:27).

3. *Image-bearers should conform to God’s original design for gender*

²⁸Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 1:172.

²⁹Pablo Gilibert, *Human Dignity and Human Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 1.

and sexuality. Never has the church needed a clearer definition of what it means for image bearers to be made “male and female” (Gen 1:27). The sexual revolution that redefined traditional gender roles in Western culture eventually eroded into the radical separation of physical sex characteristics from “gender identity.” Many parents under the influence of postmodernity are reluctant to call their child a boy or a girl, insisting that the children can make that decision for themselves. In other cases, these parents have started walking pre-adolescent children through a process of “gender transitioning” with drugs which block natural hormones and surgeries which mutilate and alter the appearance of genitalia.

From the beginning of creation, men and women were designed to complement and correspond to one another. God gave Adam responsibility over the garden and its maintenance (Gen 2:15) and charged him with naming every other living creature (Gen 2:19–20). But seeing no helper (*ezer*) to complement him (2:20b), God created the woman from Adam’s own rib and brought her to him (2:21–22). The man was so pleased with Eve that he broke into song, calling her “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” (2:23). God created Adam and Eve with physical compatibility, with different sexual organs designed to stimulate one another and be instrumental in human procreation. Human sexuality is a gift from God designed to provide intimacy and trust in marriage, but men and women are more than sex objects or fodder for fantasy and lust.

But in addition to their physical complementarity, these image-bearers served different functions in the created order. Man was created to work the ground (Gen 2:6, 15). The woman was created to help him in this service (Gen 2:20). Paul highlights the way differences between the husband and the wife in marriage bear witness to Christ’s relationship to the church. Though men and women have different, complementary roles in marriage they are equals who are called to Christ-like mutual submission to one another (Eph 5:22–33).

IV. HUMANITY IN CHRISTIAN AFFECTIONS: THE PASTORAL-THEOLOGICAL TASK

Faithful doctrine does more than stimulate our intellects; it also serves the important pastoral-theological task of stirring our hearts

and affections to love God and love neighbor. Josh Moody and Robin Weekes define *affections* as “*the movement of our thoughts, feelings, and will toward a desired object, person, or event. An affection is what inclines us to something. . . . Affections are what move us to action.*”³⁰

Affections, unlike passions, can be trained and directed toward a good and noble end. Our doctrine of humanity ultimately helps us fulfill the second Great Commandment: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:39; cf. Lev 19:17–18; Mark 12:30–31; Luke 10:27).

Loving one’s neighbor demands healthy, God-honoring self-love. We must avoid the extremes of pride and self-hatred, both of which are denials of the good work of God in creating, redeeming, and renewing us. A proper affection for self as an image bearer will extend to others—even those who do not deserve our compassion or our care. After all, as we reflect on the grand narrative of Scripture, we recognize that we ourselves are undeserving recipients of the mercy and grace of God. Now we are called to offer mercy and grace to others just as God has forgiven us through Christ (Matt 5:7; 6:12; Luke 6:36; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13; Jas 2:13; 1 Pet 4:10). Jesus even goes to the extreme position and tells us to love our enemies and to pray for those who wish us harm (Matt 5:44). We love our enemies and act as their benefactors, expecting nothing in return (Luke 6:35).

Love for neighbor is universal, meaning we are called to love all image bearers despite the differences in ethnicity, nationality, or cultural background between us. Jesus illustrated this principle in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), which he offered up in response to the question of a scribe who inquired of Jesus the identity of his neighbor. In the parable, the neighbor was not someone who shared ethnicity or culture with the man who fell into the hands of the robbers but the one who showed mercy to him (Luke 10:36–37). All image bearers are part of the same family and share a common ancestor, Eve, “the mother of all the living” (Gen 3:20). Yet because of the fallen state of our world, this has often been forgotten or entirely rejected. We must not value any ethnicity, nationality, or skin color over another. The reconciling work of Christ which brought us back to God has also reconciled us to one another.

³⁰Josh Moody and Robin Weekes, *Burning Hearts: Preaching to the Affections* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2014), 14.

God-honoring affection for our neighbor becomes the grounds of obedience to the whole law of God. Paul explains this connection,

Do not owe anyone anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, **Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do not steal; do not covet;** and any other commandment, are summed up by this commandment: **Love your neighbor as yourself.** Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the law (Rom 13:8–10).

Love or proper affection for neighbor always guards the best interests of others. Love for one's neighbor means refusing to sleep with his wife. We cannot murder a neighbor we love because we are concerned about her health and well-being. Healthy, God-honoring self-love which holds the private good and the good of our neighbors in balance is fundamentally incompatible with theft or dishonest gain. To love our neighbor is to look out for his best interests as a fellow image bearer, to treat him fairly in all matters. When our affections are turned to God and neighbor, we celebrate the grace of God poured out on him in material, financial, and family relationships. We do not envy him or wish God to remove his hand of blessing from him.

These affections do not always come naturally to us, so they must be trained in us like our deeds and thoughts. The work of the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of love for neighbor in us (Gal 5:22). We must meditate on God's clear instruction about what it means to be human, what he has done for us in Christ Jesus, and what he demands of us as his people. Contemplation on the activity of God in our lives will manifest itself in love for those who bear his image. To love fellow man is to be like our Creator, who loves us more than any other creature (Matt 10:31; 12:12).

The doctrine of humanity teaches us about the human constitution: the relationship between our physical bodies and our spiritual natures, but theological anthropology must be more than a speculative philosophical exercise about substances and properties, free will and determinism. It must come alive with the bold proclamation that God has made human beings in his image and endowed them with

honor and value. Only through God's Word do we really know how we should think about humanity, how we should behave toward other human beings, and what we should feel toward them. The doctrine of humanity is a vital part of Christian disciple-making, and it can help us approach the complex issues we face in the present moment.



A WHOLE BIBLE APPROACH TO INTERPRETING CREATION IN GOD'S IMAGE

John S. Hammett*

In discussions of theological anthropology, the issue of human creation in the image of God usually takes a central place. It is seen as the most important and distinctive characteristic of humans. Yet understanding the meaning of our creation in the image of God has been problematic. The doctrine is built upon a surprisingly small number of biblical texts. It is true that some of these texts are found at “unusually significant” places in the biblical narrative, and “have a special urgency and importance” beyond what the mere number of references might suggest, but even so there is a striking paucity of biblical data.¹

And in the verses where our creation in the image of God is affirmed, there is nothing resembling an explicit definition. Thus, it is not surprising that there has been no unanimity in interpretations of the meaning of human creation in the image of God.

Most scholars affirm one of three major ways in which the image of God in humans has been understood, with differing combinations of the three forming a fourth approach. John Collins alliteratively calls them resemblance, representational, and relational; J. Wentzel van Huyssteen and Millard Erickson use the categories of substantive, functional, and relational; and Marc Cortez prefers structural, functional, and relational, and terms the fourth approach “multifaceted.”²

¹John Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2015), 37; G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, trans. Dirk Jellema (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 67.

²C. John Collins, *Science and Faith: Friends or Foes?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 124–25; J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, *Alone in the World? Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Gottingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 126–45; Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 457–74; Marc Cortez, *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2010),

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Despite the differences in nomenclature, they are all referring to the same basic approaches, and discussions of these three approaches can be found in various works on theological anthropology.³

One weakness of many who discuss this topic is to give the teaching in Genesis 1 an inordinate emphasis. Richard Middleton argues that there is a “virtual consensus” among OT scholars on the interpretation of Genesis 1 and what it means for our understanding of our creation in the image of God.⁴ Marc Cortez concurs, stating that biblical scholars have reached a “general consensus” on a functional view of the image of God, based on their interpretation of Genesis 1.⁵ But a significant weakness of the functional view developed from Genesis 1 is the fact that none of the other relevant texts on the image of God mention the function of dominion. They develop their view from Genesis 1 alone. By way of contrast, David Kelsey chooses “to privilege New Testament uses, rather than Old Testament uses, of the phrase ‘image of God,’” in his massive theological anthropology.⁶ But Kelsey may be critiqued for unduly minimizing the importance of a foundational text like Genesis 1.⁷

The approach in this article will be to privilege neither Genesis 1 nor the NT texts, but to take a whole Bible approach. We will survey all the pertinent texts in which the creation of humans in the image or likeness of God is mentioned. None of these texts give any definition of the meaning of our creation in the image of God, but they do give some clues that we can use to draw some parameters. Whatever the image of God in humans is, it must fit within these parameters. I will then offer one formulation of what it means for humans to be created in the image of God and argue for it based on how well it fits all the biblical parameters.

This article will also document a movement toward something of a consensus concerning a central aspect of the meaning of our

18–29.

³Such as Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*; Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*; and Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1986).

⁴J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 25. The subtitle shows the exclusive focus on Genesis 1.

⁵Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 30.

⁶David Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology*, 2 vols. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 2:900.

⁷See the critique of Kelsey in Marc Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 103–06.

creation in the image of God in recent scholarship. In view of the longstanding disagreement among scholars and the three major approaches mentioned above, this is something of a surprising development, but one common element is found in slightly different forms in numerous recent publications on the image of God. This movement offers some additional support for the understanding of the image of God argued for in this article.

I. PARAMETERS FROM KEY BIBLICAL TEXTS

The relevant texts fall into three categories. From the affirmations made about humans as created in the image of God in these texts, we may draw parameters for the meaning of that phrase.

1. *Foundational, creation texts.* There are, first, four texts that affirm God's creation of all humans in his image: Genesis 1:26–27; 5:1–2; 9:6; and James 3:9. They may be called foundational because, in the case of the Genesis references, they are first and form the background for many of the later references. Additionally, each of these references give image-bearing as a defining characteristic of all humans. They may also be called creation texts because in these verses, humans are image-bearers of God because they are created as such. Being created in the image of God here seems to be something true of all humans as humans, as that which constitutes them as humans. Genesis 1 and 5 both specifically mention “male and female” as created in God's image and likeness. Genesis 9 and James 3 refer to humans generically (*adam* and *anthropos*) and give their creation in God's image and likeness as the ground for treating them with dignity.

The initial text, Genesis 1:26–27, is emphatic, using the term “image” three times, and using “likeness” once as well. Specifically, the text says we are made “in” God's image and “according to” his likeness. The prepositions used (the Hebrew letters *beth* and *kaph*) serve to distinguish between humans and God's image itself; humans are not the image or likeness itself but are made in some sense like or in accordance with God's image. Trying to go further and make a clear distinction between “in” and “according to” seems unwarranted, since they seem to be used interchangeably. Scripture uses “in” with both image and likeness (Gen 1:26; Jas 3:9) and “according to” with both likeness and image (Gen 1:26; Col 3:10).⁸ Gordon Wenham

⁸While Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum agree that the two prepositions “have roughly the

concludes, "According to our likeness' therefore appears to be an explanatory gloss indicating the precise sense of 'in our image.'"⁹

The other two verses in this category, Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9, see our creation in God's image and likeness as bestowing on all humans a special dignity. In the former text, to kill a human is such a heinous and serious crime that the offender forfeits her own life; in the latter, even to curse one made in God's likeness is improper. Perhaps here James is remembering the teaching of Jesus that put cursing a brother on the same level as murder (Matt 5:21–22).

The key terms in these verses, image and likeness, also seem to be used interchangeably. Some verses use "image" (*tselem*) alone to describe humans (Gen 1:27; 9:6); some use "likeness" (*demuth; homoiōsis*) alone (Gen 5:1; Jas 3:9); only Genesis 1:26 uses both. Though some in the Catholic tradition sought to make a distinction between the two,¹⁰ the essentially synonymous nature of the two terms is one of the areas of general consensus today.¹¹

Another text, 1 Corinthians 11:7, is somewhat problematic. It affirms man as "the image and glory of God," while woman is described as "the glory of man." This verse should not be seen as denying that women are created in the image of God; Genesis 1:27 is explicit and all the other foundational texts refer to humans categorically. The contrast between man and woman in this verse has to do with the term "glory," not "image,"¹² thus making this verse less fitting in a list of foundational texts.

As noted earlier, none of these texts give anything resembling a

same value in these texts," they also note that "we must not assume that the meaning is identical," and cite the work of Randall Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity, and Monotheism*, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), who argues for some distinction in meaning. See the discussion in Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 198–99.

⁹Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 29.

¹⁰Irenaeus and much of the Catholic tradition argued that the "likeness" of God was a gift of original righteousness lost at the fall, while the "image," usually seen as reason and free will, remained intact and unaffected. Irenaeus's view is seen in various parts of Books 3 (chapters 18 and 23) and 5 (chapters 2, 6, and 16) of his *Adversus Haereses (Against Heresies)*. For a concise exposition of the thought of Irenaeus, see David Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*, rev. ed. (London: Collins, 1973), 80–84.

¹¹Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 16 and Paul Sands, "The *Imago Dei* as Vocation," *Evangelical Quarterly* 82, no. 1 (2010): 29, agree that the essentially synonymous nature of "image" and "likeness" is commonly acknowledged. For example, both Hebrew terms are used to refer to the same carved figures in Ezekiel 23:14–15.

¹²Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 515.

definition of what it means to be created in the image of God, but they do allow us to draw some parameters. First, whatever the image of God is, it is something true of all humans. It seems to constitute humans as humans. It is specifically affirmed of males and females, and is nowhere limited by age, race, or social class.

Second, whatever the image of God is, it is something that sets humans apart. It is hard to read the account in Genesis 1 and not note the special treatment of the creation of humans. It is positioned last in the account, is given more space, is introduced with a distinctive formula (“Let us make” versus “Let there be”), includes the distinctive terms “image” and “likeness,” and, of all God’s creatures, it is only humans to whom God speaks. In Genesis 9, the killing of a human is viewed in a more serious light than the killing of an animal, further implying a unique status for humans. James 3:9 underscores human dignity by prohibiting even the cursing of a human.

Third, all the texts discussed here, with the exception of Genesis 1, describe humans after the fall. Thus, whatever the image of God in humans is, it is not something destroyed by our fall into sin. Whether the image is in some sense damaged by our fall into sin is a question not answered in these texts.

2. *Christological texts.* At least two texts (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15) speak explicitly of Christ as the image (*eikōn*) of God. Hebrews 1:3 has the same idea in slightly different terms; Christ is the “exact expression” (*charactēr*) of God’s being. John 14:9 describes it in visual terms: “The one who has seen me [Jesus] has seen the Father.” I think it is wise to observe that Christ **is** the image, while humans are made **in** or **according to** the image. The context in Colossians 1 and Hebrews 1 suggests that calling Christ the “image of God” and “exact expression of his being” are ontological claims, claims of deity.¹³ This is also obvious in John 14:9. What ordinary human says, “The one who has seen me has seen the Father”? As God incarnate, Christ is the image of God in a way that humans can never be.¹⁴

¹³Stephen Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 180, sees the image language of Col 1:15 and 2 Cor 4:4 as requiring deity: “Only a divine Son can be *this* image” (emphasis in original).

¹⁴For a contrary view, arguing that the language of Christ as the image of God refers to his humanity, see Marc Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology*, 129. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 2:905–11, also identifies the image of God with Christ in his humanity, but in a slightly different way. Sadly, the space limitations of this article do not allow for fuller engagement with their arguments here.

But if that is the case, what does Romans 8:29 mean in speaking of our destiny to be conformed to the image of the Son? The solution is found in the twofold nature of Christ: true God and true man. As God, Christ *is* the image of God; as human, he is also *according to* or *in* the image of God, and he alone lived out image-bearing in a perfect way. Our destiny is Christlikeness, not as the Second Person of the Trinity, but as True and Perfect Human. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, in his study *The True Image: The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ*, writes:

Thus the Son, who *is* the Image, by becoming man became *in* the image, without however ceasing to *be* the Image. It is as consubstantial with God that he *is* the Image and as consubstantial with us that he identified himself with our human existence *in* the image; and thus he who is truly God revealed what it is to be truly man.¹⁵

This gives us a further biblical parameter in understanding our creation in the image of God: It is something that Jesus lived out perfectly in his humanity, and something to which we will one day be perfectly conformed.

3. *Renewal texts.* There is a final category of texts on the image of God in humans, all found in Pauline letters (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:10; and Eph 4:24). These verses speak of the image of God in humans as something dynamic. It is something renewed in believers in conversion (Col 3:10; Eph 4:24),¹⁶ something into which believers are now being increasingly transformed (2 Cor 3:18),¹⁷ and something to which believers will one day be perfectly conformed (Rom 8:29).¹⁸ These descriptions give us one final parameter. They

¹⁵Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The True Image: The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity, 1989), 29.

¹⁶Colossians 3:10 uses the phrase “image of your Creator;” Ephesians 4:24 refers to our creation *kata theon*, which F. F. Bruce interprets as meaning “in the image of God” and which English versions translate as “according to God’s likeness” or similar phrase. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 359.

¹⁷The verse does not specify image as “image of God” or “image of Christ,” but the context justifies seeing it as “transformation into the image of Christ” which is “none other than the restoration of the image of God.” Philip E. Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 119.

¹⁸This is assuming that conformity to the image of Christ, who is himself the image of God, is

depict the image (or at least the manner in which humans live out the image) as something dynamic, capable of suffering damage,¹⁹ but also capable of renewal, transformation and perfection in believers.

4. *Summary.* To summarize, from the biblical texts which give us teaching on the meaning of human creation in the image of God, we may draw the following parameters. Whatever the meaning is, it must fit within the following parameters:

1. Creation in the image of God is something affirmed for all persons; it constitutes humans as humans.

2. Creation in the image of God is something affirmed only for humans, implying that humans are unique among God's creatures and giving them transcendent worth and dignity, simply because they are image-bearers.

3. Even after the fall, humans are spoken of as being in the image of God, so the image is not lost in the fall.

4. Since Christ is both the perfect image of God in his deity, and the perfect representation of what it means to live out our creation in God's image in his humanity, the image of God in us must be something that allows for some correspondence between Christ and humans. It is something that Jesus lived out perfectly in his humanity.

5. The numerous renewal texts require us to consider creation in God's image in dynamic terms. How humans live out their creation in God's image has been damaged in some way by sin. Now, in Christ, the living out of God's intention in creating humans in his image is progressively being realized in believers in renewal and transformation and will one day lead to complete conformity to the image of Christ.

"renewal of the believer into that likeness of God which is God's original purpose for man." C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 1:432.

¹⁹Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 160–75, argues strongly against the idea that the image of God has been damaged, on two grounds. First, while people have been damaged by sin, Christ is the image of God and he has not been damaged. Second, Kilner fears that the language of damaged image diminishes the protection afforded to all humans when they are seen as being fully in God's image. He has a point in that humans are not actually described as being the image of God. However, the way in which humans live out what it means to be created in God's image has been impacted by the fall and that is what is typically meant by the damage language. As Craig Blomberg notes, Kilner "represents a small minority of scholars who think the image was not damaged by sin." Blomberg, "'True Righteousness and Holiness': The Image of God in the New Testament," in *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, ed. Beth Felker Jones and Jeffrey Barbeau (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016), 68, n. 7. Moreover, if humans are damaged as image-bearers, that would seem to warrant greater protection, not less.

II. THE IMAGE AS CAPACITY FOR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

The biblical parameters enable us to construct something of a proverbial glass slipper. Now our task is to find a theological foot that fits it. I will first offer a formulation of the meaning of human creation in the image of God. Then I will seek to argue for it by showing how well it fits these parameters and avoids the objections that could be placed against it. Finally, I will conclude by showing a growing consensus supporting this view.

I believe our creation in the image of God involves the gift of a capacity for a particular type of personal relationship, primarily a relationship with God. This right relationship with God should lead to right relationships with other humans and the creation itself, unless conditions like dementia, severe autism, mental disability, or other extraordinary situations hinder or prevent the development of these relationships. In such cases, these individuals are still humans, made in the image of God, but the consequences that should flow from being in the image of God are being hindered by some of the conditions of fallen life.

This capacity for relationship with God, I argue, is centered in the human spirit, but normally utilizes other human capacities such as reason, conscience, and emotion, without necessarily requiring the use of them. Our creation in the image of God may also have a representational aspect, which is associated especially with our creation as embodied beings,²⁰ but I see that aspect as secondary. Identifying the *imago Dei* in terms of a capacity places this view technically in the substantive or structural category, but the emphasis on capacity for relationship puts it very close to what many mean by a relational approach to the image of God. Either way, the support for this view lies in the way it fits the biblical parameters identified earlier.

1. *The image as universal and constitutive.* Take, first, the idea that all persons are created in the image of God and that this constitutes humans as humans. Is capacity for a relationship with God something true of all humans? If that capacity is defined in terms of attributes such as reason, will, and conscience, the answer would seem to be no for very young children, the mentally disabled, those

²⁰Image bearing is associated with our future bodily resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:49: "we will also bear the image of the man of heaven."

with dementia or Alzheimer's, and others who may not have or be able to exercise such attributes.²¹ But there is a growing field of study on theology and disability that affirms the possibility that some of those suffering disability of rational capacities may experience a relationship with God on another level.²² We think that possibility is especially strong if we see the capacity for relationship with God as lodged primarily in the spirit.

In spirit, we deal with something that is constitutive of all humans and distinctive to humans, for while both humans and animals can be referred to as creatures with souls, only humans are clearly referred to as creatures with spirit. Anthony Hoekema notes that the word for "soul" in the OT (*nephesh*) can be used in a multiplicity of ways, including at times as a virtual synonym for spirit (*ruach*). Whereas *nephesh* can be used of both humans and animals, *ruach* is used only of humans, with one possible exception (Eccl 3:21),²³ and even that exception is phrased in the form of a question. The NT gives greater clarity on this, as it associates the human spirit (*pneuma*) with the capacity for relationship with God.²⁴ Only humans engage in personal relationships with God, because only humans possess that which enables them to relate to God.²⁵ Thus, if we link the capacity for relationship with God not to capacities that vary from person to person but to something that is present in all humans from before

²¹This fear of a definition of the image of God that excludes some people has been important in the rejection of the substantive or structural approach by many. As Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 20, puts it, "it is nearly impossible to find a structural capacity that applies to all human beings." Thus, "any structural definition of the *imago* runs the risk of excluding certain categories of human beings from its definition of humanity."

²²For a survey of key books in this emerging field, see David F. Watson, "Theology, Bible and Disability: An Overview," at <https://www.catalystresources.org/theology-bible-and-disability-an-overview/>, accessed 6/11/2019. See also Marc Cortez, "Beyond Imitation: The Image of God as a Vision for Spiritual Formation," in *Tending Soul, Mind, and Body: The Art and Science of Spiritual Formation*, ed. Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2019). Cortez narrates the account of the baptism of a profoundly disabled teenager by a student in Cortez's class who was prompted by that teenager's reaction to wonder "if there is a means of recognition and consciousness beyond the brain" (28). Cortez himself suggests that perhaps "a person may be able to exercise the relevant capacity or capacities in ways that transcend our current ability to understand" (29).

²³Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 210–11.

²⁴G. E. Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 463: "It is because man possesses *pneuma* that he is capable of being related to God."

²⁵For spirit as an element in human personality that enables the whole person to relate to God, see W. D. Stacey, *The Pauline View of Man* (London: Macmillan, 1956), 89–90, 141; Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, 458–64.

birth²⁶ to death and even beyond death,²⁷ we have something that is truly universal and inclusive.

Care should be taken here, for we are not arguing that spirit is one “part” of human nature. Humans are made in God’s image in their entirety, and spirit is a capacity that interacts with the whole of a person’s being. W. D. Stacey says of the OT, “When reference is made to man in his relation to God, *ruach* [spirit] is the term most likely to be used,” but “*the whole man was involved*.”²⁸ James Dunn says much the same for *pneuma* (spirit) in the NT. It denotes “*that dimension of the whole man wherein and whereby he is most immediately open and responsive to God*.”²⁹ Normally one’s relationship with God and others, including the created order, involves the use of reason, will, emotions and other capacities as the spirit energizes, directs, and stimulates them. Seeing the capacity for relationship with God as lodged primarily in the spirit does not denigrate the body, for the way a spirit acts in our world is normally by use of a body. But these other aspects of personality may not be absolutely necessary in every case. Seeing our capacity for relationship with God as dependent on spirit leaves open the possibility that God can establish relationships with humans in exceptional ways in exceptional circumstances, such as when reason is impaired, or no longer functioning, or not yet functioning.

2. *The image as grounds for unique dignity.* From Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9, we draw the parameter that humans have a unique status that demands they be treated with a special dignity because they have been created in the image of God. Does understanding the image of God as the capacity for personal relationship with God fit within this parameter? It would certainly seem so. Humans are the only creatures to whom God speaks in Genesis 1 and 2 and pronounces words of blessing and command. He assigns them tasks and holds them accountable. They alone may experience the eternal life that consists in knowing God (John 17:3). And perhaps it is because they

²⁶See Luke 1:44. When the baby still in Elizabeth’s womb leaped with joy at the sound of Mary’s voice, it seems unlikely that it was the result of the operating of rational faculties. Romans 8:16 suggests the possibility that the communication was on the level of spirit.

²⁷See Heb 12:23, which describes those in the heavenly Jerusalem as “the spirits of righteous people made perfect.”

²⁸Stacey, *The Pauline View of Man*, 90. Emphasis added.

²⁹James Dunn, “Spirit, Holy Spirit,” *NIDNTT* 3:693. Emphasis added.

alone will face divine judgment that it is unfitting for humans to curse or kill them. Humans are not just created *by* God; creation in God's image means humans are created *for* God. They alone can experience a special relationship with him.

3. *The image as enduring after the fall.* The presence of numerous texts affirming our status as image-bearers after the fall is sufficient to sustain possession of the image post-fall as a biblical parameter. How does this parameter harmonize with understanding creation in God's image as the capacity for relationship with God, centered in the human spirit? We think it gives us a way of understanding the damage that the image sustained in the fall, without seeing the image as totally destroyed in the fall. God's warning in Genesis 2:17 was that the man would die "the day" he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Wenham says, "Though this phrase ['the day'] can mean vaguely 'when' (cf. 2:4; 5:1), it tends to emphasize promptness of action."³⁰ But Adam lived for hundreds of years after he ate of the tree. The death he died that very day, or at least with promptness, would seem to be a spiritual death. John Collins notes that the semantic range of the Hebrew word used in Genesis 2:17 for "die" includes spiritual death, which he calls "estrangement from a life-giving relationship with God."³¹

Thus, the fall gave a mortal wound to the human spirit in Adam. He remained human, with the spirit within him, still having the status of an image-bearer of God but now in a deadened condition. Fallen people today do not live out a positive relationship with God, but they have not lost the capacity for such a relationship. The proof is what happens in salvation; the spirit must be present to be given new life by the Holy Spirit (John 3:5–8; Titus 3:5). Scripture uses the language of renewal and transformation with reference to the image of God in us; something must be present to be renewed and transformed. God can breathe new life into those spiritually dead; he can reactivate the spirit left dead by the ravages of sin. The fall had a horrific impact, but it does not change our status as created in the image of God. The image is still present in us but requires renewal.

4. *Christ as the perfect image of God and perfectly in the image of*

³⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 68.

³¹C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), 117.

God. The identification of Christ as the image of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15) raises the question: Does Christ as the image of God conflict with the view that we are arguing for, that being created in the image of God is being created with the capacity for relationship with God? Answering this question requires us to remember the twofold nature of Christ and to maintain the distinction made earlier between being the image and being created in or according to the image.

As the eternal Son, Christ *is* the image of God in a way that we never will be. He is the “image of the invisible God,” in whom “all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Col 1:15; 2:9). *Being* the image is true only of deity, but being created *in* the image is true of humans. As the God-man, Christ both *is* the image and is *in* the image of God. And it is as the incarnate Son, made *in* the image of God, that he exercised the capacity for personal relationship with God in a perfect, unfallen way, such that he was like us in all ways, except without sin (Heb 4:15). In fact, the relationship that Jesus enjoyed with his heavenly Father seems so central to his human existence that I think it strengthens the association of image of God with the capacity for relationship with God. At the very least, this parameter raises no conflict with the interpretation being championed here.

5. *The image as dynamic.* There are a number of NT passages that we considered earlier under the heading of renewal texts. These texts indicate that we should consider our creation in the image of God as something dynamic and capable of suffering damage and experiencing renewal in the course of Christian conversion and sanctification. When we do so, many traditional interpretations of the image of God are revealed to be inconsistent with such a description. But the capacity for a relationship with God seems to fit this parameter especially well.

The first renewal text, Romans 8:29, speaks not of the image of God but of the image of the Son, and not of our creation in that image but of our eventual conformity to it. But there need be no conflict here. Because Christ both *is* the image and is the perfect expression of life lived *in* the image of God, conformity to the image of Christ would seem to be perfect conformity to life lived in the image of God brought to eschatological completion. What will it mean to be completely conformed to the image of the Son? We think that one major aspect of that conformity will be the full development

of Christlike character.³² But central to Christ's character was his perfect relationship to the Father, so being conformed to the image of the Son would include living in perfect relationship with God, which fits our understanding of the image of God as the capacity for relationship with God. Christians experience the living out of that capacity to a degree now; we will experience it to the full then.

The second primary text is 2 Corinthians 3:18. Here the language is not renewal but transformation, and the key preposition is not "in" but "into." We do not think the suggestion can be that humans are not in God's image until they are transformed into the Lord's image, but that the different texts are speaking of one reality—our creation in God's image—in two different ways. Texts that speak of our creation in God's image (Gen 1:26–27) speak of something that is always true of all humans, something stable. This text on our transformation "into his [the Lord's] image" speaks of this same reality, but as something dynamic. As John Kilner interprets this text, it means "Christians are already becoming better able to fulfill the divine intentions that have always marked their lives as created in God's image."³³ What is one major divine intention that has always marked our lives as created in God's image? It has always been God's intention for us to live in relationship with him. This text speaks of that capacity for relationship with God being progressively more and more utilized, or, as another puts it, by this transformation, humans are more and more "realizing the meaning of their original status as creatures in God's image."³⁴

In the third primary passage, Colossians 3:10, we have the language of renewal. The verses preceding verse 10 speak of a definitive change taking place in those whom Paul addresses, a change that can be described as death to an old life (vv. 5–7), or taking off an old self and putting on a new self (vv. 9–10). These can describe Christian conversion. But even before conversion all humans are created in the image of the Creator. So what happens after conversion in the life of a Christian? This passage describes it as renewal in the image of the Creator. This assumes that while humans are still created in God's

³²See the description of glorified humans as "the spirits of righteous people made perfect" (Heb 12:23) or then expectation that when we see Jesus, "we will be like him" (1 John 3:2).

³³Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 242.

³⁴Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 119. Hughes is citing A. M. Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ*, 151.

image (i.e., still have the capacity for relationship with God), there has been some damage affecting how humans live out their created status. Renewal involves people coming to live out God's intention more and more fully, as the capacity for relationship with God comes alive. Interestingly, it is described as renewal "in knowledge according to the image of your Creator." What is this knowledge? Paul does not specify what he means here, but Colossians 1:6, 9, and 10 speak of knowledge of God's grace, God's will and God himself. All these would be involved in a growing relationship with God, which, as we have been arguing, is the central significance of our creation in the image of God.

There are two other passages we may deal with much more summarily. Ephesians 4:24 largely echoes Colossians 3:10, but with less explicit reference to the image of God. First Corinthians 15:49 introduces a secondary aspect of our creation in the image of God. It pictures our resurrected bodies as bearing the image of the heavenly man, implying a representational function. But this is the only text that focuses on this aspect, and thus I see it as secondary.

Together, these texts require that our creation in the image of God be something dynamic and capable of renewal. Such renewal is associated with life in Christ. And life in Christ concerns the development of one's relationship with God, something the NT associates with the human spirit. All these considerations support the interpretation of the image of God being argued for here and do not seem to fit well with many other interpretations.

Thus, by the parameters we gathered from Scripture, the idea that being created in the image of God means being created with the capacity for personal relationship with God, with that capacity centered in the human spirit, seems to be biblically supported.

III. TOWARD A CONTEMPORARY CONSENSUS

It is somewhat surprising but gratifying to see that, after centuries of discussion and division, a degree of consensus is emerging on an understanding of humanity's creation in the image of God. The element of consensus lies in the idea of relationship; more specifically, the image of God is being seen as involving a relationship with God or being created with the capacity for relationship with God. Some add secondarily that it includes the capacity for relationships with

other persons or even with creation. As we said earlier, technically, if we see the key element as a capacity, this view would fall within the substantive family of approaches, but the central idea of relationships is causing many to place these formulations within the relational family. Regardless of classification, here are some of the places where this consensus is emerging.

Jason McMartin has gone back to Augustine and his idea of the image as *capax dei* (capable of participation with God) found in his treatise *On the Trinity*. McMartin develops this idea into a model of the image of God that sees it as “the capacity for relationship with God,”³⁵ which is identical to the central phrase I developed independently for my understanding of *imago Dei*.

From the progressive Reformed tradition as seen in feminist theologian Mary McClintock Fulkerson, we have much the same thing, with the language of capacity: “To say that we are created in the image of God is to identify the human capacity to be in relationship with God, or better, to claim that relationship with God is the human vocation.”³⁶ Evangelical theologian Kevin Vanhoozer includes a similar idea as the first element in his understanding of this topic: “To be in the *imago Dei* refers, first of all, to humanity’s unique capacity for communion with God.”³⁷

Douglas Moo and son Jonathan combine a definition of *imago Dei* with its purpose. The

first part is the definition: “Our argument, in keeping with that of many interpreters, is that the image of God means being placed into a particular set of relationships with God, each other, and the rest of creation.” and then its purpose: “for the purpose of ruling as his royal representatives.”³⁸ Here they are drawing primarily on Genesis 1. In an earlier work, in which Douglas Moo deals with NT teaching, he describes the image of God as “having to do primarily

³⁵Jason McMartin, “The Theandric Union as *Imago Dei* and *Capax Dei*,” in *Christology: Ancient and Modern*, ed. Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 137.

³⁶Mary McClintock Fulkerson, “The *Imago Dei* and a Reformed Logic for Feminist/Womanist Critique,” in *Feminist and Womanist Essays in Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. Amy Plantinga Pauw and Serene Jones (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 95–106, cited in *T & T Clark Reader in Theological Anthropology*, ed. Marc Cortez and Michael Jensen (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2018), 100.

³⁷Kevin Vanhoozer, “Human Being, Individual and Social,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed. Colin Gunton (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 163.

³⁸Douglas Moo and Jonathan Moo, *Creation Care: A Biblical Theology for the Natural World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 74.

with the power to form appropriate relationships—between humans and God, between humans and other humans, and between humans and creation.”³⁹ Moo’s term “power” seems very close to the term advocated in my view (“capacity”), suggesting that these two views are very close to each other.

Robert Jenson and Colin Gunton do not use the language of capacity, but link the image of God with a human’s relationship with God, which seems to presuppose a capacity for such a relationship. Here is how Jenson puts it: “The ‘image of God,’ if we are to use this phrase comprehensively for humanity’s distinctiveness, is simply that we are related to God as his conversational counterpart.”⁴⁰ Two statements by Colin Gunton lead to the same conclusion. First, he says, “To be a person is to be made in the image of God.” He then adds, “We are persons insofar as we are in right relationship to God.”⁴¹ The implication seems to be that the image of God involves being in right relationship with God, which, again, assumes that we have the capacity for such a relationship.

J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays cite numerous scholars in OT studies and other disciplines who are coming to see relationship with God as “a critical part of the *imago Dei*.”⁴² Many of these scholars do not use the precise language of the image as the capacity for a relationship with God, but what they do say seems to presuppose it. Robin Routledge, in discussing relationships as one of the implications of human creation in God’s image, states, “Human beings are made for relationship with God.”⁴³ Brevard Childs says of the image of God, “In spite of its unclarity, at least one can say that it denotes a special relationship between God and mankind.”⁴⁴

Speaking from a survey of the opinions of writers from the Early

³⁹Douglas Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” *JETS* 49, no. 3 (September 2006): 481.

⁴⁰Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 95, cited in *T&T Clark Reader in Theological Anthropology*, 350.

⁴¹Colin Gunton, “Trinity, Ontology and Anthropology: Towards a Renewal of the Doctrine of the *Imago Dei*,” in *Persons, Divine and Human*, ed. Christoph Schwobel and Colin Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 58.

⁴²J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *God’s Relational Presence: The Cohesive Center of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 17.

⁴³Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008), 140.

⁴⁴Brevard Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985), 34.

Church through those in the Reformation and beyond, Paul House says, “All agree that in Genesis 1–2 ‘image’ means that humans can relate positively to God in ways the rest of creation has not been made to do.”⁴⁵ J. van Huyssteen adds, “The concept of the *imago Dei*... has always in some broad sense functioned to express the relationship between Creator and creatures, God and humans.”⁴⁶ Jonathan Threlfall concurs, claiming that one point of agreement among the varying interpretations of the image of God in Christian history is that “humans are somehow fundamentally oriented toward God,” or as he himself puts it, humans “are constituted for a relationship with God and the rest of creation.”⁴⁷

John Kilner objects to those who define the image of God as relationship with God, for he sees the image of God as a status that sin cannot alter, and sin can and does interfere with one’s relationship to God. But it does not seem that Kilner’s objection would apply to the image of God as *capacity* for relationship with God, for the capacity itself is not altered by sin, though the exercise of that capacity is. Kilner himself does see a connection between being in God’s image and engaging in relationship with God: “Actual God-honoring relationships flow from being in God’s image, to the degree that sin does not interfere.” This statement, as well as Kilner’s language that “relationship has to do with God’s intentions,”⁴⁸ seem very consistent with the understanding of the image of God being advocated here.

Finally, Richard Lints insists that “the *imago Dei* is fundamentally a relational term.” He later states that “a relationship with God is that which secures our identity as humans.”⁴⁹ This seems at least consistent with the idea advocated here, that the image of God is the capacity for a relationship with God, though Lints does not use that exact language.

⁴⁵Paul House, “Shaped into the Creator’s Image: Spirituality and Spiritual Formation in the Old Testament,” in *Biblical Spirituality*, ed. Christopher Morgan (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 59. For the sources cited for House’s survey of opinions, see 59, n. 11.

⁴⁶Van Huyssteen, *Alone in the World*, 160.

⁴⁷Jonathan Threlfall, “The Doctrine of the *Imago Dei*: The Biblical Data for an Abductive Argument for the Christian Faith,” *JETS* 6, no. 3 (September 2019): 543–44; 546.

⁴⁸Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 229–30.

⁴⁹Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and its Inversion*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 36 (Nottingham, UK: Apollos; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015), 153.

IV. CONCLUSION

These writers differ slightly in that some define the image as the capacity for relationship with God, while others link the image of God to an existing relationship with God, and others include relationships with others and/or creation, and still others omit the language of capacity. However, all these scholars link the image of God in humans in some way to the idea of a relationship with God, and in so doing assume that humans have the capacity for a relationship with God.

The argument here is that: (1) parameters for understanding the meaning of human creation in God's image are given in numerous places throughout the Bible; (2) because it so aptly fits these parameters, capacity for relationship with God should be considered as the primary meaning of human creation in the image of God; and (3) the movement of recent scholarship toward something of a consensus on the centrality of relationship to the meaning of our creation in the image of God strengthens the case for such an interpretation.

But we should not conclude this article without noting the profound practical application our creation in the image of God has on human dignity. The weightiness of this understanding of human beings was vividly made years ago in a classic essay by C. S. Lewis:

It is a serious thing... to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics.... It is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.⁵⁰

All humans are headed toward one of these two destinations because

⁵⁰C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 14–15.

we are created in the image of God with all the privileges and responsibilities this includes.



GOD CREATED THEM, MALE AND FEMALE

Katie J. McCoy*

I.

Few subjects generate such dissonant cultural clashes as the relationship between biology and gender and its meaning for human identity. Following the influx of social feminism's influence in the mainstream, evangelicals of various theological convictions sought to delineate theologically their paradigm of gender differentiation and its significance, both through the written word and organizational advocacy. Propelling these efforts was an effort to apply rightly the significance of mankind being created male and female.

Two ideologies emerged. To define generally (and avoid belaboring the familiar), the belief that one's biological sex should neither predict nor limit one's relational or ecclesial roles became known as "egalitarianism," while the belief that one's biological sex indicates and prescribes one's relational or ecclesial roles became known as "complementarianism."¹ Both views claim male and female are equal; both views claim to interpret accurately the same biblical passages; and both views claim the other is, at least in part, guilty of theological error.

These themes are worthy of our ongoing consideration. Given the tectonic shifts in Western cultural values within the last several decades, we neglect them to the erosion of our public witness as well as to our own ruin. Indeed, every generation must search and apply the enduring precepts of Scripture to their transitory times. Cultural acquiescence threatens the integrity of Christian belief and practice

¹Complementarianism is the view to which I hold. See "The Danvers Statement," *The Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, accessed September 1, 2020; available from <https://cbmw.org/about/danvers-statement/>.

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in our day just as it did in the Apostle Paul's.

Within evangelicalism, the pervasive questions in these debates are two-fold: First and foundationally, how and to what extent does Genesis 1–3 inform and direct our sex-based gender identities and relational roles? For, how one interprets and applies the Creation narrative portends all subsequent biblical interpretation related to gender roles and relations. Second and consequently, in light of our created identities as male or female, how ought men and women express their respective genders socially, relationally, and ecclesiastically? For, if sexual differentiation is in fact essential to our personhood as God's image-bearers, then we must determine why and for what purpose.

However, the digital din of debate over evangelical gender roles has been nearly eclipsed by the clamor of a new rhetoric, with concepts like gender fluidity, gender nonconformity, and transgenderism rapidly transposing cultural mores. Before one can answer the question of what ministries a woman can fulfill in the church, one must now first define what a woman is. Before one can defend marriage as a covenant between male and female, one must be prepared to stipulate that maleness and femaleness are unalterably determined at birth. In short, conversations on *how* one expresses one's gender risk falling on deaf ears apart from a clear defense of *why* gender differentiation matters at all. And, in a society that increasingly accepts the idea that one's biology is irrelevant to determine one's gender, answering this *why* seems more urgent than ever.

As the chorus of advocates claiming gender is little more than a social performance continues to grow, much of complementarian discourse has defaulted to amplifying familiar refrains: delineating and debating specific roles, stipulating gender expressions, managing the *how*.² However, in view of our present moment, it is all the more urgent that we articulate the *why*. Why did God create sex differentiation? Why did he create male and female? In what follows, I propose that complementarian evangelicals must recover the relational character of mankind as male and female—a characteristic that pervades all of Scripture—and reframe their discourse to emphasize relationality prior to roles. This shift preserves both ontological equality between male and female as well as the meaning

²Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519–31.

created sex differentiation gives to manhood and womanhood. I hasten to add this assertion does not make the idea of specific gender responsibilities mutually exclusive to human relationality; it is an unfortunate and ironic reality in my own theological community that affirming the equality of women leaves one open to suspicion of closeted heterodoxy. Nonetheless, I choose to believe the best of my readers and am confident they will choose not to conclude that which I have not claimed.

Thus, we begin—as all conversations on mankind as male and female must—at the beginning.

II.

Scripture's first chapters describe humanity in relational terms.³ In Genesis 1:26–28, the affiliation between male and female is one of essential equality and distinct personhood in their relationship to God. Both male and female receive undifferentiated commands from the Lord: to rule and reign over creation, and to multiply and fill the earth. They are equal manifestations of the *imago Dei*: concerning activity, they are equal recipients of the divinely-given mission; concerning community, they are equal participants in a divinely-created relationship; concerning status, they are equal stewards of a divinely-delegated authority over his creation.⁴

The very mode of woman's creation portrays her comprehensive equality to the man. The Lord created the woman to mitigate the man's solitude, to provide community in relationship. Rather than creating her out of the dust of the earth as he did the man, the Lord fashions her out of the man's side. In Hebrew thought, this signified the man's rational powers; woman shared in man's capacity for comprehension, reason, and agency.⁵ She is of the same substance as the man, in every way related and corresponding to him. Even the event of naming the woman confirms this: woman is both of

³Portions of this article appeared in "Recovering the Communion of Persons: How Hebrew Anthropology Counters Aristotelian Thought Concerning Male and Female Roles," *Eikon: A Journal for Biblical Anthropology* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2019): 44–59.

⁴The manner in which male and female express their authority over creation is intrinsic to their relationship to each other. While the man and the woman had equal authority over creation in Genesis 1-2, they did not necessarily have identical authority over each other.

⁵Earle Bennett Cross, *The Hebrew Family: A Study in Historical Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 42. Within Hebrew thought, emotional affections were located in the bowels.

man, yet not man (Gen 2:18–25). Man could neither disparage her person nor dismiss her intellect or personhood without despising himself—and what man ever despised himself (Eph 5:29)?

This relational emphasis is consistent with the rest of written revelation. From the first moments of creation to history's culmination, Scripture reveals a relational deity. God created humanity in male and female forms in his image, not out of necessity—the Godhead subsisted in perfect fellowship within himself—but from love, and for his glory. More specifically, he created humanity so that they would know his love and his glory in a relationship unlike any other of his creatures. They were his family (Isa 43:6–7). As humanity is created in his image, they are likewise relational. The Creation Mandate of Genesis 1:27–29 instructed the man and the woman to fill the earth and multiply—to increase the family. Thereafter, the Lord continues to reveal himself and his work in relational terms. He calls himself the Father of Israel, an indissoluble family bond (Gen 12:1–3; Exod 4:22–23). The marital union, a relationship unique among all other familial and social affiliations, was a metaphor portraying his covenant faithfulness of Yahweh to Israel and his anguish over Israel's spiritual infidelity (Jer 3:14; Hos 2:16). Israel's mediatorial ministry to the surrounding nations was intended to bring pagans into relationship with Israel's God (Isa 19:16–25; 43:10–12).

This relational prominence continues in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus grounds the motivation for obedience in love for God. The Apostle Paul predicates personal holiness upon one's right relationship with God (Romans 6). The Apostle John establishes one's relational union with Christ as the impetus for one's purification (1 John 3:3). The Great Commission entails acting as God's ministers of reconciliation for the expansion of his family. Even the fulfillment of the Law—that we would love the Lord our God with the totality of our being and love our neighbor as ourselves—is a fundamentally relational command. And the consummation of the present age is the marital union between the Lord and his people. Within the metanarrative of Scripture, God reveals himself in relational terms.

By allowing this relational theme of Scripture to inform our reading of the creation narrative, we discover the meaning of mankind as male and female with greater insight. The creation story in Genesis 1–2 grounds human identity and personhood in terms

of relationship. Although the substance of the *imago Dei* includes various definitions and approaches, humanity's potential for relationship with God constitutes the most unique aspect of being created in his image.⁶ John F. Kilner identifies God's purpose for creating humanity as connection and reflection; the Lord intended humanity to know him in a special connection and reflect his attributes such that God receives glory and his people flourish as he intended.⁷ The Lord's relational motivation for creating contrasted with the deities of other ancient Near Eastern cultures. Tom Holland contrasts the creative impulse of Yahweh with the Babylonian god, Marduk. The pagan deity created humanity to fulfill the work he was unwilling to do. Yahweh, however, created humanity to know him, to be in relationship with him.

The sexual differentiation between male and female is not merely functional or reproductive. John Paul II in his work *Theology of the Body* describes the significance of the male-female relationship as the "nuptial meaning of the body." The body is a gift, one that subsumes the whole person. To fulfill the body's nuptial meaning, both male and female mutually give themselves to create a "communion of persons."⁸ This communion is a dynamic relationship in which both male and female mutually realize the significance of their gendered bodies as embodied gifts to each other.

The character and expression of their respective sexualities (i.e., masculinity and femininity) are inextricably established by their sexual differentiation. The differences between male and female constitute what J. Budziszewski calls "polaric complementarity," a corresponding oppositeness that reflects interdependence and congruence.⁹ This polaric complementarity enables both male and female to comprehend themselves through comprehending each other.

⁶Other understandings of the *imago Dei* contain a relational underpinning: the functional view reflects humanity's positional relationship to the Lord in comparison to all other creation (Gen 1:27); conscience or moral law presumes humanity's instinctive knowledge of right and wrong and consequently accountability to a personal God (Rom 1:18–23).

⁷John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 228.

⁸John Paul, II, *Theology of the Body in Simple Language* (Philokalia Books, 2008), 19. John Paul II discusses at length how the celibate person also fulfills the nuptial meaning of the body by being "married" to God (168, 173).

⁹J. Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2012), 38–40. Not merely do biologically quantifiable brain differences between male and female exist, but they exist in corresponding ways, the differences of one balancing what the other lacks (41).

Within the woman, man recognizes himself. He understands himself through her corresponding similarities and difference. Gerhard Müller describes this as among the reasons God created sexual differentiation: “In sexual difference...each of the two can only understand himself or herself in light of the other: the male needs the female to be understood, and the same is true for the female.”¹⁰ In other words, the man understands himself by understanding what he is not and vice versa. Man cannot comprehend his identity as a man apart from woman and vice versa; both masculinity and femininity find their meaning in contradistinction to one another.¹¹ One cannot know the meaning of one’s gendered self apart from relationship. John Paul II explains, “Femininity is found in relation to masculinity and masculinity is confirmed in femininity. They depend on each other.” Ross Hastings asserts the relationality between male and female is constituted in both unity and “differentiated, complementary, noninterchangeable plurality.... *It is otherness and oneness. Otherness in oneness.*”¹²

III.

This self-understanding through relational correspondence has been described as an “I-Thou” way of relating.¹³ Just as God is not alone in himself, human beings image God by an *analogia relationis* (analogy of relation).¹⁴ This relationship personified the imago Dei in a manner that individual man could not in isolation, what Karl Barth called, “being in encounter.”¹⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer explains:

¹⁰Gerhard Müller, “An Opening to the Mystery of God,” in *Not Just Good, But Beautiful: The Complementarity Relationship Between Man and Woman*, ed. Steven Lopes and Helen Alvaré (Walden, NY: Plough, 2015), 12.

¹¹John Paul, II, *Theology of the Body*, 16.

¹²Ross Hastings, “The Trinity and Human Sexuality: Made in the Image of God,” *Crux* 53, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 15.

¹³Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/1*, translated by G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 185. The analogy between God and man [*imago Dei*] is simply the existence of the I and the Thou in confrontation.” The I-Thou motif originates with Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Scribner, 1970).

¹⁴Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1-3*, ed. John W. deGruchy, trans. Douglas Stephen Bax, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 65. Bonhoeffer contrasts this with an *analogia entis* (analogy of being). The “freedom” of God that human beings image reflects God’s ability to be free *for* another. “The creature is free in that one creature exists in relation to another creature, in that one being is free for another human being” (66).

¹⁵The analogy between God and man [*imago Dei*] is simply the existence of the I and the Thou in confrontation.” Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/1*, 185. “Hence humanity is the determination of our being as a being in encounter with the other man.” Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/2*, 248. “The only

“Human beings exist in duality, and it is in this *dependence on the other that their creatureliness exists*.”¹⁶ The relational interdependence in which human beings exist is the *analogia relationis*. Thus, human beings cannot image God fully apart from an “in-dependence-upon-one-another” relationship.¹⁷ As humanity images God with their being, and as sexual differentiation is not only functional but also relational, created sexual differentiation itself images the divine.

Likewise, as all creation reveals the existence of a Creator, sex differentiation between male and female comprises general revelation, part of the natural world that proclaims the reality of an intelligent designer and his attributes. Hastings explains, “The fact that humans are sexual beings in a binary way, that they are beings who are not interchangeable with respect to sex, says something particular about who God is.”¹⁸ In other words, the sexed body is significant because it images God.¹⁹ The physical creation contains a spiritual meaning.²⁰ Humanity is like God in its relationality, yet unlike God in interdependence. According to Leslie Cook, a human being’s gender, signified by the human body, reinforces the theological belief that humans are distinct from the divine. She claims that “gender, represented through the body, is a symbol of difference. God is undifferentiated unity.”²¹ As Rabbi Ghatan describes, one gender without the other would bring “destruction to the world.”²² Both male and female qualities are necessary for the benefit of humanity. For Ghatan, the Hebrew concept of sex differentiation obviates competition between male and female: “The question of whether

real differentiation and relationship is that of man to man, and in its original and not concrete form of man to woman and woman to man. Man is no more solitary than God. But as God is One, and He alone is God, so man as man is one and alone, and two only in the duality of his kind, i.e., in the duality of man and woman. In this way he is a copy and imitation of God. In this way he repeats in his confrontation of God and himself the confrontation in God.” Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, 186. This is not to say that individual humanity does not fully image God. The image of God is not contingent upon relationship, but it is manifested in relationship.

¹⁶Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 64. Italics original.

¹⁷Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 64.

¹⁸Hastings, “Trinity and Human Sexuality,” 13.

¹⁹Hastings, “Trinity and Human Sexuality,” 13.

²⁰Lisa Aiken, *To Be a Jewish Woman* (Northvale, NJ: J. Aronson, 1992), 27.

²¹Leslie Cook, “Body Language: Woman’s Rituals of Purification in the Bible and Mishnah,” in *Women and Water: Menstruation in Jewish Life*, ed. Rahel R. Wasserfall (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1999), 42.

²²Yedidiah H. E. Ghatan, *The Invaluable Pearl: The Unique Status of Women in Judaism* (New York: Bloch, 1986), 42.

man is superior to woman or vice versa is totally irrelevant. Either sex without the other is incomplete.”²³ Again, this pertains not only to reproductive capacity but also to relational completion.

Further, the sexual differentiation between male and female and the unbreakable bond intended by the marital union didactically illustrate God and his own covenant faithfulness. Hastings explains, “Humanity functions as co-humanity in its being male and female together, and by humans being male or female individually. Human relationality structured in this sexual binary manner has correspondence to God and his covenant partner.”²⁴ Human sexuality and its complementarity between male and female also portrays the perfect union God has within the Godhead. Peter Kreeft identifies this as the reason for the power and uniqueness of sexual passion: “Human sexuality is that image [of God], and human sexuality is a foretaste of that self-giving, that losing and finding the self, that oneness-in-manyness that is the heart of the life and joy of the Trinity... We love the other sex because God loves God.”²⁵

This relationality-preceding-functionality—the “communion of persons”—relates to the other as a living “Thou,” rather than a static “It.” Thus, within the male-female relationship, failure to relate to one another in a communion of persons produces failure to comprehend fully the nature of one’s identity as male or female. This “I-Thou” connection—*analogia relationis*—is not mutually exclusive to what may be identified as “roles” in the sense of sex-specific responsibilities and ways of relating; on the contrary, the I-Thou finds its expression in relationships particular to one’s personhood as male or female.²⁶

Further, equality does not entail indistinguishability. The relational complementarity between male and female is both biological and gendered. The creation account reveals the human body is neither incidental nor accidental to gender identity.²⁷ Genesis 1 uses the Hebrew terms *zakar* (male) and *neqebah* (female) to depict their sexual

²³Ghatan, *Invaluable Pearl*, 43. Cf. 1 Cor 11:11–12.

²⁴Hastings, “Trinity and Human Sexuality,” 14.

²⁵Peter Kreeft, “Is There Sex in Heaven?” in *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Heaven but Never Dreamed of Asking* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990), 132.

²⁶Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/2, 297, 310-11. Within this mutuality, Barth explains the analogical relationship between God and Israel, Christ and the Church. “This basic order of the human established by God’s creation is not accidental or contingent.”

²⁷By “gender identity,” I do not mean the idea that one may determine the gender with which one subjectively identifies. Rather, I mean the gender that one’s biology empirically signifies.

differentiation while Genesis 2 includes the words *ish* (man) and *ishah* (woman) to reflect their gender differentiation. These pairs of terms relate *zakar* to *ish* and *neqebah* to *ishah*. To be a *zakar* makes one an *ish*. To be a *neqebah* makes one an *ishah*. At the risk of inviting the charge of anachronism, this linguistic nuance contradicts the cultural belief that one's biological sex and one's gender are unrelated, and confirms the culturally anathema idea that gender is binary. To be sure, biological sex and gender are not *identical* aspects of one's humanity—sex is a primarily reproductive descriptor, while gender is a relational one—but they are indeed *correlative* aspects. From this, we may deduce that one's biological sex indicates and corresponds to one's gender such that both are binary. The sexed body is indivisible from gendered self. On this point, we must elaborate.

IV.

An increasingly accepted yet empirically unestablished belief claims one's sex is unrelated to and divisible from one's gender. According to this ideology, a person who is born male but believes himself to be a woman has a legitimate cause to conform his outer life to his inner "feminized" self and to expect society to do the same. The psychological condition is known as gender dysphoria, in which a person's biology does not coincide with a person's gender identity, causing distress.²⁸ The gender dysphoric person may attempt to achieve external conformity to his internal self through socialized gender expressions, (one's name, personal pronouns, manner of dress and appearance), medical treatments (hormonal therapies), and/or surgical procedures (breast implants, mastectomy, hysterectomy, vaginoplasty, orchiectomy, phallectomy, phalloplasty, and womb transplant).

Transgender advocates substantiate their belief that biological sex and gender identity are divisible by claiming gender is merely a social construct. Males have been socialized into behaving in characteristically masculine ways, females in feminine ways. Remove these social influences and a child is free from the constraints of conforming to external expectations. Hence, the so-called progressive trends like gender-neutral parenting and countries offering a

²⁸"What Is Gender Dysphoria?" American Psychiatric Association, accessed August 31, 2020, <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/gender-dysphoria/what-is-gender-dysphoria>.

non-binary option on birth certificates.²⁹ Validating gender dysphoria is considered a civil right.³⁰ In some cases, pubescent children are undergoing hormone replacement therapies to alter their natural sexual development.³¹

However, contrary to common parlance, one's sex is not "assigned at birth," but rather identified as that which corresponds to biology. Paul McHugh, University Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins Medical School, insists one's sex is biologically unalterable. "People who undergo sex-reassignment surgery do not change from men to women or vice versa. Rather, they become feminized men or masculinized women."³² To collaborate with one's gender dysphoria is, in McHugh's words, "to collaborate with and promote a mental disorder."³³

Intrinsic in transgender ideology is the conviction that gender is, at its core, a feeling. In his work, *When Harry Became Sally*, Ryan Anderson notes the epistemological questions transgenderism creates. How does one "know" the embodied experience of the other sex? As Anderson notes, "The claim of a biological male that he is 'a woman stuck in a man's body presupposes that someone who has a man's body, a man's brain, a man's sexual capacities, and a man's DNA can *know* what it's like to *be* a woman."³⁴ The remaining "proof" appears to be one's identification with and affinity for stereotyped expressions of gender identity.³⁵ In other words, the expression of gender is regarded as the essence of gender.

²⁹ArielJao, "Gender'X':OntarioIssuesItsFirst'NonBinary'BirthCertificate,"NBCNews,May9,2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/gender-x-ontario-issues-its-first-ever-non-binary-birth-n872676>.

³⁰Adam Liptak, "Civil Rights Law Protects Gay and Transgender Workers, Supreme Court Rules," *New York Times*, updated June 16, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/15/us/gay-transgender-workers-supreme-court.html>.

³¹Jason Rafferty, "Ensuring Comprehensive Care and Support for Transgender and Gender-Diverse Children and Adolescents," *Pediatrics* 142, no. 4 (2018); "Pubertal Blockers for Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth," Mayo Clinic, August 16, 2019, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/gender-dysphoria/in-depth/pubertal-blockers/art-20459075>; Michelle Cretella, "I'm a Pediatrician. How Transgender Ideology Has Infiltrated My Field and Produced Large-Scale Child Abuse," *The Daily Signal*, July 3, 2017, <https://www.dailysignal.com/2017/07/03/im-pediatrician-transgender-ideology-infiltrated-field-produced-large-scale-child-abuse/>.

³²Ryan T. Anderson, "*The New York Times* Reveals Painful Truths about Transgender Lives," *Public Discourse*, November 25, 2018, <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2018/11/47220/>.

³³Anderson, "*Times* Reveals."

³⁴Ryan T. Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Movement* (New York: Encounter, 2018), 104.

³⁵Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally*, 104.

Moreover, that gender identity is socially formed and expressed does not entail that it has nothing to do with the body. In his book, *On The Meaning of Sex*, J. Budziszewski notes gender identity “must be disciplined and stewarded; it is not in itself a separate reality of one’s being to be followed without critical thought or question.”³⁶ Gender identity is influenced, directed, and formed. Even the gender dysphoric person relies on *some* type of community to validate his or her sense of self.

Consider the research presented by Lisa Littman, assistant professor at the Brown University School of Public Health. Littman endeavored to explain the relative phenomena of an increasing and sudden prevalence of gender dysphoria among adolescents, teenagers who had previously expressed no gender dysphoric symptoms. The condition, known as Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria revealed an unexpected—and in certain corners, unwelcome—pattern. Littman discovered the influence of an adolescent’s relationships directly affected her gender identity. The phenomenon had a social cause. Among adolescents with Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria, 87 percent had friends who announced themselves as gender dysphoric, had saturated themselves with material on niche websites discussing gender dysphoria, or both.³⁷ In other words, a condition believed to find its source and validation in one’s intrinsic sense of self has extrinsic factors.³⁸ Additionally, a majority had also experienced some sort of psychological trauma within the last twelve months, including sexual abuse or assault, serious illness, their parents’ divorce, bullying, or moving to a new school.³⁹ Expressing gender dysphoria became a coping mechanism to distract from the source of distress. When Littman identified Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria as a peer contagion, she effectively confirmed that it is, at least in part, socially influenced. In other words, the gender dysphoric individual’s gender dysphoria may itself be a type of social construction.

As we uphold a biblically sound view of mankind as male and

³⁶Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex*, 41.

³⁷Lisa Littman, “Parent Reports of Adolescents and Young Adults Perceived to Show Signs of a Rapid Onset of Gender Dysphoria,” *PLoS ONE* 13, no. 8; August 16, 2018, <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0202330>.

³⁸Katie McCoy, “Gender, Sexuality, and Family in the Context of Baptist Witness in Society,” paper presented at Research Institute for the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, Dallas, TX, 2018.

³⁹Littman, “Parent Reports.”

female, we must unwaveringly maintain that our identities are indivisible from our bodies. Biological sex and gender identity are created aspects of our significance as God's image bearers, created aspects that he calls "good." These two aspects of our humanity—sex and gender—were intended to coincide in wholeness. Employing Kilner's two-fold purpose for humanity, one's biological sex and one's corresponding gender image God in a way that connects us to him and reflects his attributes. In light of this, we must affirm the logically simple yet culturally subversive claim that one cannot choose one's gender. The idea that an *ish* may not be a *zakar* and an *ishah* may not be a *neqebah* reflects the fractured and distorted self-image caused by our sinful world. Even more, it reflects the attempts of God's rebellious image bearers to suppress the truth that nature reveals about God.

We are more than our embodied sex, yet we cannot be separated from our embodied sex.⁴⁰ Christianity gives us the framework to affirm that our bodies and reproduction are good yet not ultimate.⁴¹ Andrew Walker clarifies: "Maleness isn't only anatomy but anatomy shows that there is maleness. And femaleness isn't only anatomy, but anatomy shows that there is femaleness. Men and women are more than just their anatomy, but they are not less. Our anatomy tells us what gender we are. Our bodies do not lie to us."⁴² We may also affirm that both one's maleness or femaleness and one's manhood or womanhood are created and bestowed aspects of our identities as God's image bearers. To reject this relationship between sex and gender is but a resurrected form a Gnosticism,⁴³ a devaluation, and consequently, a denigration of the body.⁴⁴ Thus, men and women are neither composites of their biology nor abstractions from their biology. Our sexed bodies are neither accidental nor incidental to our gendered selves. Both are given by God to image himself in holistic relationality.

Transgender persons should elicit our compassion. No social

⁴⁰Hastings, "Trinity and Human Sexuality," 10

⁴¹Angela Franks, "Andrea Long Chu Says You Are a Female, and He's Only Partly Wrong," Public Discourse, December 10, 2019, <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2019/12/58719/>.

⁴²Andrew Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate* (The Good Book Company, 2017), 54, cf. 50-51.

⁴³Craig Carter, "The New Gender Gnostics," *Eikon* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 28-39.

⁴⁴Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018).

adaptation or surgical procedure will achieve the sense of wholeness they seek. The staggering suicide rate among sex-reassignment recipients is proof. What is inwardly broken has no outward cure. Whether one's psychological distress is symptomatic of another source of pain or the effect of living in a fallen world, the transgender person's hunger for meaning finds its satisfaction only in the satisfaction of Christ on our behalf. Apart from a reconciled relationship with our Creator, we will never comprehend, much less fulfill, the significance of our sexed bodies, our gendered selves, or our relationality with others.

V.

Evangelical discourse preoccupied with prescribing specific roles may, however unwittingly, neglect the relational emphasis within Christian anthropology. A "role" is an extrinsic property; a relationship is an intrinsic reality. One can adopt or suspend a role like a task or a function. Yet the nature of male or female is not a static position but rather an active relationship, one in which two persons relate to one another as a "Thou" not an "It." One's identity as a man or a woman reflects the intricate wholeness of personhood, one that is neither reduced to one's biological sex nor separate from one's biological sex. To condense the relationship to terms of roles reduces the complexity and comprehensiveness of the maleness and femaleness to a function—to relating to the other as a depersonalized "It." Moreover, emphasizing roles over relationality risks displacing one's relationship with God as the defining factor of one's gender identity and replacing that defining factor with an interpersonal dynamic.

The relational character of sexual differentiation and gendered personhood requires man and woman to know one another primarily as relational persons (Thou), not as static positions (It). This being-in-encounter relationship is distinct from the inhabiting of a role, although the two are not mutually exclusive. This observation is not to dismiss the different ways of relating or relational responsibilities between male and female; Scripture's pattern of male headship in nuclear and spiritual families is clear. Rather, this point considers the idea of male-female roles primarily in terms of personal relationship, not the other way around.

With this in mind, I humbly offer the following definition of

biblical manhood and biblical womanhood. Biblical manhood constitutes a biologically born male who submits fully to God and his Word, allowing the precepts of biblical instruction and the implications of that spiritual posture to pervade every aspect of his life and relationships. Likewise, biblical womanhood constitutes a biologically born female who submits fully to God and his Word, allowing the precepts of biblical instruction and the implications of that spiritual posture to pervade every aspect of her life and relationships. The relative ambiguity and correspondence of these definitions stresses a twofold relational emphasis. First, the man or woman who aligns his or her life to biblical instruction will fulfill its gender-specific commands, thus embodying the significance of his or her biological sex and gender identity. One's relationship to the Lord determines one's relationship to the self and to others. Second, as a man or woman submits to and obeys God's commands—both to all Christians and to their respective genders—the Lord accomplishes and fulfills the meaning and significance of one's gender through one's interpersonal relationships. In other words, and at the risk of oversimplifying the issue, when we as men and women worship the Lord in obedience, he is the one who reveals and establishes the meaning of manhood and womanhood. We conform; he confirms.

Undoubtedly, a reader or two will object to such simplicity. Yet, consider the perennial efforts to delineate and stipulate gender roles in detail. Preoccupation with prescribing gender roles at the expense of human relationality quickly tends toward conflating culturally gendered activities with the essence and meaning of gender itself. In other words, the gender expression of manhood constitutes the essence of manhood; the gender expression of womanhood constitutes the essence of womanhood. In this way, overzealous complementarian discourse risks committing a similar fallacy as transgenderism: conflating the essence of gender with the expression of gender. Grounding gender differentiation in relationship rather than roles protects sound complementarian theology from devolving into disproportionate concern over gender expression. This is not to denigrate the importance of practicing cultural sensitivity and outwardly behaving in a way that reflects one's acknowledgement of his or her created gender.⁴⁵ Rather, it is to demonstrate that complementarian discourse can

⁴⁵First Corinthians 11:2–16 addresses this point.

become so preoccupied with stipulating specific gender roles that it misses the significance of relationality.

Further, in a culture increasingly receptive to the idea that gender is a subjective feeling, expressed exclusively by behaviors (i.e., roles), complementarian discourse jeopardizes its own convictions if it fails to emphasize a relationality that is inseparable from the sexed body and holistic to the gendered self. But to emphasize gender distinctions as respective ways of relating safeguards our theological discourse from devolving into a preoccupation with specific tasks, functions, or cultural expressions. By amplifying the communion of confrontation with a “Thou,” we represent the fellowship of Hebrew marriage and the sex differentiation and gender complementarity described in Genesis 1–2.

Grounding gender differences in relationship prior to roles further allows us to maintain that male headship is a relational responsibility by which one bears greater accountability rather than a superior role with which one wields greater control. This permits the possibility of a marriage that both fulfills Scripture’s relational pattern and varies in social roles.⁴⁶ In contrast, to ascribe approval or disapproval of a marital relationship according to whether it conforms to culturally dominant norms of gender expression reflects a paradigm in which male and female fulfill a role rather than express a relationship. To reiterate, this in no way eschews the biblically established pattern of male headship in the family and the church. Nor does this approach intend to dismiss the relationship of man as spiritual authority and woman as corresponding helper in marriage (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:22–33). Rather, this distinction proposes that we present and discuss this pattern to reflect the relational nature of man as male and female prior to stipulating gendered expressions.

Finally, grounding gender differences in relationship prior to roles also frees us from associating certain virtues with gender. A virtuous man will be meek, tenderhearted, and gentle. A virtuous woman will be resolute, bold, and steadfast. While the virtues themselves

⁴⁶For instance, consider a couple that chooses to invest in their children’s education through homeschooling. Both parents are vocationally capable of earning the income the family needs. But the father, a professional educator, is more qualified to direct his children’s education. So, both parents agree that the mother will work fulltime so the father can invest in their children’s future academic success. Is the father abdicating his role to provide and lead, or is the mother failing to make her family a priority by working outside the home? Perhaps the answer will depend on whether one understands headship as a relationship or a function.

are not gendered characteristics, the expression of these virtues may correlate to the gender of the person who possesses them.⁴⁷ This point also frees us from assessing one's manliness or womanliness by the degree to which they possess specific virtues relative to other persons and, instead, relates all virtue as an expression of one's relationship to God (2 Pet 1:3–11).⁴⁸ This, too, protects our theological convictions regarding male and female from being reduced to gendered behaviors.

Our created identities as male or female are indispensable to and inseparable from our identities as God's image bearers. If our public witness is to be effective, we must underscore human relationality prior to gender roles. A compelling and cogent defense of the relational intent of male and female provides the platform upon which we may display our relational God, whom we reflect in both our equality and our distinction, our wholeness and our difference. Our world is spiraling into confusion over and celebrating the destruction of our sexed bodies and our gendered selves. May we, as ambassadors of Christ himself, not be entangled in the secondary squabbles over specific roles but be found faithful to proclaim and embody the holistic relationality through which male and female find their meaning.



⁴⁷A woman is no less feminine because she is brave, yet she not does suspend her femininity in displaying bravery. In the same way, a man does not suspend his masculinity by displaying kindness or nurture.

⁴⁸More research and work is needed on the difference between complementarity and gender essentialism. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss, but I hope a curious mind will take on the philosophical question. Edith Stein describes the biblical paradigm between the male/female relationship as complementarity without polarity; the way of relating does not consist of opposite traits and characteristics to be divided and maintained. Rather, in relationship, both man and woman integrate character traits of the other gender, and in so doing, guard themselves from hyper-femininity or hyper-masculinity. In other words, in self-giving, self-revealing relationship, both male and female fulfill the meaning of their respective gender identities. See Edith Stein, *Edith Stein Essays on Women*, 2nd ed., ed. L. Gelber and Romaeus Leuven, trans. Freda Mary Oben (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1996), 36–40.

A THEOLOGY OF HUMAN EMBODIMENT

Gregg R. Allison*

“The Lord appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of his tent during the heat of the day. He looked up, and he saw three men standing near him.”

(Genesis 18:1–2a)

I. INTRODUCTION

The narrative of Genesis 18 is intriguing for several reasons. It wonderfully presents an ancient cultural expression of hospitality (vv. 1–8). It provides choreographic details about the positioning of the Lord, Abraham, and Sarah as the first protagonist challenges the third protagonist about her denial of laughing at his (seemingly) ridiculous promise that she would bear a child in her old age (vv. 9–15). It recounts a daring conversation between the Lord and his covenant partner, Abraham, concerning the fate of desperately wicked people (vv. 16–33).

Our focus is another matter. Though the narrative characterizes the visitors as “three men” (vv. 2, 22), we readers know that one of the three is “the Lord” (e.g., vv. 1, 10, 17, 33). Furthermore, in the subsequent narrative, we learn that the other two visitors are actually “angels” (19:1, 12, 15). Strangely, then, these three “men” are actually a divine being and two angelic beings. As for the first strangeness, theologians use the term *theophany* or *Christophany*: a highly unusual appearance of God or, given the insistence of other biblical passages that “no one has ever seen God” (John 1:18),¹ more probably a pre-incarnate, temporary manifestation of God the Son.² As for the second

¹Other passages affirm that no one sees God: Exod 33:20; John 5:37; 6:46; Col 1:15; 1 Tim 6:16; 1 John 4:20.

²Vern S. Poythress, *A Biblical Theology of God's Appearing* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018). For a

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strangeness, theologians employ the term *angelophany* and insist that angels are properly immaterial beings that can, on occasion, take on human shape and appear as “men.”³ Consequently, the narrative of Genesis 18 is strange because it features three beings—God (or the preincarnate Son) and two angels—who, though usually and properly immaterial, have taken on human-like physicality.

Does such strangeness pertain also to Abraham and Sarah? We readers give no second thought to these protagonists being embodied people, one a male embodied human being and the other a female embodied human being. They share every possible human characteristic with us readers, including embodiment. There is not one strange thing about these two characters. As far as I can recall, theologians never use the word *anthropophany*.

This point leads to the thesis of this article: embodiment is the proper state of human existence.⁴ Whereas God’s existence as embodied is strange, and whereas angels’ existence as embodied is strange, human existence as embodied is natural and normal. Indeed, God has designed and creates human beings to be embodied. This is the embodiment thesis.

II. EMBODIMENT: A DEFINITION⁵

In *Embodiment: A History*, Justin Smith defines “embodiment” as “having, being in, or being associated with a body.”⁶ Human nature is complex, consisting of both an immaterial aspect and a material aspect; so “the body is a biological, material entity.”⁷ There is a second definition of “embodiment.” As a discipline of study like biology and psychology, embodiment is “an indeterminate methodological field defined by perceptual experience and the mode of presence and

counter argument to Christophanies, see Andrew S. Malone, *Knowing Jesus in the Old Testament?: A Fresh Look at Christophanies* (London: IVP UK, 2015).

³For further discussion, see Graham A. Cole, *Against the Darkness: The Doctrine of Angels, Satan, and Demons*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 76–78.

⁴This article is adapted from Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, forthcoming).

⁵The following discussion is taken from Gregg R. Allison, “Four Theses concerning Human Embodiment,” *SBJT* 23, no. 2 (2019): 157.

⁶Justin E. H. Smith, “Introduction,” in *Embodiment: A History*, ed. Justin E. H. Smith, Oxford Philosophical Concepts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1.

⁷Thomas J. Csordas, “Somatic Modes of Attention,” *Cultural Anthropology* 8, no. 2 (May 1993): 135.

engagement in the world.”⁸ From a theological perspective, human embodiment intersects with a host of other important theological concerns:⁹

(1) an understanding of God’s creation of human beings and his design for human flourishing (thus, the theology of creation); (2) the constitution of human nature (thus, theological anthropology); (3) the somatic effects of the fall and sin (thus, hamartiology); (4) the nature of the incarnation (thus, Christology); (5) the Holy Spirit’s indwelling of, and divine action through, redeemed human beings (thus, pneumatology and soteriology); (6) the strangeness of disembodiment in the intermediate state and the completion of God’s redemptive work through the general resurrection (thus, eschatology); (7) numerous contemporary moral and social issues such as heterosexuality and homosexuality, transgenderism and gender dysphoria, and body image and body modification; and (8) an exposé of the devastating impact of Gnosticism/neo-Gnosticism on the America society and church.¹⁰

⁸Csordas, “Somatic Modes,” 135.

⁹I am cheered by the growing literature on human embodiment from a biblical and theological perspective, the most recent of which is Timothy Tennent, *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020). As a discipline of study, embodiment began with John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (Boston: Pauline, 1986, 2006). Others have continued to develop this field: Mary T. Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); John B. Nelson, *Body Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992); idem, *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978); Benedict Ashley, *Theologies of the Body: Humanist and Christian* (Braintree, MA: The Pope John Center, 1985); Carlo Maria Martini, *On the Body: A Contemporary Theology of the Body*, trans. R. M. Giammanco Frongia (New York: Crossroad, 2001); Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *I Am My Body: A Theology of Embodiment*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Continuum, 1995); Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018); Ola Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies: Incarnation, the Gaze, and Embodiment in Christian Theology*, trans. Carl Olsen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016); Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Revelatory Body: Theology as Inductive Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015); Samuel M. Powell and Michael E. Lodahl, eds., *Embodied Holiness: Toward a Corporate Theology of Spiritual Growth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999). From a nontheological perspective, contributions include Smith, ed., *Embodiment: A History*; Bessel Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin, 2014).

¹⁰Allison, “Four Theses concerning Human Embodiment,” 157–58.

To advance a theology of human embodiment, I will offer some biblical and theological considerations, then turn to a discussion of the debated statement “I am my body.” I will then present an entailment of human embodiment—genderedness—and conclude with several applications of gendered embodiment.

III. BIBLICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Genesis 1:26–28 (ESV) underscores this fact of human embodied existence:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Following the divine deliberation (v. 26), God created human beings in his image, specifically male image bearers and female image bearers (v. 27). To these gendered embodied beings, God gave what is popularly called the cultural mandate, that is, the duty to build human society for the flourishing of its citizens. This responsibility consists of reflecting God in whose image they are made and representing God through procreation (“be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth”) and vocation (“subdue it and have dominion over” the rest of the created order).

A moment’s reflection leads us to affirm the essential embodiment of these human-beings-as-divine-image-bearers.¹¹ When we readers first come upon the word *man* (v. 26), we think immediately of the race of people who are embodied. We would never think of this embodied condition of human creation as strange (remember

¹¹Luke Timothy Johnson emphasizes that “humans bear God’s image in the world somatically.” Johnson, *Revelatory Body*, 55

Genesis 18). Moreover, because sex or gender (almost completely) maps onto embodiment, the actualization of the divine purpose means that embodied image bearers are either male or female (v. 27). We would never consider this gendered embodied condition of human creation as strange. Furthermore, the cultural mandate about procreation and vocation demands embodied people to accomplish. We would never envision a flourishing human society with embodied men and embodied women multiplying children and engaging in work as strange.

Embodiment is the proper state of human existence, by divine design and creation. The embodiment thesis is supported.

The next few chapters of Genesis rehearse the beginning of the fulfillment of the cultural mandate. It starts in the garden of Eden: “The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it” (Gen 2:15). While Adam and Eve’s mutual task of “Edenizing” the world through procreation and vocation was horribly complicated by their fall into sin, nonetheless they carry out their responsibilities as (now fallen) image-bearers:¹² “The man was intimate with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain [procreation]. She said, ‘I have had a male child with the Lord’s help.’ She also gave birth to his brother Abel [procreation]. Now Abel became a shepherd of flocks, but Cain worked the ground [vocation]” (Gen 4:1–2). This divinely designed duality of procreation and vocation repeats itself over and over again as “she conceived” and “he fathered” along with city building, tending livestock, musical artistry, and tool making (4:17–22). Importantly for our purposes, obedience to and fulfillment of the divinely given task of building human civilization is necessarily carried out by embodied image-bearers.

Embodiment is the proper state of human existence, by divine design and creation. The embodiment thesis is supported.

IV. THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION

One of the devastating results of the fall was the divine decision to punish sin with death. Whereas before their fall, Adam and Eve were not susceptible to death, after their catastrophic collapse, not

¹²For the notion of Edenizing the world, see William J. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order: Eschatology in Focus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 11.

only did they become liable to death, but the entire human race did as well. Importantly for our purposes, death is not only the cessation of the physiological functioning of the material aspect of human nature. It is also the separation of that material element from the immaterial element, often called the soul or the spirit. At death, the deceased person's body is sloughed off, laid in a grave or entombed or cremated, and begins to decay. Still, the person herself continues to exist in a disembodied state, with this important distinction: disembodied believers go immediately into the presence of the Lord in heaven and disembodied unbelievers go immediately into conscious torment in hell. Theologians refer to this as the intermediate state, the condition of deceased people between their death and the return of Jesus Christ (accompanied by bodily resurrection).

The obvious question arises: if human existence is possible in a disembodied state, how can I maintain my embodiment thesis? If deceased human beings can exist without their bodies, isn't it better to define the proper state of human existence as immaterial, yet with the usual but not necessary material component?

On the contrary, this condition of temporary disembodiment supports the embodiment thesis. The apostle Paul describes death, the intermediate state, and the resurrection with startling metaphors:

For we know that if our earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal dwelling in the heavens, not made with hands. Indeed, we groan in this tent, desiring to put on our heavenly dwelling, since, when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. Indeed, we groan while we are in this tent, burdened as we are, because we do not want to be unclothed but clothed, so that mortality may be swallowed up by life (2 Cor 5:1–5).

First, Paul presents death as the tearing down of our earthly tent, a dissolution of or separation from our body. Second, he gives assurance of our bodily resurrection, which involves a divinely prepared, eternal building, or re-embodiment with an incorruptible, strong, glorious, and Spirit-dominated body (1 Cor 15:42–44). Third, Paul quakes at what lies between the two events: the intermediate state,

in which we will be “naked” or “unclothed,” that is, disembodied. If the condition of disembodiment in the intermediate state is a horror to dread, we should not allow this abnormal situation to define human existence. Indeed, during life on earth, human existence is embodied. Following death, the intermediate state, and the resurrection, human existence will be embodied. Thus, the temporary condition of disembodiment does not overthrow the thesis that the proper state of human existence is embodiment.

It should also be called to mind that if Adam and Eve had not fallen, they would not have died as a punishment for sin. They would not have experienced the intermediate state; that is, they would never have been disembodied. Thus, the condition of disembodiment in the intermediate state is foreign to human experience as divinely designed. Though it is “natural” in the sense that it is common to all human beings after the fall, it is not “natural” in the sense that it is not the way it is supposed to be. Therefore, it should not be allowed to contradict the embodiment thesis.

Thus, embodiment is the proper state of human existence. Whereas God’s existence as embodied is strange, and whereas angels’ existence as embodied is strange, and whereas human existence as disembodied in the intermediate state is strange, human existence as embodied is natural and normal.

V. A DEBATED STATEMENT

This theology of embodiment prompts me to make the following statement: “I am my body.” So as to avoid confusion, it should be noted that I have not formulated the statement as “I am *only* my body.” Though I have only briefly mentioned it, human nature or constitution is complex, consisting of both an immaterial aspect and a material aspect. Though my discussion has focused on the later, bodily aspect, I by no means deny the immaterial aspect, which many call the soul or spirit (or, according to some, the soul and spirit).¹³ Moreover, as noted above, the intermediate state demands the ongoing existence of human beings as disembodied people; thus,

¹³Dichotomy was first articulated by Tertullian in his *Treatise on the Soul*. Trichotomy, against which Tertullian argued, had been proposed earlier by Irenaeus in his *Against Heresies*. For further discussion of the development of these two views, see: Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 322–27.

some type of immaterial existence is necessary for life after death. Thus, “I am *only* my body” is a false affirmation.

To focus on human embodiment, I frame the statement as “I am my body.” As expressed by the Russian philosopher, Vladimir Iljine, “Without this body I do not exist, and I am myself as my body.”¹⁴ Again, the affirmation of this statement applies to my earthly existence; to dismiss the statement because it is false in regard to the intermediate state misses the point of reference. Also, to disagree with the affirmation on the theoretical basis that I could exist with a different body is highly problematic, because with a different body—say that of my wife or that of my best friend—I would be a different person, a different “I.” Indeed, that idea is the point of the second phrase: “I am myself as my body.” Change my embodiment, and I am not *myself* but a *different* self. Once again, now expressed as a question, “Am I who I am principally in virtue of the fact that I have the body I have?”¹⁵ Exchange my body with that of another person, or in the case of my body not struggling to pass a kidney stone as I write this article, I am not who I am in virtue of the fact that I have a different body or I have the same body that does not implicate me in renal pain and sleeplessness.

The statement “I am my body” runs counter to prevalent views that have been expressed historically and in our contemporary context. As a first example, Plato played “a decisive role in the history of philosophy in establishing body and soul as a pair wherein the latter is superior to the former. . . . We see him minimizing the body’s participation in human life by defining it in simple terms as a tool and by isolating its care from the care of the soul.”¹⁶ To take another example, Aristotle, in *On the Soul* II, classified “body” as matter (*hylē*), the substratum or “substance that is *not* a this.”¹⁷ In contrast, he classified “soul” as form (*morphēn*), the shape “in virtue of which a thing *is* called ‘a this.’”¹⁸ Additionally, matter is potentiality and form is actuality; thus, “soul is ‘form and actuality of a natural body

¹⁴The statement by Vladimir Iljine is quoted without bibliographic detail in Moltmann-Wendel, *I Am My Body*, 2.

¹⁵Smith, “Introduction,” 2.

¹⁶Brooke Holmes, “The Body of Western Embodiment: Classical Antiquity and the Early History of a Problem,” in *Embodiment: A History*, 41–42.

¹⁷Helen Lang, “Embodied or Ensouled: Aristotle on the Relation of Soul and Body,” in *Embodiment: A History*, 55.

¹⁸Lang, “Embodied or Ensouled,” 54.

able to have life'... As actuality, form acts as mover and body as matter and potentiality is moved, or acted upon by form."¹⁹ Clearly, then, for Aristotle, the soul is primary, the body is secondary. Indeed, according to Aristotle, when it is engaged in contemplation of eternal things (in this way, thinking like gods think), the human soul (with particular reference to the intellect) briefly experiences thinking that is both proper to soul and that is "perfect activity, free of body or matter." Such disembodied freedom of the soul is the "highest excellence" of human beings.²⁰

In the early church, these and other influences resulted in prioritizing the soul over the body. In his development of the concept of the image of God, for example, Tertullian explained that the nature of the soul includes "rationality, sensibility, intelligence, and freedom of the will."²¹ Coming close to identifying the image of God with the human soul, Justin Martyr offered, "In the beginning He [God] made the human race with the power of thought and of choosing the truth and doing right."²² And what of the body? The *Letter to Diognetus* rehearsed the tension between the lofty soul and the miserable body:

To sum up all in one word—what the soul is in the body, that are Christians in the world. The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians are scattered through all the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, yet is not of the body; and Christians dwell in the world, yet are not of the world... The flesh hates the soul, and wars against it, though itself suffering no injury, because it is prevented from enjoying pleasures; the world also hates the Christians, though in nowise injured, because they abjure pleasures. The soul loves the flesh that hates it, and [loves also] the members; Christians likewise love those that hate them. The soul is imprisoned in the body, yet preserves that very body; and Christians are

¹⁹Lang, "Embodied or Ensouled," 55, 58. The citation is from Aristotle, *On the Soul* II, 1,412a21.

²⁰Lang, "Embodied or Ensouled," 66–67.

²¹Tertullian, *Treatise on the Soul*, 38, in *ANF* 3:219.

²²Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 1.28, in *ANF* 1:172.

confined in the world as in a prison, and yet they are the preservers of the world.²³

The soul-destroying activity of the body should prompt Christians to desire death, at which point the soul is released from the body:

The flesh, since it is earthly, and therefore mortal, draws with itself [drags down] the spirit linked to it, and leads it from immortality to death.... The flesh hinders the spirit from following God.... But when a separation shall have been made between the body and the soul [at death], then evil will be disunited from good; and as the body perishes and the soul remains, so evil will perish and good be permanent. Then man, having received the garment of immortality, will be wise and free from evil, as God is.²⁴

Thankfully, at times the church has pushed back against this far too common disparagement of the body and sought to emphasize the intimate connectedness of the soul and the body. As an example, Patrick Lee and Robert P. George rehearse Thomas Aquinas's argument against Plato's notion of the body-soul relationship:

1. Sensing is a living, bodily act, that is, an essentially bodily action performed by a living being.
2. Therefore the agent that performs the act of sensing is a bodily entity, an animal.
3. But in human beings, it is the same agent that performs the act of sensing and that performs the act of understanding, including conceptual self-awareness.
4. Therefore, in human beings, the agent that performs the act of understanding (including conceptual self-awareness, what everyone refers to as "I") is a bodily entity, not a spiritual entity making use of the body as an extrinsic instrument.²⁵

Thus, Lee and George, building on Aquinas, make a strong case that what most theologians consider to be the classical faculties of

²³*Letter to Diognetus*, 6, in *ANF* 1:27.

²⁴Lactanius, *The Divine Institutes*, 4.25 and 7.5, in *ANF* 7:127 and 202.

²⁵Patrick Lee and Robert P. George, *Body-Self Dualism in Contemporary Ethics and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 4.

the “soul”—e.g., thinking, understanding, intellectually apprehending—have “an intrinsic need and functional orientation to matter or the body.”²⁶

To oversimplify, the church has perennially struggled to overcome the influence of Gnosticism and its contemporary expression in neo-Gnosticism, both of which privilege the immaterial element of human nature over the material element. Popular expressions of these positions include George MacDonald’s “You don’t have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body.”²⁷ This instrumentalist view of human embodiment demeans the material aspect of human nature or at least considers it to be of less importance than the immaterial aspect. Some even take their rejection of embodiment to a disconcerting extreme. C. S. Lewis quipped that “the fact that we have bodies is the oldest joke there is.”²⁸ Rejecting this perspective, I affirm to the contrary, “I am my body.”

Yet, Luke Timothy Johnson notes that MacDonald’s and Lewis’s position is not completely wrong: “Whereas there is some truth to the claim that I *have* a body, since I can in fact dispose of it in a number of ways, there is at least equal truth to the claim that I *am* my body. I cannot completely dispose of my body without at the same time losing myself. In strict empirical terms, when my body disappears, so do I.”²⁹ Adjusting Johnson’s view slightly, I aver that the statement “I *am* my body” is the ground for the statement “I *have* a body.” As I’ve written elsewhere:

Let me illustrate Johnson’s point. Because I *have* a body, I can sacrifice certain parts of it for the sake of others. For example, I can donate one of my kidneys so that someone whose kidneys are failing may, by organ transplantation, live. But if I sacrifice too much of my body, which I *have*—for example, if I donate both kidneys for the sake of others—then I (and I *am* my body) no

²⁶Lee and George, *Body-Self Dualism*, 17.

²⁷George MacDonald, *Annals of a Quiet Neighborhood* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1867), chap. 28.

²⁸C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1960), 101.

²⁹Johnson, *Revelatory Body*, 80.

longer exist (that is, I'm dead). Thus, "I *am* my body" is the ground for "I *have* a body."³⁰

VI. GENDEREDNESS: AN ENTAILMENT OF HUMAN EMBODIMENT

Without developing it at length, I draw attention to the fact that embodiment entails genderedness.³¹ Simply put, a fundamental given of human existence is maleness or femaleness. Physiologically and genetically, gender maps almost completely onto (correlates with) embodiment. In rare cases, "a child is born with an ambiguous gender, and it is not clear whether the child is male or female. One form of this is known as intersex. Ambiguous gender results from a genetic abnormality."³² Because the condition of intersex affects from between .04% to 1.7% of the population and is a matter of genetics, its exceptional nature prevents me from including it as part of this discussion. Bracketing that condition, God's design for his image bearers is that they are gendered as either male or female.

Maleness and femaleness are well supported from the opening pages of Scripture. Following the divine deliberation to "create man in [God's] image," the narrative continues: "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). The divine plan to create beings who would be more like God than any other creatures results in human image bearers who are embodied and gendered. As noted above, God gives to both the cultural mandate to build society through procreation and vocation (Gen 1:28).

In terms of specific creative action, as for the first embodied male, "the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a

³⁰For further discussion, see Moltmann-Wendel, *I Am My Body*, 1. She further illustrates this point: "I've a fever, 'my stomach's on strike,' 'my back's out of action'—that's how we first perceive our illnesses. We keep them from us, see them as an isolated defect which can be remedied in isolation, until one day we have to say, 'I'm sick.' Then we are saying something that we do not normally say of ourselves: that our destiny is to be bound up with our bodies. In a variety of situations we can distance ourselves from our bodies, but at some point they get hold of us and will not let go. 'I am my body.' . . . It is not only my body that is sick; I am sick. I am in my body. I have no other identity." Moltmann-Wendel, *I Am My Body*, 21–22.

³¹Time and space constraints do not permit me to discuss the differences between sex and gender, so I will use the two words interchangeably.

³²Scott B. Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 339.

living creature” (Gen 2:7). God then took Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:8–9, 15–17); the first man was embodied and emplaced. Next, God formed the first embodied female: “So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man” (Gen 2:21–22). Out of Adam’s physicality, God fashioned Eve, whom Adam enthusiastically recognized as the divinely promised helper fit for him—with an emphasis on her embodied and gendered correspondence: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen 2:23). The first woman was embodied and emplaced, joining Adam in the garden. “Together and indispensably, they begin to engage in the cultural mandate involving procreation and vocation for human flourishing. They are able and obligated to carry out the mandate to build society because of, and only because of, their complementary genderedness. Adam and Eve are embodied human beings, and as such, they are fundamentally male and female.”³³

The binary pattern used in the creation of Adam and Eve did not differ from the pattern of binary creation that is narrated in Genesis 1 and 2, as seen in the following: heaven and earth; light and darkness; day and night; evening and morning; waters above and waters below; dry land and waters; two great lights (sun and moon); creatures of the sea and birds of the air; work and rest; two trees (of life, of knowledge); good and evil. That God created human beings as male or female is an application of the pattern of binary creation he employed leading up to the apex of his creation of his image bearers. Thus, a fundamental given of human existence is maleness or femaleness. God did not create an agendered being and then add on a secondary characteristic of maleness or femaleness. God did not create a superior male image bearer and then secondarily derive out of him an inferior female image-bearer.

Specifically, and contra Megan DeFranza, I do not believe the Genesis narrative portrays a spectrum of human genderedness that is patterned after the spectrum of other created things.³⁴ According

³³Allison, *Embodied*, 40.

³⁴Megan DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of*

to this idea, “night” and “day” (for example) are two terms that represent the two poles or ends of the spectrum of created temporality. Within these two poles, the spectrum features intermediate created realities that the biblical narrative does not mention (for example, dusk and dawn in between night and day) but that nonetheless exist. Following this spectrum of creation, then, human genderedness includes not only the male and female poles mentioned in the biblical text but other varieties between them as well: androgynous, pangender, transgender male, transgender female, demigender, two spirit, and many more.³⁵

What DeFranza seems to overlook is the biblical language of “separation” and “kinds.” In terms of the first matter, God separated light from darkness (Gen 1:4), the waters from the waters (Gen 1:6), the day from the night (Gen 1:14) and the light from the darkness (Gen 1:18). Difference or distinction, not a spectrum of intermediate realities, is emphasized textually. As for the second matter, God created vegetation, plants, fruit trees, great sea creatures, other watery creatures, winged birds, livestock, creeping things, and land beasts “according to their kinds” (Gen 1:11–12, 21, 24–25). To many of the creatures in this latter category, God gave the command to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:22). This duty could only be carried out by species that are binarily male and female, not a spectrum of intermediate realities. Accordingly, the biblical language of “separation” and “kinds” underscores difference and distinction, not the spectrum of intermediaries that DeFranza’s position highlights.

Importantly, for our discussion, human beings are either male or female by divine design. Indeed, God’s assessment of the creation newly brought to completion was “it was very good” (Gen 1:31). This judgment included the goodness of human image bearers who were male and female. What was pleasing to the Creator and what was certainly pleasant to the original image bearers, Adam and Eve, continues to be pleasant to the vast majority of people today. According to Frederica Mathewes-Green,

For large segments of the world, gender differences are

God (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

³⁵Estimates vary, but the number of different genders claimed by people runs between fifty and eighty.

pleasant, appealing, and enjoyable, and practical application of theory—reproduction itself—is hardly a chore. (The subtitle of a Dave Barry book put it winningly: ‘How to make a tiny person in only nine months, with tools you probably have around the home.’) Yes, most cultures note and highlight gender differences, because most people find them delightful, as well as useful in producing the next generation.³⁶

VII. APPLICATION OF ENGENDERED EMBODIMENT

This theology of human embodiment, with a particular emphasis on genderedness, can be helpful in our discussions about what constitutes a human person, our interactions with those who experience gender dysphoria, our theologizing about transgenderism/transageism/ transracialism/trans-speciesism, our pastoral care for those wrestling with problems of heterosexuality and homosexuality, our condemnation of dehumanization and objectification, our counseling of those struggling with body image, and more. A theology of embodiment does not ease the pain that the people with whom we are interacting face. Nor does it substitute for the compassion that we are called to express toward them. But it does provide a foundation on which to build our counseling and care ministries.

Engendered embodiment also compels us to reconsider our view of and posture toward men and women. First and foremost, our theology underscores that all human beings are image bearers whose gender (almost always) maps onto their embodiment. All women and all men are divine image-bearers and, as such, are worthy to be accorded respect and treated with dignity. We do not have the right to interfere with other image-bearers and/or to detract from their image-bearing and/or to destroy the purpose for which God created them. As divine image-bearers who exist in community, we do not have the right to be isolated from others or to isolate others from us; to refuse help to others or to refuse to be helped by others; to deface the image-bearing of others or to permit being defaced by others. Moreover, in terms of redeemed image-bearers, women and

³⁶Frederica Mathewes-Green, “The Subject Was Noses: What Happens When Academics Discover That We Have Bodies,” *Books and Culture* (January/February 1997): 14–16. Her reference is to Dave Barry, *Babies and Other Hazards of Sex* (New York: Rodale Books, 2000).

men are called to love and honor one another: “Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor” (Rom 12:10). Scripture often employs familial images to help us envision how to express our relationships with one another: “Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity” (1 Tim 5:1–2). The metaphor of siblingship has a prominent place in the NT to instruct us how female believers and male believers are to relate to one another.³⁷ Admittedly, the church has a long way to go to embrace and actualize this vision. A theology of gendered embodiment can serve this transformation.

This theology also challenges us to reconsider how we view our own embodiment. Do we live the reality that “I am my body” or do we consider our body in instrumentalist terms, as something to be used or managed or stewarded like we do our time, money, gifts, and other resources? Such a perspective of our own embodiment shows up in statements like “I need to feed my body only certain types of foods in order to keep it tuned up like a fine car” or “I must exercise incessantly so that my body will perform at peak performance.” Certainly, proper nutrition and regular exercise are important for us as embodied beings, but such statements belie an instrumentalist view of embodiment, as if our bodies are somehow outside of ourselves or different from ourselves. As my theology of embodiment proposes, this perspective, though widespread and entrenched in our mindset, is not the right way to consider our bodies. God’s creation of us to be his embodied image-bearers stands against this view. As Frederica Mathewes-Green offers, “The initial impression that we stand critically apart from our bodies was our first mistake. We are not merely passengers riding around in skin tight racecars; we are our bodies. They embody us.”³⁸

Embodiment is the proper state of human existence.



³⁷For further discussion, see Aimee Byrd, *Why Can't We Be Friends? Avoidance is Not Purity* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2018).

³⁸Mathewes-Green, “Subject Was Noses,” 14–16.

THE BODY AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

W. Madison Grace II*

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

¹Nicole 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”

³Sexual 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.christian-post.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

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

⁵Jürgen 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

⁶Eric 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*

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

⁸Olson, “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

⁹Boethius defined a person as “an individual nature of a rational substance.”

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

¹¹Robert Spaemann, *Persons: The Differences between “Someone” and “Something,”* trans. Oliver O’Donovan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4.

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

¹³Olson, “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

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

¹⁵Spaemann, *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 orbited 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

¹⁶Translations 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

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

¹⁸See 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.

¹⁹Farris, *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)?

²⁰See 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

²¹For 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.

²²Cortez 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.

²³Vanhoozer, “Human being,” 164. Note also the language of “psycho-physical” in Cortez’s treatment as well. Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 70.

²⁴There 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.

²⁵See 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.

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

²⁷Formula 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.

²⁸The Apostle’s Creed, *Historic Creeds and Confessions*.

²⁹Stanley 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

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

³¹Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*, 17.

³²Farris, *Theological Anthropology*, 208.

³³Farris, *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).

³⁴Farris, *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

³⁵Farris, *Theological Anthropology*, 220.

³⁶Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*, 27.

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

³⁸Pearcey, *Love Thy 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

³⁹Pope 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.

⁴⁰Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 118.

⁴¹Pearcey, *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."



A GOSPEL-CENTERED APPROACH TO THE ISSUE OF RACISM: Race, Ethnicity, and the Gospel's Influence towards Racial Reconciliation

Carl Bradford*

Unresolved racial grievances in America and among Christians have caused an obtrusive separation. For recent evidence individuals may observe peaceful civil protests during national sports games or marches regarding the sentiment “Black Lives Matter.”¹ However, the current problem is not a new phenomenon. The American Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement demonstrate earlier evidence of racial injustice. Consequently, the question arises, “Where is the voice of the church on the matter of racial reconciliation?” The American church’s voice has been heard but not always informed by the gospel as it relates to Christian social engagement.

Some have interpreted the issue of racism as merely a social issue. Christian minister and civil rights activist John Perkins stated, “For too long, many in the Church argued that unity in the body of Christ across ethnic and class lines is a separate issue from the gospel. There has been the suggestion that we can be reconciled to God without being reconciled to our brothers and sisters in Christ.”² Others who profess Jesus as Lord complied and assimilated into a culture of racial segregation and or racism rather than applying a biblical reconciliation to the race problem. This cultural adaptation to racial prejudices even found its way into the lives of some of the most notable revivalists, including George Whitefield, Jonathan

¹The use of the phrase, “Black Lives Matter,” refers to the sentiment, not the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation.

²John Perkins, *One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race and Love* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2018), 33.

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Edwards, and Charles Finney.³

By contrast, Tony Evans offers these thoughts on the problem of racism: “Once you admit that racism is a sin problem, you are obligated as a believer to deal with it right away. As long as the issue of race is social and not spiritual, it will never be dealt with in any ultimate sense.”⁴ Thus, given the unresolved reconciliation regarding racism and racial segregation, evidence suggests that Christians have failed to realize the influence of the Christian message, the gospel, has on the issue. How should Christians approach the issue of race? Is racial reconciliation a gospel issue? How does the gospel influence racial reconciliation? This article will investigate biblically the concept of race, ethnicity, and the gospel to determine whether or not the gospel addresses racial reconciliation, and if so, how it should be addressed in our day.

I. ONE IMAGE AND ONE RACE

In a world permeated by depression and the pursuit of identity and affirmation, the biblical doctrine of humankind provides pivotal insight into God’s creation. Consequently, any biblical investigation involving the worth of human beings is obliged to examine the concept of the *imago Dei*. What does it mean to affirm the creation of an individual in the image of God?

Genesis 1:27 announces the creation of man in God’s likeness: “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”⁵ Historically, the “image of God” has been interpreted in various ways. One view considers the phrase to refer to particular characteristics of God held by the created man. The attributes may be either physical or psychological. A second view does not emphasize an intrinsic attribute, but rather

³Mark Galli, “Slaveholding Evangelist: Whitefield’s Troubling Mix of Views,” *Christian History* 38 (1993); Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); and Roger Joseph Green, “Charles Grandison Finney: The Social Implications of His Ministry,” *Asbury Theological Journal* 48, no. 2 (Fall 1993), 17. Of the three mentioned, Charles Finney is the only one who did not own slaves. However, he did believe in the segregation of blacks and whites. Although Finney granted membership of blacks to the Broadway Tabernacle, they were segregated to a reserved place at the side of the sanctuary and could not vote or hold offices.

⁴Tony Evans, “Not a Skin Problem, But a Sin Problem,” *The Urban Alternative Blog*, <https://tonyevans.org/not-a-skin-problem-but-a-sin-problem/>.

⁵All Scripture passages are from the Christian Standard Bible or my own translation.

the experience of a relationship between God and man. A third position regards the image of God as a function shared with the human from God.⁶

Two words help in the understanding of the phrase “image of God.” These words are *tselem* (image) and *demuth* (likeness). The Hebrew word *tselem* appears approximately fifteen times in the Bible. Seven times the word describes images of idols (Num 33:52; 2 Kgs 11:18; 2 Chr 23:17; Ezek 7:20; 16:17; 23:14; and Amos 5:26). Once in 1 Samuel 6:5, the word references images of tumors and mice that the Lord sent upon the people. Another time in Genesis 5:3, the reference is describing the resemblance of man in another person.⁷ The verse employs the same nouns used in Genesis 1:26–27, although the nouns and the prepositions used with each are in reverse order as compared to Genesis 1:26. This construction suggests that how a son resembles his father is, in some sense, analogous to how the human is like God. Last and most specific to the topic of human worth, the word occurs twice as the “image of God” in the previously mentioned verses, Genesis 1:26 and 27.⁸ Thus, *tselem* conveys the idea of representation of an image similar to the cast of a shadow.

Victor Hamilton provides further insight into the meaning of the phrase. He states, “It is well known that in both Egyptian and Mesopotamian societies the king, or some high-ranking official, might be called ‘the image of God.’... In God’s eyes, all mankind is royal. All humanity is related to God, not just a king. Specially, the Bible democratizes the royalistic and exclusivistic concepts of the nations that surrounded Israel.”⁹ Hamilton explains that all humans are God’s most cherished creations.

Additionally, the Greek equivalent, *eikōn*, is found twenty-three times in the NT (Matt 22:20; Mark 12:16; Luke 20:24; Rom 1:23; 8:29; 1 Cor 11:7; 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18; 4:4; Col 1:15; 3:30; Heb 10:1; Rev 13:15; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; and 20:4). The word carries the meaning of an artistic representation, an impress of a coin, or

⁶Erickson refers to the three views of the “image of God” as substantive, relational, and functional. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 517–36.

⁷F. J. Stendebach, “צֶלֶם,” *TDOT* 12:390–93.

⁸Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 166–67.

⁹Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1–17*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 135.

the image of a god.¹⁰

The second word demuth appears much more than its counterpart, tselem. It occurs approximately twenty-five times throughout the OT (Gen 1:26; 5:1, 3; 2 Kgs 16:10; 2 Chr 4:3; Ps 13:4; Isa 13:4; 40:18, Ezek 1:5, 10, 13, 16, 22, 26, 28; 8:2; 10:1, 10, 21, 22; 23:15; and Dan 10:16). In each of the occurrences, the word describes the similitude, model, or shape of an object.¹¹ Similarly to “image,” “likeness” emphasizes the representation of a thing. However, in the case of “likeness,” it does not always reference the exact representation.¹²

The meaning of both words, “image” and “likeness,” refer to a representation of something. Furthermore, the second word, “likeness,” suggests that the “image” of Genesis 1:26 and 27 is not an exact representation. “Likeness,” therefore, functions as a supporting term to signify something less than the object. Thus, man is not God but bears some representation of him.

A survey of the two words offers three vital conclusions of mankind’s worth before God, and among creation. First, whatever the specific interpretation of the two phrases is, the previous study of both words yields the idea of the representation of the divine in the earth. No other creature did God create in his image. God, having made man in his image, distinguishes humans as the only image bearers, representations of God himself. Second, the first humans, male and female, bore the image of God and passed it to others. Genesis 5:1–3 states, “When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And he named them ‘Mankind’ when they were created. When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth.” Genesis 5:3 highlights the fact that the transferal of “likeness” is thought of in a physical sense. Last, Genesis 5:3 suggests that the image of God did not become lost

¹⁰Hermann Kleinknecht, “εἰκὼν,” *TDNT* 2:388–89.

¹¹“דְּמוּת,” *HALOT* 1:226.

¹²Grudem observes at least four examples of likeness referencing a similar fashion rather than an exact representation. He writes, “King Ahaz’s model or drawing of the altar he saw in Damascus is called a “likeness” (2 Kings 16:10), as are the figures of bulls beneath the bronze altar (2 Chron. 4:3–4). And the wall paintings of Babylonian chariot officers (Ezek. 23:15). In Ps. 58:4, the venom of the wicked is a “likeness” of the venom of a snake: here the idea is that they are very similar in their characteristics, but there is no thought of an actual representation of substitution.” Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 443.

regardless of the effects of humanity's fall in chapter 3. Additionally, support exists in Genesis 9:6's use of "likeness" prohibiting murder due to the divine resemblance that man still possesses. Thus, murder is not only a crime against humanity but also a violation of God's glory, his image. James confirms the unlost image of God in man as he references the power of the tongue (3:9). He states: "With it, we bless our Lord and Father, and with it, we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God." Regarding the passage, Liefeld and Pao write, "The worth of other human beings, formed in the image of God, demands a carefulness in the speech used to address them."¹³ As humans relate to one another, God expects their actions to be void of ill intent.

Thus, the "image of God" in man at the fundamental level means that man's very existence displays the glory of the Creator. This image of God signifies the presence of the singularity of the race, which God established at creation and still exists among all men today. God created man, Adam, in resemblance of his divine DNA, and the same passed on to every man since. The apostle Paul confirms the fact to the men of Athens as he testifies to the nature of God in Acts 17:26, "From one man he has made every nationality to live over the whole earth." Furthermore, Scripture does not indicate that God created another race besides Adam and Eve, the human race. Thus, biblically, all men bear one image and exist as one race.

II. ETHNICITIES AND THE INFLUENCE OF SIN

1. One people. Genesis 11 records the beginnings of diversity among the people of the earth. Essentially, God restarts the world. However, this time the world involves the existence of sin at the onset. Again, one common group exists just as in Genesis 1. Consequently, verse 1 records the people sharing "the same language and the same words." The narrative continues,

As people migrated from the east, they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, "Come, let's make oven-fired bricks." (They used brick for stone and asphalt for mortar.) And they

¹³Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, "Luke," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* 10, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 247.

said, “Come, let’s build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky. Let’s make a name for ourselves; otherwise, we will be scattered throughout the earth” (Genesis 11:2-4).

According to verses 3–4, the people set out to build an edifice that is majestic and monumental. These verses convey the motivation of the group’s human project. The unified people group expressed their desires in the following way, “Let’s make a name for ourselves; otherwise, we will be scattered throughout the earth.” The people of the earth decided to bring glory to themselves rather than to God. Furthermore, they constructed a plan of security among each other rather than relying upon God.¹⁴

2. The sin of racism. If asked to name a list of sins, some Christians, particularly in America, may offer a list of the following: abortion, murder, adultery, stealing, lying, illegal use of drugs, etc. Towards the end of the listing, or perhaps not even mentioned, would be the sin of racism and racial prejudice. The previous statement is not an attempt to propose that “racism” should be understood as a more egregious sin compared to the others. Neither, does the statement suggest an articulation of “racism” every time the subject of sin arises. Rather, the statement simply suggests that racism is a sin, not a blind spot, or just a moral shortcoming as some have suggested. Why should Christians understand racism as sin?

The term “racism” is a learned dogma in which one ethnic person or group claims or assumes superiority over another. The acceptance of the belief emphasizes cultural, intellectual, physical, and/or social-economic differences among the groups. Over time, the prejudice of the perceived superior group most often manifests itself through discriminatory attitudes and practices.¹⁵

Theologically and biblically, racism is a sin for multiple reasons. Racism is a sin because it contradicts the nature of God. Prejudice which has its root in racism distorts a person’s view of God. Individuals misunderstand God to prefer or care for one person or group over another. The apostle Peter came to terms with this erroneous view of

¹⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapter 1–17*, 352–53.

¹⁵C. D. McConnell, “Racism” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 978.

God due to his prejudices observed in Acts 10:1–34. However, Peter eventually concluded, “Now I truly understand that God doesn’t show favoritism, but in every nation the person who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34–35). Thus, rather than understanding God as just and holy, Christians who condone or practice racism convey him as prejudiced and partial.

3. Racism is a sin because it persuades the practitioner to replace God. In essence, racism involves a person declaring that he or she knows better than God or has the authority to act as God without his permission. The disobedience of Adam and Eve demonstrates the previous statement. The account of the fall in Genesis 3:4–5 records that the couple acts apart from God, thus usurping the commandment of God. The author of Genesis alerts us to this posture in Satan’s words, “No! You will certainly not die. In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” The serpent convinces the couple that God does not have their best interest in mind. Rather than heed the divine wisdom of their Creator, the pair acted as a god.

4. Racism is a sin because it violates the image-bearer of God. As mentioned previously, one reason the Bible prohibits murder is because of the divine resemblance that man bears of God (Genesis 9:6). In a similar fashion to murder, racism is a crime against God’s glory and a violation of those that bear his image. God commands individuals to love others, not to violate them. In Matthew 22:37–40, Jesus sums up all the laws of God into two: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.” According to Jesus, the motivation for keeping all God’s commandments is love. Furthermore, Jesus affirms the two objects of a believer’s love: God and man.

Consequently, the wickedness of racism can no longer pass for something other than an atrocity to mankind. The ill of racism sets itself against the creation and nature of God. Thus, racism is an affront to all that it means to be a Christian, one who loves God and loves the people whom God created.

III. THE GOSPEL AND BIBLICAL TEACHING OF ITS EFFECTS ON RACISM

What is the relationship between the gospel and racial reconciliation? More precisely, what is the meaning of a prejudiced society and its relationship to the creation of the new person in Christ? The previous questions receive an answer by examining the meaning of the gospel and a survey of biblical teachings regarding racism.

1. The gospel. Gospel is the English equivalent of the Greek term *euangelion*, meaning “good news.” The term occurs approximately seventy-six times in the NT. The word carries the idea of glad tidings regarding a coming kingdom and its king, Jesus Christ. Additionally, the term refers to the good news of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ regarding salvation. For the apostle Paul, the previous statement is the heart of the gospel. The Pauline writings utilize the term approximately sixty times.¹⁶ Notably, in 1 Corinthians 15:1–4, Paul sets forth an explicit gospel message,

Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preached to you, which you received, on which you have taken your stand and by which you are being saved, if you hold to the message I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

Paul reminds the Corinthians of the gospel they received. He explains that the *euangelion* is the same message he had declared to them previously as he lived with them for approximately eighteen months. He establishes the fact that the message he intends to explain is nothing new, nor is it progressive. For Paul, only one gospel exists (Gal 1:6). Additionally, he highlights the act of their faith in that they received the *euangelion* he preached and were saved by it. He assures his hearers of salvation which results from belief in the gospel message.¹⁷ The previous statement is important because some have

¹⁶Friedrich Büchsel, “*εὐαγγέλιον*,” *TDNT* 2:727–35.

¹⁷Verlyn D. Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* 11, ed. Tremper

redefined how an individual becomes saved. However, in Ephesians 2:8–10, the apostle establishes that individuals receive salvation by grace through faith, and then good works follow as a result of being created in Christ.

In Paul's lucid explanation in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4, regarding the gospel, he outlines the pivotal tenets of his conceptualization regarding the good news. First, he declares that "Christ died for sins." Paul's use of *hyper* (for) demonstrates the necessary act of Christ's death for the sins of the world.¹⁸ Thus, the gospel is Christ dying instead of us. He died in our place, as a substitute, to atone for the world's sins and allow men to enter into a right relationship with the holy God. Furthermore, the phrase functions as a support to the witness of the OT.¹⁹

Second, Jesus "was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection are central to the good news. Jesus's burial and resurrection not only confirm his death but also highlight the authority he has to pick his life up after experiencing death, namely he is Lord (John 10:18). Additionally, Paul states, Jesus was *egēgertai* (raised) in the passive voice, signifying the divine power of the Father, that God was at work in raising the Son back to life.²⁰

In Ephesians 2:10, Paul demonstrates that the gospel not only saves an individual from sin but also saves him or her for something (works of Christ) and to Christ. Paul states: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do." The apostle's use of *poiēma* (workmanship) in verse 10 is not emphasizing a result of effort or labor. The use of *poiēma* underscores God's intention for those he has saved to live according to 4:1–6:20.²¹ For Paul, Christianity did not consist of solely performing good deeds. He understands that the works performed are a result of being created in the person of Christ. In other words, Christ is at work in us, and Christians are God's

Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 391.

¹⁸"ὕπερ," BDAG 1030.

¹⁹Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 2014), 373.

²⁰Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1985), 198.

²¹Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 146.

work in progress. The preposition *epi* serves as a marker of purpose, goal, result to or for something.²² Thus, in this passage, the goal of Christians is to walk in the “good works” God purposed at creation.

In Jesus’s death, burial, and resurrection is found the power to wipe away the sins of the whole world for all time, past, present, and future. Additionally, salvation calls us to live out the effects of the gospel through the “works of Spirit” (Gal 5:22–23).

2. Jesus’s teaching on ethnic prejudice. For individuals to reconcile with others, they must first love them, and if believers seek to love them, believers must first love God. Scripture has made us aware of the prejudices and enmity which exist between the Jews and Samaritans. Consequently, Jews avoided any interaction with Samaritans. In John 4, we observe the extent of the hatred between the two ethnicities. Having left Judea for Galilee, Jesus “had to travel through Samaria” (4:4) because of the divine cross-cultural appointment that awaited him. Jesus, weary from his journey and sitting by a well, asked for a drink of water from a Samaritan woman (4:6–7). Taken by surprise that Jesus would engage her, the woman replied, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” (4:9). Due to the enmity between the two groups, the woman could not fathom Jesus asking her for water, not to mention him placing his Jewish lips on her Samaritan water jug. Noteworthy is the fact that Jesus does not engage in a theological debate regarding the two ethnicities and their religion. Rather, he reveals himself to her. The encounter ultimately led to this conclusion in verse 29: “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?”

IV. THE DEMONSTRATION OF A BELIEVER’S LOVE (LUKE 10:25–37)

On another occasion, Jesus’s use of a parable demonstrates the kind of love expected from those who profess to love God. Similar to the previous example, the story involves a Jewish lawyer who holds disdain for another ethnicity. Noteworthy is the genesis of the dialogue between Jesus and the lawyer. The religious lawyer asked, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 10:25). The question highlights that the proceeding interaction regards a gospel

²²“ἐπί,” BDAG 366.

issue. Afterward, the remainder of the encounter proceeds in this way:

“What is written in the Law?” he asked him. “How does it read to you?” And he answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,” and “your neighbor as yourself.” “You’ve answered correctly,” he told him. “Do this and you will live.” But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:28–29).

Next, Jesus, through the use of the famous parable of the “The Good Samaritan,” answered the questions for the lawyer. Furthermore, he answered his first questions as well, demonstrating how those with eternal life behave. He explained that a Priest and Levite both neglected to demonstrate love to an unidentified, beaten, half-dead man in the road. By contrast, a Samaritan (one whom the Jewish man would have hated) demonstrated a love that is characteristic of a believer, one who has eternal life.

Jesus concluded the lesson on love by asking the lawyer, “Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” The Jewish lawyer, unwilling to set aside his prejudice even for the sake of demonstrating the love he supposedly had for God, could only answer, “The one who...,” rather than “The Samaritan...” (10:36). Jesus revealed the heart of this Jewish man despite the man’s knowledge and claim as a believer.

Additionally, he demonstrated the love of a Christian in at least three ways from this parable. First, a believer’s love manifests itself by unification, not separation. The Samaritan does more than observe the unidentified man; he ministered to the man’s needs. He did not worry about blood or whether the robbers were lurking around. He touches him, uniting with him rather than separating himself like the Priest and Levite. Second, a believer’s love manifests itself by integration, not racial discrimination. Regardless of the ethnic makeup of the beaten man, the Samaritan commits himself to help the man. A believer’s love manifests itself by godliness, not sinfulness. The man’s deeds demonstrating eternal life should resemble the compassion of God, rather than the prejudice of men. In Jesus’s

teaching, he demonstrates a relationship between belief in the gospel and living out the gospel's effects.

In the same vein as Jesus, the apostle Paul addresses the hostility and enmity between the Jews and Gentiles in Ephesians 2. In verse 14, we observe the Jews' disdain for the Gentiles motivated them to construct a separation even during worship. Paul wrote of the wall of separation, the former condition, and their current condition:

So, then, remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh—called “the uncircumcised” by those called “the circumcised,” which is done in the flesh by human hands. At that time you were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In his flesh, he made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace. He did this so that he might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross by which he put the hostility to death (Eph 2:11–16).

Paul calls the Gentile audience back to remember their former condition before having been created in Christ Jesus. The apostle highlights the previous statement by the use of “therefore.” He explains to them that they were not only separated from the Jewish group but also from God. Paul reveals racial (ethnic) profiling through the use of the derogatory term “uncircumcision.” It is noteworthy that Paul does not let the Jews off the hook. Although Paul does not ethnically profile the Jews, they are understood to be outside the salvific grace of God by his statement, “so-called circumcision.”²³

In verses 13–16, Paul argues that Jesus's death has brought Gentiles into the family of God. Furthermore, he declares that Jesus's establishment of peace brought an end to ethnic prejudice between the

²³Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 134–36.

Jews and Gentiles. Thus, Christ's death on the cross permanently destroyed the wall between Jews and Gentiles. Klein writes, "The barrier was destroyed. In contrast to ethnic Israel—all descended from Abraham—the body of Christ is not ethnically or racially delimited. It has no Jewish boundary markers that demarcate the insiders from the outsiders."²⁴ Consequently, Jesus recreates two groups (Jews and Gentiles) into one new person. Concomitantly and chiefly, Jesus's death reconciles them both to God.

In the following verses of Ephesians 2, Paul expresses that Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, have access through the same Spirit to the one God, the Father. After the work of reconciliation by God, no one Christian group has exclusive access to him. Paul expresses the active fitting of each group together into one holy temple. Thus, whatever ethnicity, Jesus has strategically and divinely placed them through his reconciliation at the cross, namely the elimination of enmity between all races and eradicating of hostility between man and God.

V. THE GOSPEL ADDRESSES RACIAL RECONCILIATION

Historically, Christianity has been summarized as the human response to God's love, namely the gospel, revealed in Jesus's life, death, burial, and resurrection. Additionally, for those who have begun to experience God's grace, the grand narrative of the Bible (Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration) shapes their understanding and appreciation of the extent and the effects of God's love. Thus, regarding all the previous investigations, this section will evaluate racism in light of the gospel and the Bible's grand narrative to determine whether the gospel addresses racial reconciliation and if so, how we should respond.

1. Creation contradicts racism. God, through his infinite wisdom, created a "good" (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) and "very good" (Gen 1:31) world. The goodness of God's creation is highlighted by the use of the Hebrew word, *to*, which means pleasant, good, beneficial, and right.²⁵ The apex of God's creation, man, has been created for the demonstration of his glory. The prophet Isaiah attests to the

²⁴William W. Klein, "Ephesians," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* 12, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 76.

²⁵"בָּרָא," BDB 373–75.

previous statement as he records the Lord's words regarding the sons and daughters of the earth, "whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made" (Isa 43:7). Furthermore, the goodness of God's creation finds its expression in the absence of sin. Because sin does not exist, man enjoys intimacy and fellowship with both God and one another. Consequently, God and man walk in the coolness of the day together.

Additionally, at creation, the man was in harmony with God rather than separated from God. The Creator provided food from "any tree of the garden." Second, the Creator in Genesis 2:18 blessed the man with a companion just right for him: "Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him.'" The man relied on the Creator for a purposeful life. God assigned the mankind to cultivate, populate, and rule the land, thus he stated, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth" (Gen 1:28).

Racism, like all sin, seeks to distort God's glory by establishing others as less than God's created image-bearing identity. Furthermore, racism makes others unworthy of certain God-given rights. The Bible demonstrates before man's choice to disobey that God's creation existed in fellowship with him, experienced intimacy with him, and sought to glorify him.

2. The fall is the cause of racism. Sin ties itself theologically to human civilization's fall in the Garden of Eden. Due to the fall of mankind, individuals found themselves at odds with one another. Whether Adam assigning blame to Eve (Gen 3:12) or Cain murdering Abel (Gen 3:8), the disease of sin had begun to reveal itself throughout creation. Prejudices and discrimination remained rampant throughout Jesus's day. The enmity between Jews and Gentiles was manifested in disputes regarding worship and human worth. Additionally, Hellenistic Jews experienced neglect at the hands of Hebraic Jews in the daily distribution of food (Acts 6). Likewise, today, the problem of prejudice exists and is pervasive, extending among all races and ethnicities.

Racism, along with all other sins, destroys the unity of creation. The oneness of creation, fractured by its fallen state, bears the marks of an estranged community where we become separated from God,

neighbor, nature, and our true selves. The fracturing of relations is a result of a corrupt heart resulting in enmity against God as seen in Scripture (Gen 6:5; Isa 29:13; Jer 17:9; Matt 15:19).²⁶ Acts of racism do not reflect God's intentions made known prior to the fall of creation. Furthermore, all humans need a transformation of the heart. Thus, Paul identifies that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23).

3. Redemption in Christ purges racism. The effects of humans receiving the gospel are three-fold: First, the gospel saves a person from something, racism (1 Cor 15:3–4). Second, the gospel saves a person for something, love towards others (Eph 2:10). Third, the gospel saves a person to someone, the Lord Jesus, who despises the pride of racism (Eph 2:10). In the person of Jesus Christ, we are continually being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

The Christian gospel exists because of sin. Sin first reared its head in the third chapter of Genesis, and since then, manifests itself in many ways, racism among them. At the same time, God prophesies of the forthcoming solution, the gospel: "And I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He will strike your head, and you will bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15). The sin of racism and its evil ideology of hate and prejudice can never be put to death nor will the agents of it receive forgiveness without placing faith in the finished work of Jesus.

Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are to be characteristic of followers of Christ. The effects of the gospel reveal the Christian's love for his or her neighbors, regardless of their cultural, physical, or intellectual differences. The sanctifying power of Christ enables believers to denounce racism in all its forms because they are in Christ and Christ is in them. They victoriously proclaim: "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). The gospel saves a person from the sin of racism to something and someone. Thus, the church stands armed with the gospel of Jesus Christ, equipped to respond to the sin of racism. Believers are called to the work of reconciliation.

²⁶John Kinney, "The Theology of Fallenness: The Roots of Racism" in *Baptists against Racism: The United Christ for Racial Reconciliation* (McLean, VA: The Baptist World Alliance, 1999), 14–22.

4. Restoration points toward ultimate racial reconciliation. Like every great story, the Bible's grand narrative is moving toward a goal. The destination is the restoration of a relationship. The apostle John saw at least two visions that give us hope for final racial reconciliation. John beholds the glorious reconciliation: "After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands" (Rev 7:9). The individuals are united together for one purpose with white robes that are free from the stain of racism and all other sins.

Additionally, and chiefly, he envisions a reconciliation of a relationship with God, the Father. John describes the reconciliation in this way: "Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away." (Rev 21:3). According to John, the misery which came from sin's distortion of God's purpose for creation will no longer exist. Thus, once again, humanity will be able to have intimacy with God and fellowship with others. Because of the nonexistence of sin, every individual will experience eternal bliss purposed in the Garden of Eden. Amen!

A WAY FORWARD

Given the current racially charged climate of our culture, Christians of all ethnicities have a long way to journey toward accomplishing true reconciliation. However, after examining specific arguments from Scripture, we see that the biblical gospel provides the means for racial reconciliation. With racism defined as contradictory to God's creation, a result of the fall, individuals will only find a reversal of racism by the redemption found in Christ. However, some Christians may still struggle to know what particular steps to take moving forward. I suggest the following points of application.

First, Christians must acknowledge at the onset that racism is sinful. Racism is more than a blind spot or a social ill; it is a sin against humanity and God. The Christian gospel and the effects

thereof allow no room for prejudice. Thus, regardless of where racism exists, Christians must repudiate every existence of the sin.

Second, Christians must understand the gospel exists as the only solution for the problem of racism. Reconciliation, whether with God or man, can only happen when both repentance and forgiveness take place. The practitioner of racism must seek repentance. In this, a person must come by way of Christ, placing faith in his finished work on the cross. Additionally, the one wronged must grant forgiveness, understanding that he or she also has been forgiven by God (Eph 4:32).

Finally, Christians must welcome those of different cultures and backgrounds into fellowship, personal, and institutional. Believers must seek to understand and appreciate differences. They must refuse to practice racial accommodation, which is a convenient arrangement of lesser compromise. Followers of Christ must desire Christ-centered reconciliation and allow themselves to be brought near by the blood of Christ, who breaks down enmity between the various ethnicities, so that God may make us all one again.



RACE AND RACISM IN THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION: The Lost Legacies of George W. Truett and W. A. Criswell

O. S. Hawkins*

On a crisp December afternoon in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955, Rosa Parks, a forty-two-year-old seamstress, boarded a city bus and took a seat en route home following a normal workday. What happened a few minutes later became the spark that ignited the Civil Rights Movement. Parks refused to relinquish her seat on the bus to a white man who stood over her demanding it. Within days, the entire world took note. This simple act of resistance by a then-unknown African American woman would result in a sweeping cultural change in America.

Two months later, on February 22, 1956, W. A. Criswell, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, stood before the gathered joint assembly of the South Carolina legislature and delivered a passionate plea for segregation that would become a sobering and defining moment in his life and ministry. At the invitation of Governor Strom Thurmond, and agitated by the infiltration of those from the North infusing themselves into Southern segregation, Criswell gave an impromptu speech arguing that the privilege to worship in a segregated church was something that not only the people of the South but also Southern Baptists viewed as an integral part of their heritage.¹ Moved and motivated by the cheering legislators, he moved to more caustic rhetoric that he would regret the rest of

¹ An address by W. A. Criswell, Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, to the Joint Assembly, Wednesday, February 22, 1956, Rare Books and Manuscripts Collection, Rubenstein Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina; "Criswell Rips Integration," Dallas Morning News, February 23, 1956.

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his life. Referring to those in the North, he continued, "Let them integrate, let them sit up there in their dirty shirts and make all their fine speeches. But they are all a bunch of infidels, dying from the neck up."² This divisive language and apparently oblivious awareness of the real sufferings of Black Americans became an ongoing issue.

Looking back on this signal event years later, Criswell acknowledged the speech was "unwise and untimely."³ He referred to it as "one of the colossal blunders of my young life." He continued,

Looking back I wish with all my heart that I had not spoken on behalf of segregation in any form or in any place. In the following weeks, months and years, as I prayed, searched the holy Scriptures, preached the gospel, and worked with our people, I came to the profound conclusion that to separate by coercion the body of Christ on any basis was unthinkable, unchristian, and unacceptable to God.⁴

Repeatedly throughout his remaining years, Criswell made statements of regret over his words in South Carolina. In his oral history recorded in 1973 and housed at Baylor University, he said, "I made some extreme statements there that I would have never made in a thousand years if I were really to study it through. ... The whole thing was a colossal blunder and mistake on my part. ... It did not represent my heart. I was defending a position that did not represent my heart, my soul."⁵

To be fair, in 1944, Criswell inherited a church from George W. Truett that had become steeped in a spirit of Southern culture, deeply imbedded with the stain of white supremacy. While Truett is virtually revered by the masses and his name is etched in stone over the entrances to public schools, colleges, seminaries, hospitals, and the like, his record on race and segregation is one that should cause deep concern for anyone studying his life and legacy. By almost every

² Editorial, "Dallas Pastor Stirs Controversy with Statements on Integration," *The Baptist Messenger*, March 1, 1956.

³ W. A. Criswell, *Standing on the Promises: The Autobiography of W. A. Criswell* (Dallas: Word, 1990), 203.

⁴ Criswell, *Standing on the Promises*, 204.

⁵ W. A. Criswell, *Oral History Memoir* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 1973), 266-67.

measure, Truett lived a life of impeccable integrity and enjoyed a near spotless reputation that has endured across the decades. Perhaps no one in Baptist lore has enjoyed in death the adoration and near human worship as he. However, in a day when the founders and namesakes of a multitude of institutions across the country have come under greater scrutiny, George W. Truett's lost legacy is not exempt.

Truett lived within a systemic racist culture that saw Whites as superior, and his silence on racial issues, which frequently arose during his life and ministry, are an anathema to anyone who has seriously studied his life. The attitude of most Texas Baptists in the early years of the twentieth century toward the African American community was this: "Texas Baptists were paternalists who believed the presumed superiority of whites carried with it responsibilities. Allegedly inferior and childlike blacks, instead of being humiliated, were to be under the watchful tutelage of superior Saxons."⁶ Although no records indicate that Truett felt Blacks were inferior, indications are given in his referring to them in such condescending terms as calling one man an "old darkie" and his mother "an old black mammy."⁷

In Truett's famous religious liberty address on the steps of the Capitol in Washington, D.C., in 1920, he stated, "Whoever believes in Christ as his personal savior is our brother in the common salvation. ... God wants free worshippers and no other kind."⁸ Yet, even as those words escaped his lips, Blacks in Dallas were not welcomed as "free worshippers" within the membership of the First Baptist Church. Leon McBeth speaks of Will and Agnes, "a Negro couple who helped the Truetts for thirty-five years."⁹ Agnes cooked all the meals, and Will took care of the daily chores. The Truetts kindly cared for them in their declining years, yet Will and Agnes could never be "free worshippers" at the church where George W. Truett preached Sunday after Sunday.

Perhaps this inherent racial insensitivity on Truett's part is most

⁶ John W. Storey, *Texas Baptist Leadership and Social Christianity, 1900-1980* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1986), 96.

⁷ Keith Durso, *Thy Will Be Done: A Biography of George W. Truett* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 119.

⁸ George W. Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," May 16, 1920, accessed February 8, 2021, <https://bjconline.org/baptists-and-religious-liberty-2/>, 3.

⁹ Leon McBeth, *The First Baptist Church of Dallas* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1968), 209.

revealed in the founding of Baylor Hospital, the direct result of his vision and effort. At the conclusion of a banquet honoring the world-famous Austrian physician Adolf Lorenz held at the Orient Hotel in 1903 in downtown Dallas, Truett rose to the floor with a challenge to build “a great humanitarian hospital” in the city of Dallas.¹⁰ He stated, “Whatever makes for the benefit of the race has its origin in Christianity . . . a great humanitarian hospital would illustrate the glorious result of Christian influence upon the community.”¹¹ Truett served on the board of Baylor Hospital for decades after its founding and was its most influential and prominent voice. Since not a single African American physician was given hospital privileges there during his entire lifetime and tenure of board leadership, it appears Truett was simply speaking of the benefit of the White race and the glorious result of Christian influence in the White community. It was not until 1968 that the first African American physician was given hospital and staff privileges at Baylor Hospital.¹²

As the decades unfolded, the Ku Klux Klan began to grab a foothold in Dallas. By the early 1920s, Dallas Klan #66 was the largest in the country, boasting over 13,000 members, including one of every three eligible men in the city.¹³ The bulk of Dallas’s Klan membership was made up of “Protestant church men, especially those with a more fundamentalist outlook.”¹⁴

Black lives matter today, but the initials BLM had little meaning in Dallas in the days of George W. Truett. Two horrible events took place within the sight of the steeple of Truett’s First Baptist Church. In 1910, over five thousand people gathered in a frenzy at the intersection of Akard and Main Street to witness the brutal public lynching of a sixty-five-year-old African American man by the name of Allen Brooks. In 1921, another African American, Alexander Johnson, was taken from his home around the corner from the church

¹⁰W. A. Criswell, “Dr. Truett and Baylor Hospital,” W. A. Criswell Sermon Library, June 6, 1980; accessed February 8, 2021, <https://www.waccriswell.com/sermons/1980/dr-Truett-and-Baylor-hospital/>, 3.

¹¹Durso, *Thy Will Be Done*, 69.

¹²Michael Emmett, “An Introduction to the Elgin Ware Lectureship” (Dallas: Baylor University Medical Center, July 25, 2012), <https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3377295>, accessed February 8, 2021.

¹³Darwin Payne, “When Dallas Was the Most Racist City in America,” *D Magazine* (June 2017), accessed February 8, 2021, <https://dmagazine.com/publications/d-magazine/2017/June/when-DALLAS-was-the-most-racist-city-in-America/>.

¹⁴Payne, “When Dallas Was the Most Racist City,” 3.

on Ross Avenue to the Trinity River Bottoms where he was beaten, scourged, and had KKK engraved with acid on his forehead. There is no record of Truett ever speaking out publicly against these and other atrocities taking place in his city. When many of the city leaders finally took an open stand against this radical group and were called upon to sign a statement publicly in the local newspaper denouncing the Klan, many prominent clergyman and leaders of the city added their name to the list—with one glaring exception, George W. Truett. His silence on these atrocities was not golden. J. M. Dawson, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Waco and the most outspoken Southern Baptist in opposing the Klan, lamented the “silence of his peers” and expressed “disappointment in the silence of a particular friend.”¹⁵ Because Truett was well known for his warm relationship with Dawson and because little record exists of his speaking out against the evils of racial hatred, people likely assumed that Dawson’s “special friend” was George W. Truett.

But why such silence against such evil on the part of this man of otherwise remarkable reputation and stature? Perhaps the answer can be found in a careful reading of the listing of the Dallas Ku Klux Klan’s “Steering Committee of 100” in 1921.¹⁶ It reveals that an alarming and embarrassingly significant percentage of the steering committee were members and deacons of Truett’s church. The list contains the names of prominent First Baptist members and leaders like physicians Henry Clay, A. M. Gantt, and C. C. Holder, and lawyers N. L. Leachman, Robert Allen, and W. L. Crawford, to name just a few. The list continues, containing many more of Truett’s members who were business owners, city employees, and others with virtually every vocation known to the city. And this list includes only those on the local Ku Klux Klan steering committee. It is impossible to know how many rank and file members of Truett’s church were also dues-paying members of the Klan. He stood by

¹⁵Joseph Davis, “Embrace Equality: Texas Baptists, Social Christianity and Civil Rights in the Twentieth Century,” (Master’s thesis, University of North Texas, 2013), 75.

¹⁶Darwin Payne, *Big D: Triumphs and Troubles of an American Supercity in the 20th Century* (Dallas: Three Forks Publishers, 1994), 512-14. For a further understanding of this list naming the steering committee, see page 87 of *Big D* for a detailed description of this document in a long footnote. It can also be found in the archives of the Dallas Historical Society. This list contains the names and occupations of many prominent citizens and church members and constituted the decision-making process of the Ku Klux Klan cell #66 in Dallas, the largest single Klan organization in the country.

silently as he watched those under his pastoral watch-care become actively involved in the promotion of the vilest expression of racial hatred in our nation's history. His wealthy deacon Cullen Thomas, with whom Truett is pictured in a well distributed photograph, standing in front of Thomas's mansion, publicly endorsed Earle B. Mayfield, the KKK candidate for the U.S. Senate from Texas in 1922. Mayfield, with the support of Thomas and the masses of Klan members throughout Texas, was soon off to the United States Senate with a two-to-one margin of victory.¹⁷ Throughout his life, George W. Truett met one controversy or conflict after another, always attempting, in Keith Durso's words, to remain "serenely above the fray."¹⁸ However, in our modern world of healthy and heightened racial sensitivity, attempting to stay "serenely above the fray" is an indictment and no badge of honor.

Truett's underlying racism was more "condescending than malevolent."¹⁹ His racial sins were more sins of omission than commission, but glaringly so. It is not what he said, but what he did not say in the face of such flagrant disregard for human dignity and life. Truett spoke many poignant and powerful words from some of America's greatest platforms, but in the end, in his quest to stay "serenely above the fray," what he did not say in the face of the blatant and brutal White supremacy that permeated his culture speaks louder than the rest.²⁰

Through the ensuing decades, after Truett's death, First Baptist Church has swung its doors wide open to "whosoever will, may come." Criswell, acknowledging the church's racial sins of the past, said, "We knew that racism was wrong, but we had never taken a stand to right the wrong ... we had never made it an official stated policy that any believer, black, white, or yellow could become a member of the church."²¹ Thus, in 1968, Criswell addressed the

¹⁷Editorial, *Hays Free Press News-Dispatch*, Kyle, TX, August 11, 2016, accessed February 8, 2021, <https://haysfreepress.com/2016/8/11/texans-elect-closet-klansman-to-represent-us-as-senator/>.

¹⁸Durso, *Thy Will Be Done*, 70.

¹⁹Michael Phillips, "You Get What You Pray For," <https://jacobinmag.com/2018/03/reverend-robert-jeffress-donald-trump-homophobia>, accessed February 8, 2021.

²⁰Although there is little record of any public statements, in a private, secret meeting of the Dallas Masonic Lodge, there is the record that George Truett joined Rabbi David Leftkowitz during a discussion led by lodge members in expressing their views against some of the Klan's activities and did so in a "most expressive manner." This can be found in archives of the Dallas Masonic Lodge #760 in the minutes for the meeting of October 14, 1921.

²¹Criswell, *Standing on the Promises*, 210.

deacons of the church, some of whom were former Klan sympathizers under Truett's pastorate. With passion, through tears, he told them, "I am done with preaching and worrying, even as I preach that someone who is black might respond to my invitation." He recounted, "Suddenly my eyes filled with tears ... I didn't know what those deacons would say."²² One after another, the deacons stood to their feet until all were standing in unanimous support of their pastor, who stood before them in repentance and remorse in public confession. The next Sunday morning, Criswell took his text from Revelation 3:8, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door." This sermon, "The Church of the Open Door," was one of the defining addresses of his life. It left no doubt that the First Baptist Church in Dallas was not simply remorseful but repentant of its former silence on race, having now publicly swung open its doors to anyone and everyone.

Criswell spent the rest of his life seeking to make amends for his past racial sins. After being accused of suggesting that the curse of Ham in Genesis was a life sentence of servitude for the black race, he made certain in his *Believer's Study Bible* that the notes bore out his true feeling on the matter. The note under Genesis 9:25 in the study Bible plainly states, "Contrary to some misinterpretations of the past, the reader should note that neither Ham nor Canaan and the Canaanites were black. This passage cannot be used as a basis for the reprehensible attitudes and actions of racism."²³ He opened a ministry to the homeless that still today sleeps over 400 men, women, and children of all races each night, feeds over 2,000 hungry people daily, provides medical and dental help at no charge, and trains multitudes of people for job placement. When he saw that the African American community in the poverty pockets of south Dallas would not come to the downtown church, he took the church to them, opening over thirty "chapels" in neighborhood church buildings that had been abandoned; First Baptist purchased these and provided myriad of social ministries. The fruit of Criswell's repentance can also be seen in the fact that, across the years, minorities have made up approximately one-third of the student body of First Baptist Academy while the Criswell College continues to educate and graduate a significant

²²Criswell, *Standing on the Promises*, 211.

²³W. A. Criswell, ed., *The Believer's Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 21.

percentage of African American students.

A walk through the young married and children's areas in the First Baptist Church of Dallas today looks like a journey through the United Nations. Red and Yellow, Black and White are not just precious in God's sight, but they are all on full view in this growing multiracial congregation of today. And George W. Truett? Most of our heroes and giants have a way of dwindling into ordinary men when we learn enough about them. It is without excuse to argue that Truett was simply a victim of his culture and was no different from most of the other pastors in his snapshot of time. His voice, above all others, could have meant much to social justice in his time. But, when speaking out about so many social ills of his day, sadly, Truett's voice fell almost totally silent when it came to racial concerns. In the end, those of us who have come to know and love him by studying his life and legacy can rest in the hope that he is among those in heaven rejoicing at the present journey of the church where he invested a half-century of gifts and ministry.

As one of his pastoral successors, having preached hundreds of sermons from the same pulpit from which Truett preached thousands, I can attest personally to the greatness of his stature and the deep love and respect held long after his death in the hearts of those who knew and loved him. Stories abound of how, on many occasions, he would arrive home without his overcoat, only for his wife, Josephine, to find out he had given it to someone on the street who was in need. The fact that in the midst of all his greatness he joins generations of our spiritual forefathers who remained "serenely above the fray" regarding the racial issues of their day remains one of the imponderables of Almighty God.

FAKE AND FUTURE “HUMANS”: Artificial Intelligence, Transhumanism, and the Question of the Person

Jacob Shatzer*

Today, we are pulled in many different directions on what it means to be human. On one hand, a radical constructivism rules: I choose and build my identity, and for you to use any category to describe me that I have not chosen is an offense and affront. From this perspective, there really is not anything solid that determines what it means to be human, and we can build ourselves into whatever we want. Yet, on the other hand, we construct arguments and movements based on a shared humanity. Furthermore, as we develop more and more sophisticated technology, we cannot help but begin to refer to these technologies as though they bear some marks of what it means to be human. Our digital assistants have names, we use smart robots to provide companionship to the elderly, and we exult at how “intelligent” (a human-oriented trait) our systems are becoming, whether it is the artificial intelligence (AI) built into a thermostat or a robot. When it comes to ourselves, we want to determine our humanity, but when it comes to our machines, we are quick to use static human traits in order to describe the greatness of the works of our hands.

Our technological creations pull in multiple directions at our doctrine of humanity. A robust doctrine of humanity will give us a foundation from which to address these challenges, but these challenges will also affect—or perhaps infect—our understanding of what it means to be human. A basic understanding of AI (“fake humans”) and transhumanism (“future humans”) will press a variety of challenges onto our theological anthropology, both in what it means to be human and how we might consider and pursue human flourishing in light of these developments.

The history of technology is certainly complex, and there is some

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debate as to whether technology is neutral or not. However, even if technology on its own is thought of as neutral, it is actually impossible for any of us to ever engage technology “on its own.” We always encounter technologies embedded within human cultures, which do carry and cultivate values and ethics.¹ Not only do we always encounter technologies as embedded within cultures, we also struggle to be able to notice the ways that these devices impact our ability to see and desire the good,² or in simpler language, to avoid sin and honor Christ.

This issue is particularly important because of the age in which we live. Byron Reese argues in his book *The Fourth Age* that while we think we have seen change in the last 100 years, we really have not. We’re still basically the same as people 5,000 years ago. He sees three main ages of humanity so far: fire (100,000 years ago); agriculture, cities, war (10,000 years ago); wheel and writing (5,000 years ago). We’re on the cusp of the fourth: AI and robots.³ Reese provides a perspective not present in many other treatments: he emphasizes that many proponents of different futures depend on unexamined assumptions about what it means to be human. We have to answer that question before we can understand the way to direct AI and robotics, and before we can really decide if these changes will be positive or not.

In other words, the other articles in this issue on theological anthropology have just as much to do with our response to AI and transhumanism as this article does! The questions Reese raises, from a secular perspective, show the fundamentally theological nature of the issue: “The confusion happens when we begin with ‘What jobs will robots take from humans?’ instead of ‘What are humans?’ Until we answer that second question, we can’t meaningfully address the first.”⁴ With that in mind, in what follows we will look at AI and transhumanism in order to get a better view of the touchpoints and challenges that they raise for Christian theological anthropology.

¹For more on the history of technology and understanding the connection between technology and ethics, see Eric Schatzberg, *Technology: Critical History of a Concept* (New York: Oxford, 2019).

²For an interesting take on this from a secular philosophical angle, see Shannon Vallor, *Technology and the Virtues: A Philosophical Guide to a Future Worth Wanting* (New York: Oxford, 2016).

³Byron Reese, *The Fourth Age: Smart Robots, Conscious Computers, and the Future of Humanity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018).

⁴Reese, *The Fourth Age*, xi.

By going this route, we will begin to see ways that our doctrine of humanity is informed by these challenges and also forms our response to them.

I. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial intelligence is a large and changing field that has also had a broad and varied history, both in reality and in pop-culture expressions. To consider how AI might develop and impact our thinking about what it means to be human, we will have to clear the ground a bit to make sense of what we are talking about.

In his recent book *2084*, John Lennox defines key terms related to AI, and we will rely on his explanation of “robot,” “AI,” and “algorithm.” First, “a robot is a machine designed and programmed by an intelligent human to do, typically, a single task that involves interaction with its physical environment, a task that would normally require an intelligent human to do it.”⁵ This definition is pretty straightforward and unsurprising. Second, Lennox defines AI in two ways: “The term is now used both for the intelligent machines that are the goal and for the science and technology that are aiming at that goal.”⁶ Third, Lennox expands on “algorithm” using the *OED*: “a precisely defined set of mathematical or logical operations for the performance of a particular task.”⁷ He points out that such concepts can be found as far back as Babylonia in 1800–1600 B.C., though obviously not coded into digital technology. The key feature of the algorithm is that “once you know how it works, you can solve not only one problem but a whole class of problems.”⁸ Lennox follows up with some mathematical examples, such as instructions for various steps to arrive at, say, the greatest common denominator of two numbers. You can follow the steps for any set of two numbers and it will work. Algorithms, then, are embedded within software that uses them to interact with and evaluate different data inputs.⁹ This type of system can take any input that can be digitized—sound, text,

⁵John C. Lennox, *2084: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 16.

⁶Lennox, *2084*, 17.

⁷Lennox, *2084*, 19.

⁸Lennox, *2084*, 19.

⁹For a deeper explanation of algorithms, see Kartik Hosanagar, *A Human's Guide to Machine Intelligence: How Algorithms Are Shaping Our Lives and How We Can Stay in Control* (New York: Viking, 2019).

images—apply a set of steps to that data, and come up with some sort of conclusion. That conclusion can include or lead to action. Algorithms are vital to understand because they are at the center of how AI works.

There are four main categories of algorithms. First, prioritization algorithms make an ordered list, say, of items you might want to buy or shows you might want to watch. Classification algorithms take data and put it into categories, perhaps automatically labelling photos for you, or isolating and removing inappropriate content from social networks. Association algorithms finds links and relationships between things. Filtering algorithms isolate what is important (say, eliminating background noise so a voice-enabled assistant like Siri can “hear” what you’re saying).¹⁰

Let’s take a look at a quick example. A smart thermostat can take in pieces of information, such as the current temperature in a room, the time of day, and the weather forecast for the day, run that data through a series of steps, and determine how long and how high to run the furnace to reach a certain temperature. (Smart thermostats can also take in data on household inhabitants over a period of time to determine what that certain temperature should be.) To incorporate our definitions above, the thermostat would be a type of robot, an example of AI, running an algorithm to achieve climate bliss.

Typically, experts divide AI into “narrow” AI and “general” AI, and our thermostat serves as an example of “narrow.” A “narrow” intelligence can be taught or programmed to do something. A “general” intelligence can be taught or programmed to do anything.¹¹ For example, a robot vacuum is able to do one thing: clean up. Now, it certainly relies on various elements, including reading data on mapping a room, and even things like whether its bin is full. But it basically does one thing; no one is worried about their Roomba running away from home and joining the circus.

A general intelligence, on the other hand, is able to adapt and learn a variety of actions. Some thinkers describe artificial general intelligence (AGI) as being able to do anything that humans can do, but that is primarily because humans serve as the standard for the

¹⁰Hannah Fry, *Hello World: Being Human in the Age of Algorithms* (New York: Norton, 2018), 8–10.

¹¹Lennox, 2084, 13.

ability to adapt and adopt different ways of doing things and viewing the world. In all likelihood, an AGI would quickly surpass human abilities in many areas, thus rendering this comparison less useful.

We must take one more step in understanding AI to see the complexity and potential growth of this field. My first introduction to robotics occurred when I was in second grade. My class went on a field trip to North Idaho College. We worked with some simple robots that could move and pick up items. Our challenge: program the robots to navigate a course and retrieve an item. How far forward before a right turn? How much more before the next turn? Etcetera. Early advances in AI were made with this same method. Humans were creating algorithms, steps of instructions (vastly more complicated than my second-grade robot example) to allow robots and other smart machines to interact with their environment in desired ways. This is what most of us think about when we think about AI: human programmers teaching robots to do amazing things.

That is the way that it worked for a while. The history of AI provides helpful context in understanding what we should come to expect. Most people are aware of Moore's Law, which relates to the (generally accurate) rule of thumb that computer power doubles every 18 months (this being related to the construction of microchips). Many assume that AI, since it relies on computing power, has increased at a similar, steady rate, for the last 50 years. That is simply not the case.

Artificial intelligence hit a series of walls—what is referred to as “AI winters”—for two main reasons. First, creating algorithms is really complicated, and some tasks were just too complex for humans to “crack” with the instructions they could embed in an algorithm. Second, computing power, speed, and storage are not infinite. In other words, we reached the outer limit of our ability to “write” complex instructions, and we didn't have the computing power to process them quickly and at scale. But this “AI winter” came to an end in the early 2000s.

Recent advances in AI—its emergence from “winter”—have occurred because of changes in these two areas. The second one is obvious: computers are faster and more powerful, and data storage is exponentially larger now. But the problem of creating algorithms wasn't as simple as waiting for Moore's Law to catch up. The advent

of “machine learning” has led to the great growth in AI in the last ten to fifteen years. The “rule-based algorithms” that humans can create directly are being replaced by “machine-learning algorithms.”¹² Basically, AI scientists have gone from creating algorithms for desired outcomes to creating learning algorithms: ways to set up an AI to learn for itself.¹³ This occurs by “training” the AI on a set of real-world data. Through machine learning, the AI is able to identify patterns and create algorithms that match those patterns.¹⁴ Once that is done, the AI can be fed pieces of data, and it will use its newly created algorithm to determine the relevant action or outcome. It is predicting what is most likely the proper outcome based on the dataset it used to determine the pattern and algorithm.¹⁵

Some argue that we should view AI not as intelligence but as prediction: an algorithm takes inputs and, based on patterns recognized within the data, makes a prediction on what the output should be. This could be a prediction about the answer to a question, or a prediction about whether to turn or brake, or a prediction about consumer behavior. AI will make prediction cheaper, which will mean businesses can do other things better. At some point, cheap prediction might change business models drastically.¹⁶ One example of this is Amazon’s work in “anticipatory shipping.” There could come a point when Amazon’s AI is so good at predicting what consumers want that it is more beneficial for them to simply ship things before people shop. It knows what you want; it sends it. Sure, sometimes it would be wrong, but once its correct predictions cross a certain threshold, it is actually more financially feasible for Amazon to ship and then allow returns on what it gets wrong. Their profit would be so high based on the increased number of items people would buy from them rather than elsewhere that it would be worth eating the costs of returns the times when it gets it wrong.¹⁷

¹²Fry, *Hello World*, 10.

¹³I am of course simplifying here. To get a better grasp of the different types of algorithms and approaches to this aspect of AI, see Pedro Domingos, *The Master Algorithm: How the Quest for the Ultimate Learning Machine Will Remake Our World* (New York: Basic, 2015).

¹⁴Darrell M. West, *The Future of Work: Robots, AI, and Automation* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2018), 24.

¹⁵See Ajay Agrawal, Joshua Gans, and Ayi Goldfarb, *Prediction Machines: The Simple Economics of Artificial Intelligence* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Books, 2018).

¹⁶See Agrawal, Gans, and Goldfarb, *Prediction Machines*.

¹⁷Agrawal, Gans, and Goldfarb, *Prediction Machines*, 16.

We will look at some challenges below, but one jumps out here immediately. Machine learning is powerful, but part of its genius is that it works without having human programmers setting it up. In many cases, we're not really sure how these algorithms work. This can lead to biases or other problems. In other words, bad data can lead to bad machine learning, which can then perpetuate the same problems. As one scholar puts it, "When a new technology is as pervasive and game changing as machine learning, it's not wise to let it remain a black box. Opacity opens the door to error and misuse."¹⁸ But the very nature of machine learning makes transparency difficult. Scientists often are not sure exactly how the AI has trained itself on the data set, or whether the data set itself harbors problematic assumptions.

We have not even begun to consider at what point this "artificial intelligence" becomes something meriting a new category. Technologists are already dreaming and planning about creating consciousness. As one puts it, "*techno-optimism about machine consciousness... is a position that holds that if and when humans develop highly sophisticated, general purpose AIs, these AIs will be conscious.*"¹⁹ Schneider uses the "precautionary principle" to argue that if we have any reason to believe an AI to be conscious, we should extend the same rights to it that we would to other sentient beings.²⁰ In fact, she argues that we should be really careful *not* to create consciousness and should thus limit our development of AI. While some are concerned about AI developing to merit something mirroring human rights, others are looking to technology to change radically what humans are.

II. TRANSHUMANISM

If we imagine a Venn diagram, AI and transhumanism would be their own circles, but there would certainly be overlap. We need this image, because we do not want to assume that all AI is part of transhumanism, nor do we want to assume that transhumanism is only about merging humans with AI. Both are bigger, but they are related. And, as we will see later, they produce some of the same

¹⁸Domingos, *Master Algorithm*, xvi.

¹⁹Susan Schneider, *Artificial You: AI and the Future of Your Mind* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), 23.

²⁰Schneider, *Artificial You*, 67.

existential quandaries for us.

At root, transhumanism is about harnessing a broad range of enhancement technologies in order to bootstrap humans to the “next step” in the evolutionary process. Lennox quotes a character in Dan Brown’s novel *Origin*, who speaks this way about transhumanism: “New technologies... will forever change what it means to be *human*. And I realize there are those of you who believe you, as *Homo sapiens*, are God’s chosen species. I can understand that this news may feel like the end of the world to you. But I bet you, please believe me . . . the future is actually much *brighter* than you imagine.”²¹ This quotation captures both the essence of transhumanism—changing what it means to be human—and also the inescapable religious dimension. Transhumanists, by-and-large, see all religions as opiates of the people distracting from pain and preventing or denigrating the very advances that provide the only “true” hope. (Yet this stance itself is a religious one!)

Even though religion is the *persona non grata* of transhumanism in most cases, more Christians are finding common cause with transhumanism. One group is more theologically progressive, proposing “post-anthropologies” that emphasize “posthuman subjectivity and relationality, multiple embodiments, and hybridity as its key components” and goes so far as to propose a “cyborg Christ” as the center of a posthuman Christology.²² Most evangelical Christians will not find such proposals alluring due to their radical theological innovation. Theological engagement with such groups will invite further research and thought from evangelical theologians and ethicists, but this response remains mostly peripheral among Christian responses to transhumanism.

However, a growing number of Christians identify with the transhumanist movement and seek to support it theologically without going quite as far in theological innovation.²³ “Christian Transhumanists” have founded an organization and gather in an annual conference. Engaging their thought is more important at

²¹Lennox, 2084, 45–46.

²²Jeanine Thweatt-Bates, *Cyborg Selves: A Theological Anthropology of the Posthuman* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 13.

²³For a recent edited volume that covers a variety of perspectives on the issue, see Steve Donaldson and Ron Cole-Turner, eds., *Christian Perspectives on Transhumanism and the Church: Chips in the Brain, Immortality, and the World of Tomorrow* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018).

this stage because their arguments and thinking are more likely to gain traction in evangelicalism broadly.

A Christian Transhumanist is “someone who advocates using science & technology to transform the human condition—in a way consistent with, and as exemplified by, the discipleship of Christ.”²⁴ They choose to use “transhumanism” intentionally, believing that it provides a touchpoint for conversation with leading-edge thinkers in science and technology. According to their website, “[Transhumanism] originates with Dante in 1320, winds through Christian history, and is picked up in the work of Jesuit priest and paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Teilhard’s friend Julien Huxley uses the term in 1957 in attempt to define a philosophy of humanity’s ongoing transformation. This leads to secular transhumanism, as it is understood today.” Further, the group thinks that it can “promote positive engagement between Christianity and the leading edges of scientific & technological thought.”²⁵

The group’s statement of faith is fairly short but important:

As members of the Christian Transhumanist Association:

1. We believe that God’s mission involves the transformation and renewal of creation including humanity, and that we are called by Christ to participate in that mission: working against illness, hunger, oppression, injustice, and death.

2. We seek growth and progress along every dimension of our humanity: spiritual, physical, emotional, mental—and at all levels: individual, community, society, world.

3. We recognize science and technology as tangible expressions of our God-given impulse to explore and discover and as a natural outgrowth of being created in the image of God.

²⁴“Frequently Asked Questions,” *Christian Transhumanism Website*, <https://www.christiantranshumanism.org/faq> (accessed June 8, 2020).

²⁵“Frequently Asked Questions”.

4. We are guided by Jesus' greatest commands to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength...and love your neighbor as yourself."

5. We believe that the intentional use of technology, coupled with following Christ, will empower us to become more human across the scope of what it means to be creatures in the image of God.

*In this way we are Christian Transhumanists.*²⁶

At root, "Christians who embrace transhumanism tend to believe that God is not entirely done with the work of creation but is actively creating even now."²⁷ *Creatio continua* in Silicon Valley.

Christian Transhumanists are interested in gaining a place at the table with technologists and futurists. This is needed because already "Christianity has lost a propaganda war—no matter what we conclude in the dialogue with transhumanism, we currently do not have the power to create any substantial change" because Christians are primarily external to the conversation, much like the "bioethicist" operates separate from and outside the role of the doctor.²⁸ Instead, Christian Transhumanists hope for an evangelistic impact of sorts, an increased impact of Christian ethics on the development of transhumanism.

Other Christians are more critical of transhumanism because of its dependence on deficient ideas of enhancement. As Jeffrey Bishop puts it, enhancement technology "is the achievement of a rather dark view of the world. It is the achievement of a sinister metaphysics, originating from relatively recent Western cultural ideas about the ambiguity of the body."²⁹ Furthermore, "Enhancement technologies and the whole transhumanist lifeworld cannot be merely accepted by

²⁶"The Christian Transhumanist Affirmation," *Christian Transhumanism Website*, <https://www.christiantranshumanism.org/affirmation> (accessed June 8, 2020).

²⁷Ron Cole-Turner, "Introduction," in *Christian Perspectives on Transhumanism*, 9.

²⁸Boaz Goss, "Christianity's Rigged Debate with Transhumanism," in *Christian Perspectives on Transhumanism*, 84.

²⁹Jeffrey P. Bishop, "Nietzsche's Power Ontology and Transhumanism: Or Why Christians Cannot Be Transhumanists," in *Christian Perspectives on Transhumanism*, 118.

Christians because at the heart of these transhumanist lifeworlds is a metaphysics and an ontology that is alien to Christianity.³⁰ Many Christian Transhumanists identify the work of enhancement with the idea of being “co-creators” with God, who continues to create and work beyond the initial chapters of Genesis. But Bishop argues that the “co-creator” language is just a mask for an instrumental, utilitarian calculus that misrepresents the true nature of the world and is ultimately sub-Christian.³¹ It sounds theological because it is rooted in Genesis and supposedly subordinated to God’s work, but it in fact masks and defends a deficient and non-Christian approach to the world.³²

Not only does transhumanism (and Christian Transhumanism) depend on a deficient metaphysics and ontology, it also promotes a paradoxical view of human nature. At the same time, “humanity is viewed as a formless work in progress, but also as fundamentally oriented toward desiring specific goods (namely, the goods of control and progress).”³³ Furthermore, there seem to be other paradoxes in play, such as the paradox between the language of artificial “intelligence,” which operates based on some level of essentialist definition of “intelligence,” but then the completely fluid approach to humanity as evidenced by transhumanism. I introduced this paradox at the start of this article, but hopefully now the substance of the paradox is clearer.

III. FAKE AND FUTURE “HUMANS”:

THE CHALLENGE TO THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Now that we have introduced AI and transhumanism, we can explore some ways that these developments will challenge our understanding of what it means to be human, and how that relates to the pursuit of human flourishing in our communities and societies. In other words, we will look not only at traditional “doctrinal” issues but also to the ethical problems that are interwoven with our attempt

³⁰Bishop, “Nietzsche’s Power Ontology,” 119.

³¹Bishop, “Nietzsche’s Power Ontology,” 131.

³²Further, instead of buying into the promises of transhumanism, Christians should cling to the doctrines of creation and resurrection. At root, “The Christian message of resurrection is that bodies matter, they have significance, and they are not just clay to be molded to our wills.” See Bishop, “Nietzsche’s Power Ontology,” 133.

³³Ysabel Johnson, “Rivalry, Control, and Transhumanist Desire,” in *Christian Perspectives on Transhumanism*, 230.

to follow Christ in the face of these particular opportunities and challenges.

1. *Expansion: I define myself.* Transhumanism subtly tempts us to believe that our humanity is infinitely malleable by playing on our hopes for technology-empowered improvement. While we might think that we do not buy into this, we cannot deny that this ethos surrounds us and impacts the way we think about the world. As ethicist Jason Thacker puts it, “Because technology is woven into every aspect of our lives, it will naturally revolutionize how we see ourselves and those around us.”³⁴ If we are not intentional about countering a transhumanist narrative, we will find ourselves and our churches slowly changed by it.³⁵ AI and transhumanism are poised to influence any self-definition of humanity we might be prepared to do, intentionally or unintentionally.

2. *Reduction: I am data; I am my work.* We will not only see ourselves expanding what it means to be human and thinking we can define it for ourselves. We will also find that as more and more of the world is turned into data (or, perhaps, recorded as data), we risk reducing ourselves and our neighbors more and more to sets of data.³⁶ As we find data about human behavior more and more interesting, and more and more useful (see comments on commercial interests below), we should see this as a helpful development that can illuminate for us some of the tendencies and consistencies of those around us. However, we must resist the idea that data can represent a person, full stop. A human person will always exceed what can be recorded as data, because humans are more than simply physical bodies with chemical reactions that can be recorded and stored. In short, the coming years are going to present us with a vast increase in the data we can know about ourselves and others. We are going to be sold on these things as though they reveal who we “really are.” This data will be enlightening and could be used for great good. But we must not act like or buy into the idea that it fully represents a person.³⁷

³⁴Jason Thacker, *The Age of AI: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 44.

³⁵For more on this line of argument, see my *Transhumanism and the Image of God: Today's Technology and the Future of Christian Discipleship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019).

³⁶Thacker, *Age of AI*, 66–67.

³⁷The more we accept these ideas and interact with them uncritically, the more like machines we actually become. Some argue that mindless technology use actually turns people into simple machines, programmable and controllable by powerful interests. In *Re-Engineering Humanity*,

And while this difficulty is related primarily to the development of machine learning and AI, it also connects with transhumanism. Advocates of “mind uploading” believe that there may be technological pathways to “upgrade” a person from a biological body to a synthetic one. All you need to do is capture all of the data that make that person that person (which, according to many, is entirely housed within the brain, without remainder). One perplexing issue among transhumanists is the “reduplication problem”: there can only be one you, so what happens when you make a downloaded copy?³⁸ In other words, even if you grant that a human can be reduced to a certain amount of data, and you can copy all of that data out of a biological brain, what do you have when you are done? Two persons? A clone?

The development of AI will also impact our sense of ourselves because it will challenge human beings’ sense of work. As erstwhile presidential candidate Andrew Yang argued, “The lack of mobility and growth has created a breeding ground for political hostility and social ills. High rates of unemployment and underemployment are linked to an array of social problems, including substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse, and depression... This is the most pressing economic and social issue of our time; our economy is evolving in ways that will make it more and more difficult for people with lower levels of education to find jobs and support themselves.”³⁹ As he puts it later, “The challenge we must overcome is that humans need work more than work needs us.”⁴⁰ These changes will not be isolated to jobs that we can immediately imagine robots doing—say, autonomous trucks replacing truck drivers—but may extend into jobs we had previously considered “safe” because we cannot yet

Brett Frischmann and Evan Selinger worry about “techno-social engineering,” which “refers to processes where technologies and social forces align and impact how we think, perceive, and act. That’s the ‘techno’ and ‘social’ components of the term. ‘Engineer’ is quite close in meaning to ‘construct,’ ‘influence,’ ‘shape,’ ‘manipulate,’ and ‘make,’ and we might have selected any of those terms” (4). They argue that we need the freedom to be “off” and freedom from an engineered determinism that many tech companies are after, whether in relation to AI or transhumanism. In other words, our resistance to the idea that we are merely lumps of data can help keep us from patterns of life that do in fact reduce us to almost that. See Frischmann and Selinger, *Re-Engineering Humanity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 4.

³⁸Schneider, *Artificial You*, 84.

³⁹Andrew Yang, *The War on Normal People: The Truth about America’s Disappearing Jobs and Why Universal Basic Income Is Our Future* (New York: Hachette, 2018), xiv.

⁴⁰Yang, *The War on Normal People*, 68.

imagine an AI doing them.⁴¹ As one scholar puts it, “The threat to jobs is coming far faster than most experts anticipated, and it will not discriminate by the color of one’s collar, instead striking the highly trained and poorly educated alike.”⁴²

Others argue that this line of thinking falls prey to three myths. These myths assume AI will follow a clear line of “progress” away from human involvement, eventually replacing all human jobs, and leading to a fully autonomous intelligence that can operate on its own. Instead, others believe there will be more creative ways of interacting with and utilizing AI, maintaining human control, jobs, and so on. The future, for these thinkers, is collaboration, not replacement.⁴³ In fact, “For the vast majority of professions, the new machine will actually enhance and protect employment. We don’t think, for example, that a single teacher or nurse will lose their job due to artificial intelligence. Instead, these professions will become more productive, more effective... and more enjoyable. Workers in such professions will come to view the new machine as their trusted colleague.”⁴⁴ Such collaboration will raise a different set of questions for the meaning of human work, and we must be better prepared not to reduce our sense of humanity or our primary identities to our work.

3. *Big business: aligning commercial interests and the common good.* Another economic challenge presented by these developments emerges when we look beyond the impact on jobs to the way economic incentives drive the growth and implementation of AI and the implications these decisions have for society at large. We also must consider the impact that AI will have on the development of human economies and societies. In *The Big Nine*, Amy Webb draws out how nine major corporations have a large impact on the direction

⁴¹See, for instance, the work of West, *The Future of Work*.

⁴²Kai-Fu Lee, *AI Superpowers: China, Silicon Valley, and the New World Order* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018), 5.

⁴³See, for instance, David Mindell, *Our Robots, Ourselves: Robotics and the Myths of Autonomy* (New York: Viking, 2015), 8–9.

⁴⁴Malcolm Frank, Paul Roehrig, and Ben Pring, *What to Do When Machines Do Everything: How to Get Ahead in a World of AI, Algorithms, Bots, and Big Data* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2017), 8–9. See also Paul R. Daugherty and H. James Wilson, *Human + Machine: Reimagining Work in the Age of AI* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2018); Andrew McAfee and Erik Brynjolfsson, *Machine, Platform, Crowd: Harnessing Our Digital Future* (New York: Norton, 2017); Thomas H. Davenport and Julia Kirby, *Only Humans Need Apply: Winners & Losers in the Age of Smart Machines* (New York: Harper, 2016); Nick Polson and James Scott, *AIQ: How People and Machines Are Smarter Together* (New York: St. Martin’s, 2018).

of this field, and there are a variety of ways that it could turn out.⁴⁵ Christians must consider these elements not only to hope for the ideal direction, but also to consider how best to minister to people in the midst of some of the less-optimistic future scenarios. Webb's basic argument is that the development of AI is currently controlled by nine main companies that could take it in three different directions depending on a variety of factors. She wants especially Western countries to invest more in AI so that it does not have to simply be about being quick to market and therefore making a profit for investors and shareholders.

As Webb lays out the nine companies, they fall into two main groups or tribes. G-MAFIA is the Western group (Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Facebook, IBM, and Apple), and it is primarily dependent upon the profit motive. They are well intended, but they have to focus on products that are quick to market and fit the consumeristic desires that would make them attractive. Meanwhile, the coding, etc., that is going on right now will be incredibly important for the way AI continues to develop. Webb hopes that Western countries can help the G-MAFIA collaborate and be motivated and guided by the common good, not just profit.

The other group, BAT (Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent) are the Chinese companies controlled by that government. According to Webb, China is considering the long-term in a way the West is not. But their long-term goals are bent on world domination. They have more data to build on, etc., so they are ahead in many ways.

Webb's three futures are interesting and well developed. There is an ideal scenario, in which we learn to collaborate and align the development to a common good future. There is a pragmatist scenario, in which Webb describes many "paper cuts" that lead to an adequate but still difficult future. The worst-case scenario is one in which China comes to dominate and ultimately eliminate the West. While only time will tell the outcome, this angle should encourage Christians to consider how to align technology with neighbor love, not only on the individual level, but also in how we hope and work to see technology deployed in our societies. The common good must be a human good and one rooted in a true sense of human flourishing.

⁴⁵See Amy Webb, *The Big Nine: How the Tech Titans and Their Thinking Machines Could Warp Humanity* (New York: Public Affairs, 2019).

4. *Surveillance and privacy; policing and justice.* Another way that the technology of algorithms becomes more problematic in societies is when combined with machine learning. As noted above, machine learning takes a known data set and then teaches itself how to create an algorithm that can work with future data points for accurate predictions. So, for instance, you could “give the computer” a dataset on criminal statistics that pull in all sorts of factors, including verdicts. Once it teaches itself by interpreting patterns, you can plug in other data, let it work, and it’ll give you results that fit the pattern of the original data set. Such systems are used in policing (to determine which areas of a city to patrol more carefully) and in sentencing (to determine how likely a particular person is to re-offend). The problem is that no one knows how it works. For instance, an algorithm built via machine learning for criminal justice could be racist, relying overtly on race or racial signifiers in sentencing. If no one knows how it works because it is too complex, there is no way to evaluate the ethics of the way it is making decisions.

One of the most profound questions for AI, I think, is how to make machine learning ethical, if we can. One of Hannah Fry’s most helpful ideas is the notion of “algorithmic regulation”: “Should we insist on only accepting algorithms that we can understand or look inside, knowing that taking them out of the hands of their proprietors might mean they’re less effective (and crime rates rise)?... In part, this comes down to deciding, as a society, what we think success looks like. What is our priority? Is it keeping crime as low as possible? Or preserving the freedom of the innocent above all else? How much one would you sacrifice for the sake of the other?”⁴⁶ Or would such regulation grind development and profit to a halt?

These issues weigh heavily in the actual pursuit and prosecution of justice, but they also impact our overall understanding and expectations of privacy. In her book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, Shoshana Zuboff reveals how companies are built on collecting, analyzing, selling, and utilizing data.⁴⁷ This issue of surveillance ties in with the issues related to how AI can be turned more toward the

⁴⁶Fry, *Hello World*, 173.

⁴⁷Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2019). See my review, “On Being Watched, and Remembered,” *Front Porch Republic*, May 15, 2019, <https://www.frontporchrepublic.com/2019/05/on-being-watched-and-remembered/>.

common good rather than merely short-term financial interests. Easy answers aren't options here, but we must be ready to consider how viewing humans primarily as data, building companies to turn that data into profit, and the ubiquitous surveillance it relies on impacts our understanding of what it means to be human.

5. *Warfare and world domination.* Of course, ad companies using surveillance and AI might end up being the least of our worries. As Vladimir Putin said in 2017, the country that takes the lead in AI will rule the world.⁴⁸ But why?

To understand the current developments in this, we need to rewind to the ways AI has developed. Kai-Fu Lee explains the new era in AI by tying it to AI's history and then putting all of that in a political context. Basically, there were two camps: rule-based approaches (which sought to program algorithms) and neural-network approaches (machine learning and ultimately deep learning). AI research has gone through "winters," when development is slow. Deep learning is narrow AI, which draws from data in one field for use to achieve a specific outcome. Basically, in the mid-2000s neural networks research made a leap forward and then proved better in competition in 2012.⁴⁹ This leap puts us into the age of implementation.

Neural networks need three things: data, computer power, and the work of strong engineers.⁵⁰ Computing power and engineers are easier to get. What is going to make the difference going forward is access to data. China is way ahead on this front because their Internet has developed differently and has gobbled up so much more data on so many more people. All of this data can be fed into innovative algorithms for implementation. We have shifted from the discovery phase (figuring out how it works) to the implementation phase (applying it in a variety of ways); from the age of expertise (when we need experts to develop the theory) to the age of data (the neural networks work; they just need more data). While the West had advantages in the early stages of development, now China has the clear edge.⁵¹

But how might this tie into not only economic advantage but

⁴⁸Radina Gigova, "Who Vladimir Putin Thinks Will Rule the World," <https://www.cnn.com/2017/09/01/world/putin-artificial-intelligence-will-rule-world/index.html> (accessed June 10, 2020).

⁴⁹Lee, *AI Superpowers*, 9.

⁵⁰Lee, *AI Superpowers*, 14.

⁵¹Lee, *AI Superpowers*, 15.

to ruling the world? Paul Scharre served in the military and has been involved with policymaking regarding autonomous weapons. His book wrestles with "lethal autonomy" and how nations should approach that, given that AI is getting faster and faster but warfare requires an understanding of context that seems to require a human "in the loop." He is not against using AI, but he warns against a rush to autonomous robot killers. These are questions we must face now, because the technology is already available to make many of these things happen. What policy can limit this on an international scale? Over ninety nations have drones patrolling the skies, and more than thirty already have defensive supervised autonomous weapons.⁵² The Israeli Harpy drone has already crossed the line to full autonomy: it "can search a wide area for enemy radars and, once it finds one, destroy it without asking permission. It's been sold to a handful of countries and China has reverse engineered its own variant."⁵³ As Scharre puts it, "AI is emerging as a powerful technology. Used the right way, intelligent machines could save lives by making war more precise and humane. Used the wrong way, autonomous weapons could lead to more killing and even greater civilian casualties."⁵⁴ We should not underestimate the significance AI will play in future global conflicts and balances of power.

6. *The limitations.* We should certainly be wary of the many ways that technology could go wrong. At the same time, we should be wary of too much hype. A robust doctrine of humanity reminds us that humans are the crown of God's creation. This does indeed mean we can do great things, but we should not expect our own creations to do everything. One realm to consider, even from a secular perspective, comes down to meaning and value. As Scharre explains, "Machines can do many things, but they cannot create meaning. They cannot answer these questions for us. Machines cannot tell us what we value, what choices we should make. The world we are creating is one that will have intelligent machines in it, but it is not for them. It is a world for us."⁵⁵ We might want to situate that sentiment a little more theologically, but at its root we are reminded of the limitations

⁵²Paul Scharre, *Army of None: Autonomous Weapons and the Future of War* (New York: Norton, 2018), 4.

⁵³Scharre, *Army of None*, 5.

⁵⁴Scharre, *Army of None*, 8.

⁵⁵Scharre, *Army of None*, 362.

of our technology and our responsibility to orient not only the tools but the culture around the tools in a way that honors the kingdom of God rather than building the idolatrous kingdom of man.

IV. CONCLUDING WITH PERSONHOOD

Where do we go from here? There are many possible routes to address AI, transhumanism, and the challenges and opportunities they raise from a Christian perspective. We could talk about the *imago Dei* in Genesis, the prohibition of idolatry throughout the Bible, the prophetic call for justice, Jesus's teachings on caring for the marginalized, or the Great Commission's charge to make disciples. In 2084, John Lennox turns to the book of Revelation for insight.

But what about considering personhood, seeking a better understanding of how we can know a person when we "see" one? This idea can help us notice the difference between humans and artificial intelligences, as well as the false promises of transhumanism. While we're used to the language of personhood in a theological context, its use in a secular context is already growing in significance in relation to these challenges. Susan Schneider asks the question "What is a person?" in her book *Artificial You: AI and the Future of Your Mind*. She goes on to highlight four main theories, before roughly combining two of them to argue for ways that personal existence could persist outside the physical brain. Going into her argument would take us too far afield at this point,⁵⁶ but this shows that the question of personal existence is tied into these questions of what exactly a person is and how that relates to the material world and the "digitizable" world. Here we are, back at the doctrine of humanity.

Secular approaches to AI and transhumanism have to make a call on what it means to be a person, because they must explain whether AIs should be considered persons, and they must also explain how some of these radical extensions of "life" would still be the same "person." But they actually lack the ability to provide a solid definition. They lack this because they refuse to allow God to speak, and they also lack it because they are pulled in opposite directions. Techno-utopians insist on essential definitions of things like "intelligence," but they resist any essential definition of "human" or "person," because the whole transhumanist project is built on

⁵⁶See Schneider, *Artificial You*, 74–81.

exceeding and improving everything, which resists the idea of preserving any "essence."

As Christians, we must develop a strong doctrine of humanity not only to guide our use of particular technologies for ourselves (the temptations associated with transhumanism) but also in how we consider, evaluate, and "treat" emerging technologies (AI).

One article cannot provide a robust enough treatment of the doctrine of humanity, nor can a single issue of a journal. But we can start, and we can point in directions of further development. I would like to propose one quick litmus test question for evaluating whether or not something is or is not a person. Can it make or break a covenant with God? To be a person is to be one who can enter covenant with God. Or, perhaps we might say, to be a person means to be able to exist in obedience or disobedience to the Triune God. (Angelic persons, then, fit into this, without our having to determine some sort of "angelic covenant.") As Michael Horton puts it, "Can there be any doubt that human beings are uniquely suited among the creation to be covenant partners with God?"⁵⁷ If we develop our understanding of the image of God into a series of capabilities, we might very well see that AI can replicate many of them. Some sort of transhumanist intelligence built off a copy of a biological brain might also be able to replicate some. But does that make either of those *things* into *persons*? I do not think so, because personhood is ultimately given by God, the Creator, to those he calls into relationship with himself for his glory. We can only acknowledge that we have received this gift; we cannot create it ourselves.

We could also recast this litmus test with the question the Gospels writers put before us, reminding us that Jesus asked, "But who do you say that I am?" While an AI might be able to answer with facts, or even repeat statements that sound like praise, only a person can give and live by Thomas's later exclamation: "My Lord and My God."



⁵⁷Michael Horton, "Image and Office: Human Personhood and the Covenant," in *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, ed. Richard Lints, Michael S. Horton, Mark R. Talbot (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 184.

BOOK REVIEWS

***Apostle of the Lost Cause: J. William Jones, Baptists, and the Development of Confederate Memory.* By Christopher C. Moore. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2019, x+300pp., \$50.00.**

From 1865 until his death in 1909, no one did more to promote the glories of the Confederacy than the Southern Baptist preacher, J. William Jones (1836–1909). He led a host of Southern propagandists who rehabilitated the reputation of white Southerners and made possible the nation's indulgence of the nullification of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments of the United States Constitution through Jim Crow legislation, convict leasing, and suppression of black voting. It made possible also the extensive success and influence of such novels as Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* and Thomas Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots* and *The Clansman*, and their even more popular screen adaptations.

Christopher Moore, instructor of history and religion at Catawba Valley Community College in North Carolina, casts J. William Jones as the most influential figure in this movement. Jones especially established the veneration of Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Jefferson Davis as heroes of Southern religion and civic virtue. Jones's books, lectures, and sermons made him, more than any other, the "apostle of the Lost Cause," popularizing its version of the meaning of Confederacy and the South. And he had apostolic credentials—he knew personally Lee, Jackson, and Davis, and had the endorsement of both the Lee and Davis families.

The book, which began as a dissertation at Baylor University and is part of the America's Baptists series at the University of Tennessee Press, argues that Jones viewed himself as called by the providence of God to be an apostle of the Confederacy to spread the gospel of the Lost Cause, vindicating Southern whites from accusations of the

sins of slaveholding and secession, and from depictions of them as weaker or inferior to Northerners. It argues also that Jones's commitment to Baptist denominationalism increased his effectiveness as an apostle of the Lost Cause.

What was the Lost Cause? It was a version of the history of the South and of the United States that insisted on the righteousness and justice of Southern whites in establishing and defending the Confederacy. Jones's vindication of the Confederacy defended the following ideas: 1) Southern secession was entirely justified and constitutional. 2) The South did not secede because of slavery, but Southern slavery was in any case a kind and beneficial arrangement. 3) The South actually seceded to gain freedom from unconstitutional tyranny. 4) Southern soldiers comprised the greatest and most pious army in history. 5) Lee was the greatest general, Jackson the most brilliant tactician, and Davis among the greatest leaders in all history—and the three were also the most virtuous, devout, and godly men to lead any nation or army. 6) God favored the South because the South was just and right in its actions, and demonstrated his favor by visiting the Confederate army with an extraordinary revival. 7) By means of the Confederacy's defeat and reunion with the North, loyalty to Southern values and valor would preserve the true American spirit and save America from internal dangers and external foes.

Jones and most Lost Cause writers diminished the significance of slavery in the secession of the slave states, and rarely appealed directly to the notion of white superiority. Belief in white superiority however undergirded and gave coherence to their vindication of slaveholding and to their understanding of the Confederacy and of the antebellum and postwar South.

Moore demonstrates that Jones felt a deep commitment to preach the everlasting gospel as a Southern Baptist and that he became an important figure in the denomination. He joined the very first class of students at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina, in 1859. He was appointed as a missionary of the Southern Baptist Convention's Foreign Mission Board, though he never served overseas due to the Civil War. Throughout his career, Jones pastored various Southern Baptist churches, served as the agent for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, served the denomination's

Home Mission Board and edited its official journal, and was elected a vice-president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Jones's experiences in the war made him an apostle of the Lost Cause as well as a preacher of the gospel. Jones served with Lee's army during the entire war, first as a soldier, then as a chaplain, and finally as a missionary to the army. He knew Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee during the war and developed a close relationship with Lee and Jefferson Davis after the war. He wrote biographies of Lee and Davis with the support and endorsement of their wives, Mary Custis Lee and Varina Davis. He also published a lengthy account of Jackson's spiritual life. For twelve critical years he supervised the conservation and construction of Confederate memory as the editor of the *Southern Historical Society Papers*. In 1887 Jones published *Christ in the Camp*, his account of the revivals in the Southern armies. He later held other positions in Confederate memorial organizations.

The book makes important contributions. Above all it reveals the irony—the contradiction—between Jones's attitude toward the Confederacy and toward Christianity. Jones served two gospels. Throughout his life Jones preached the gospel of the cross, imploring sinners to humble themselves and confess their guilt and insufficiency to God, and ask his pardon through faith in Christ. When he preached the gospel of the Lost Cause, however, Jones asserted that Southern whites were entirely right, with hardly a fault or weakness, and needing no forgiveness. "We thought we were right in the brave old days when to do battle was a sacred duty," Jones told the 1894 reunion of Confederate veterans, "but now, in light of subsequent events, we *know* we were right; and with malice toward none and charity for all, we are asking pardon of no living man" (p. 199).

Throughout his career, Jones was a minister of the Confederate battle flag no less than he was a minister of the cross. At the 1906 annual meeting of the United Confederate Veterans, one former Confederate general praised Jones before the assemblage as "the greatest living Confederate today," for Jones had "prayed harder and preached longer and more about the Confederacy than any man since the war" (p. 202). Thus, the gospel of the Confederacy spread widely in the South alongside the everlasting gospel.

Though he did not intend it, Jones's Lost Cause crusade suborned the scriptural message of the cross to advance a secular identity rooted

in Confederate patriotism, political partisanship, and the unshakeable belief in white superiority, all of which served to justify continued oppression and injustice toward American blacks through violence, legislation, and the judiciary. Jones subordinated the true gospel to a false one, with horrific consequences.

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***Christ Above All: The Book of Hebrews.* By Adrio König. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2019, viii+100pp., \$17.99.**

Adrio König was a professor of systematic theology at the University of South Africa. *Christ above All* is part of the Transformative Word Series edited by Craig G. Bartholomew and David Beldman.

In the introductory chapter, König notes the difficulties associated with Hebrews. The author, the intended audience and the specific date of its composition are unknown to contemporary scholars. Paul, Luke and Apollos appear to be conducive candidates, yet the identity of the author is far from certain. König proposes that the recipients could be believers who were tempted to go back to the belief and practices of Judaism, hence needing to be retold of the supremacy of Christ. The chapter also overviews the main themes of Hebrews, which will be fleshed out in the subsequent chapters: the humanity and humility of Christ, the use of the OT, the six warnings and the call to perseverance.

Chapter two presents the supremacy of Christ. König argues that Hebrews 1:1–3 is foundational to Hebrews. These verses portray Christ as the final revelation of God, co-Creator with God, sovereign, divine, sustainer of the world, reconciler with God, and King. Following his brief explanation of Hebrews 1:1–3, König states that these verses provide an understanding of both Jesus and the doctrine of the Trinity.

Chapter three explicates the humanity of Christ in Hebrews. The epistle not only highlights the supremacy of Christ but also

expounds upon the humility of Christ. In so doing, Hebrews reveals Christ's identification with humanity. Hebrews portrays Christ as a human who was tempted, suffered and died in order to represent us before God. Nonetheless, unlike the rest of humanity, Christ remains without sin. König posits that Hebrews presents Christ as God-Man, a human being with two natures. As such, Jesus reveals both the image of God and the image of humanity simultaneously.

Chapter four delineates the supremacy of Christ. Christ is superior to the angels who have access to the presence of God and are higher than humanity. He is also superior to Moses, for Moses was only a faithful servant, whereas Jesus is the faithful Son who rules over God's house. Christ provides a superior rest than that of the OT (Joshua) because of his death and resurrection. Believers are then to rest from sinning against God and enter into that permanent rest through Christ. Christ is also superior to the temple, rituals, sacrifices and the Levitical priests of the OT.

In chapter five, König discusses both the positive and negative deployment of the OT in Hebrews. Although Hebrews asserts the superiority of Christ, it does not denigrate the prophets, the angels, Moses or Melchizedek. These, along with institutions, foreshadow Christ. König uses Hebrews 11 and 12 so as to illustrate Hebrews' positive view of the OT. Hebrews 11 comes immediately after chapters 7–10 to signify that the Christian faith is composed of suffering; hence, they are urged to persevere. Hebrews is also "negative about certain features in the OT" (p. 60). The repetitive sacrifices and the inability of the law to bring about perfection are the main negative elements Hebrews highlights.

Chapter six is concerned with the warning passages in Hebrews. The epistle's main thrust, König postulates, is a call for perseverance. Although the warning in Hebrews 6 is frequently highlighted, there are other warnings dispersed throughout the epistle. The warning passages have created heated debates between two camps: those who believe that there is a possibility to fall from grace and those who argue for the perseverance of the saints. König identifies strong scriptural evidence employed for both views. He suggests that we use the warning passages to encourage doubters of the faithfulness of God in securing believers and to seriously warn Christians who are apathetic and on the cusp of abandoning the faith.

In chapter seven, König addresses the issue of the unforgivable sin. The idea of the unforgivable sin is mentioned in three passages (Heb 6:4–6; 10:26–27; 12:14–17). These passages delineate the fact that after the commission of this sin, repentance, sacrifice, and turning back to the faith are impossible. By gleaning from passages outside of Hebrews (such as Matt 12 and 1 John), König identifies the unforgivable sin: identifying the works of the Spirit as being those of Satan and continuing to sin after being informed about God’s truth. He proceeds to argue that in Hebrews, the unforgivable sin is committed not only against the Spirit but also against Jesus, for the person committing this sin is rejecting the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus.

König reads Hebrews with a Chalcedonian framework, and he repeatedly affirms both the divinity and humanity of Christ while at the same time explicating the supremacy of Christ. The clarity and conciseness of the book, coupled with suggested reading passages of Scripture and reflection questions at the end of every chapter, will enable readers to pause and ponder what was said in each chapter. This book will be helpful both in ecclesiastical and academic settings to those who would like to understand what Hebrews is all about.

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***Who Is God?: Key Moments of Biblical Revelation.* By Richard Bauckham. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020, vii+120pp., \$21.99.**

Based on *Key Moments of Biblical Revelation*, Richard Bauckham asks, “*Who Is God?*” rather than asking, “Does God exist?” or “Who is the God you are talking about?” (p. 1). Bauckham prioritizes this question because “God defines who God is for us” (p. 2). Originating with two lecture series, the 2015 Frumentius Lectures at the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology in Addis Ababa and the 2018 Haywood Lectures at Acadia Divinity College in Nova

Scotia, Canada, Bauckham inextricably links the rich content in each chapter as he pursues the question of who God is through biblical revelation.

Emphasizing the divine presence in the narrative of Jacob's dream at Bethel in Genesis 28:10–22, the first chapter brings out the principal concept of “with-ness” by indicating God's faithful presence to his people Israel (pp. 6–11). Bauckham, then, introduces two significant parallels with Jacob's dream, which are related to where God resided “with” his people: tabernacle and temple. He makes two outstanding points regarding the places in comparison with Jacob's life: “the tabernacle corresponds to the ongoing, accompanying presence of God” with Jacob's journey and “the temple corresponds to the more permanent residence of God” in relation to Bethel (p. 15). The concept of “with-ness” in Genesis 28 is expanded from Genesis to Revelation, reaching its climax when it comes to the person of Jesus Christ who is the new tabernacle and the new temple, and who also is God dwelling among his people (pp. 27–29).

The central passage of the second chapter is found in Exodus 3:1–6, which deals with God's revelation of his divine name at the burning bush. God reveals his divine presence by allowing the people of Israel to have the name that drives binds and identifies the newly formed relationship. But God's revealing of his name to Moses as “I will be who I will be,” confirming that God makes a free choice, utterly self-determining, which helps us understand that God “cannot be constrained by anything other than himself” (p. 42). God's revelation of the divine name is his act of grace, condescending to the people so they could access and know him (p. 45). However, this name “was not for Israel's sake alone but with a view toward God's revelation of himself to all nations” (p. 59). More significantly, as evidenced by Philippians 2:9–11, God, the Father, gave his name to Jesus because Jesus not only shares God's name “the Lord” but he also “belongs to God's unique identity” (pp. 56–58). Ultimately, it is in Jesus Christ that God makes himself “knowable and accessible to all people” (p. 59).

In chapter three, Bauckham deals with God's revelation of his divine character through the conversation between God and Moses in Exodus 33 and 34:5–8 after the golden calf incident among the Israelites. When Moses requests to see his glory, God twice

proclaimed his name “The Lord,” then he lists five characteristics of who “The Lord” is: merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The common feature found among these characteristics is that these are relational terms, which reveal “the foundation in God’s character for the remarkable way God has treated Israel since the episode of the golden calf” (p. 69). The minor prophets, Joel and Jonah, echo the descriptions of God (pp. 71–75). Focusing on Psalm 145, Bauckham stresses how God’s positive characteristics were made known to the foreign nations and even to all creation.

Finally, based on the OT passages noted above, Bauckham introduces three moments of revelation in the life of Jesus: the vision of baptism (Mark 1), the transfiguration (Mark 9), and the centurion’s confession (Mark 15). The Gospel of Mark provides the main ground for tying together these moments. The most conspicuous feature, however, is that each passage further reveals the identity of Jesus Christ, which means Jesus is the Son of God (p. 91). In this sense, the Gospel of Mark manifests the life and ministry of Jesus Christ from the beginning to the midpoint and extending to the completion of the book.

Bauckham unfolds this book in a canonical manner rather than through a historical reconstruction behind and around the texts. He brings into sharp focus the points of biblical revelation through key moments in both the OT and the life of Christ. In doing so, readers are allowed to see how God used these moments to reveal himself and to make known who he is. This book is accessible for laypeople as well as scholars. I gladly recommend this book for any person who desires to wholeheartedly pursue and follow God.

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***Not Scattered or Confused: Rethinking the Urban World of the Hebrew Bible.* By Mark McEntire. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2019, 300pp., \$30.00.**

Mark McEntire, who serves as professor of biblical studies at Belmont University, has written a provocative and erudite book. He argues that scribes reshaped and rearranged their source material, so that the final form of the OT had a positive perspective toward cities. He states, “the central question of this volume is how the understandings of cities and urban life in biblical texts shift in response to the changes in the culture that produced those texts” (p. 2). To justify this claim, he brings together literary, historical, and archaeological data on ancient Israel and its scribal class.

McEntire largely agrees with the neo-documentary hypothesis and contends that a supposed J source had a decidedly anti-urban bent. On his reading, the traditions associated with J see “city building and technology [as] skills that humans acquire illegitimately and use in opposition to God” (p. 67). He contends that the original J composition situated the Tower of Babel narrative before the Flood narrative. Thus, the flood is God’s response to their city-building project. He suggests that later scribes moved the Tower of Babel narrative into its current position within a post-flood world as part of a strategy to dilute “the anti-city tone of J without removing it” (p. 73). In this arrangement, God’s judgment in Genesis 6 arises solely from evil human inclinations and is no longer associated with the city-building project of Babel. Instead of Genesis 11 serving purely as a condemnation of city-building policies, in the final form of Genesis it now serves as an expansion of the story of Nimrod’s construction of Babylon in Genesis 10, which resulted in the formation of multiple cities (Gen 10:9–12). On this account, the redactor has changed the story so that God merely slows the city-building efforts of humans, so that they spread further before settling and developing cities.

McEntire’s general assessment of the anti-urban and pro-urban sentiments that Genesis 1–11 continues throughout his assessment of the OT. In passages that critical scholars have often associated with a J tradition, he finds a consistent, anti-urban sentiment. In passages that critical scholars have often associated with a P tradition, he finds a consistent, pro-urban sentiment. McEntire reads these passages closely, searching for seams between traditions that he suggests reveal opposing sentiments toward urban life.

Evangelical scholars will find much of value in this volume.

Although evangelicals will disagree with some of his core presuppositions and reconstructions of the text, his close reading often produces valuable exegetical insights. For instance, his comments on the urban ideals that both Genesis 1 and the covenant code presuppose offer much for evangelical readers, particularly those with a missiological interest.

In response to McEntire's primary arguments, an evangelical could respond that the texts he associates with J are not anti-urban—or at least that they are neutral toward cities. As an example, John Sailhamer and others have argued that Cain's narrative and city-building have literary ties to the cities of refuge. On this reading, the city should be seen as a sign of God's grace given to a manslayer, whom Israelite laws would condemn to death. Furthermore, many evangelical scholars have argued that God's punishment on Babel arises not as a response to their city-building, but to their refusal to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Their rebellious act came not through city-building, but from seeking a name for themselves apart from God's command. If scholars can show that these texts view cities in a positive light, then the Pentateuch does not have opposing views on cities but sees them as generally positive.

Although evangelicals will not agree with many of the presuppositions and conclusions of McEntire's work, they can justly appreciate his erudition and close reading of the text. McEntire does not claim to have written a biblical theology on cities, yet each chapter ends with a reflection on implications for the rapidly urbanizing world of the twenty-first century. Whereas these are noble attempts to apply his research, the book still fits more squarely as a work of biblical criticism. Pastors and church leaders will most likely not profit from this work and without a sufficient understanding of biblical criticism and its presuppositions, evangelical pastors may come away confused. I recommend the book for biblical scholars, more familiar with this type of argument, who can profit from various insights, even if they do not agree with his overall thesis or conclusions.

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***The Gospels as Stories: A Narrative Approach to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.* By Jeannine K. Brown. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020, xiv+210pp., \$21.99.**

If probing the world of biblical studies were like visiting a museum with an entire gallery devoted to the Gospels, having Jeannine K. Brown as your docent would be make all the difference, moving you from interest and appreciation to a paradigm shift in your perspective. As both a seasoned professor of NT—having taught at Bethel Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, for two decades—and an accomplished author, Brown’s pedagogical experience and depth of scholarship meld in the expert guidance she provides to engaging the narrative dimensions of the four canonical Gospels.

In the brief preface, Brown shares her own journey from interest in narrative criticism to appreciation of its value for her students. What began with her dissertation on Matthew’s characterization of Jesus’s disciples has developed into the more comprehensive method outlined and illustrated in *The Gospels as Stories*. Written in a personable style and clearly structured, the book supplies a content-rich introduction to narrative criticism while remaining accessible to a wide audience. Like a good docent, Brown immediately invites the readers’ interest in the subject matter, wins their confidence in her expertise, and challenges them to examine the literary craftsmanship of the Gospels.

The book is organized in six parts of approximately twenty pages each, except for the three-page conclusion. Several features enhance the book’s usefulness as a text both for college or graduate level courses and for readers new to the subject matter. Key terms are noted in bold and appear in a glossary with concise definitions. A few pages of “Recommended Resources,” provide a handful of bibliographic references pertinent to parts 1 through 5. The book also has a Scripture index and a subject index. Throughout the book, Brown includes twenty-three figures or charts visually organizing key details or data.

Part 1: “The Turn to Gospels as Stories” surveys “some of the key ways scholarship and the church have read the Gospels” and introduces narrative criticism “as a beneficial and developing methodology” (p. 19). Readers can easily imagine themselves as students

in Brown's classroom as she employs three versions of a well-known fairy tale (the original account written by Hans Christian Andersen, a picture book, and a musical) to illustrate other approaches to the Gospels. Brown openly invites the audience to consider the analogy, asking for example, "What do you notice about these various methods applied" to the fairy tale? (p. 7). As she guides the reader through her own thought process in response to such questions, terms that would be unfamiliar to those outside the domain of academic biblical studies—like *source criticism* and *redaction criticism*—become both clear and memorable. Brown further extends the analogy to provide three basic categories for these approaches that fail to account for "the narrative character of the Gospels in some significant way" (p. 7). This exercise establishes context for introducing "the role and contribution of narrative criticism" through a concentrated summary of the method's emergence and implementation in academic study of the Gospels.

Parts 2 through 5 are each comprised of two chapters. In parts 2, 3, and 4, the first chapter concentrates on a major strategy for analyzing the Gospels, with examples drawing on facets of all four Gospels. The second illustrates the strategy's application to reading one of the Gospels. Part 2 focuses on "Plot and Plotting" illustrated in the structure of Luke's Gospel. Part 3 addresses characterization and draws on Brown's extensive study of Matthew's portrayal of the disciples as a character group. Part 4 counters atomization of Scripture with exploration of intertextuality, specifically the Gospel writers' use of the OT. Brown's research for previously published articles undergirds her demonstration of the way two major themes of John's Gospel—Jesus as the Passover Lamb and the renewal of creation—unfold through OT allusions and echoes. Part 5 also follows the pattern, but instead of highlighting a narrative strategy, the first chapter explores "How a Story Theologizes." In the second, Brown performs a "kind of integrated reading" of the Gospel of Mark, walking through it sequentially and noting "how Mark's plotting, characterization, and use of the Old Testament intersect to illuminate his understanding of God" (p. 168). In the few pages of part 6, Brown succinctly summarizes the narrative method proposed in the book. However, the concluding remarks also capsulize her overarching apologetic for reading each Gospel as a whole story, not

merely a series of loosely related pericopes, and for attending to “how a particular Gospel writer shapes his narrative” (p. 185).

The Gospels as Stories will prove to be an eminently teachable and accessible text in a variety of settings. Brown successfully showcases four major strategies and clearly demonstrates the value of each. She is judicious in use of Greek vocabulary, which is limited to transliteration. The chapters are well-organized with sensible subheadings. Footnotes do not overwhelm, but neither are they skimpy in providing pertinent clarifications or directing the reader to important sources or concepts. Compared with the substantive content and even the insightful choice of cover art for the book, the subject index was disappointing. Numerous terms and authors cited are entirely missing from the index or lacking a complete list of page numbers. In addition, a handful of literary terms used in the text could have been included among those appearing in bold and in the glossary.

Apart from these relatively minor shortcomings, weaknesses are few. First, because Brown has clearly situated her narrative approach within the field of biblical studies, its relationship to theological interpretation is treated tangentially, mentioned as merely one “reading strategy” among many with which narrative criticism can easily be in conversation (p. 18). Consequently, the introductory chapter’s account of the method’s historical development is narrowly limited in scope, with no mention of such key movements as new criticism and study of patristic reading strategies or of the contributions of such scholars as Hans Frei or Brevard Childs. Perhaps the addition of a bibliography could supply references to some of the more important works without detracting from the appropriate focus on narrative criticism alone. Especially since Brown devotes a section of the book to narrative theology (part 5), at least initiating “conversation” between narrative criticism and theological interpretation would help readers distinguish between them. Second, the conclusion seems exceptionally brief. Although it works well as it is, Brown’s readers would benefit from an expanded essay, especially one that extended the practical dimensions of her narrative approach. These comments aside, Bible teachers, seminary professors and students, ministers, pastors, and, as argued below, oral communicators of the gospel who follow Jeannine Brown’s guidance to reading the Gospels as stories can expect to experience, potentially, a paradigm shift in

the way they detect and are transformed by the distinctive narrative shape of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

A particularly significant strength of Brown's proposal is its potential for practical application. *The Gospels as Stories* defines and illustrates the narrative critical approach in a masterful manner. In addition to providing a theoretical framework for an in-depth understanding of the biblical stories, this book can contribute significantly to the practical task of communicating the gospel to oral communicators. Grant Lovejoy estimates that "there are 5.7 billion people in the world who are oral communicators because either they are illiterate or their reading comprehension is inadequate. That is over 80% of the world's total population."¹ Lovejoy explains that

The oral cultures of the world pose a particular challenge for conventional Christian ministry. Oral cultures are not print-oriented and do not respond well to forms of witnessing, discipling, teaching and preaching that are based on print. . . . Sermons built around outlines and lists of principles communicate poorly with people whose life is lived in oral cultures.²

To address this need, Jim Slack and J.O. Terry designed an approach to telling stories called "Bible Storying." "It is a method of sharing biblical truths by telling the stories of the Bible as intact stories in the order they happened in time. The person using this method leads the hearer to discover the truths in the stories for the purpose of evangelization, discipleship, church planting, and leadership training."³ While this method has been very effective in reaching oral communicators,⁴ it has encountered resistance in some highly literate, propositional, and Western academic circles in which the mere mention of the word "orality" sets off red flags.⁵ In light of

¹Grant Lovejoy, "The Extent of Orality: 2012 Update," *Orality Journal* 1 (November 1, 2012), 31.

²Lovejoy, "The Extent of Orality: 2012 Update," 13.

³Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy, eds., *Beyond Literate Western Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Cultures* (Richmond, VA: International Orality Network, 2013), 205.

⁴J. Dudley Woodberry, ed., *Seed to Fruit*, 2nd ed. (Pasadena: William Carey Press, 2011), see the technical data article on CD that is included with the book.

⁵Larry Dinkins, "Presenting Orality in Academic Contexts," in *Beyond Literate Western Practices: Continuing Conversation in Orality and Theological Education*; eds., Samuel E. Chiang and Grant

this, Jeannine Brown's *The Gospel as Stories* can be of great benefit to those employing oral methodologies to share the gospel message with oral communicators in the following ways.

First, the manner in which this book defines and illustrates narrative criticism can provide a validation for Bible Storying. While form criticism, source criticism, and redaction criticism have their place in interpreting other genres in Scripture,⁶ by focusing on the literary and storied qualities of a narrative portion (e.g., the Gospel of John), narrative criticism can facilitate its interpretation in a clear and precise manner. Bible Storying, by employing narrative criticism properly, does not need to be perceived as a "light" or non-exegetical form of communication. Instead, it will be recognized as instrumental in allowing the stories in the Bible to be clearly understood and internalized by oral communicators, resulting in the transformation of their lives.

Second, Bible Storying can benefit from the emphasis in this book focusing on the final form so the entire storyline is understood. While Bible Storying correctly emphasizes the importance of telling the complete story without interruption,⁷ the advice that the storyer should read the entire book (e.g., the Gospel of Matthew) repeatedly to grasp the entire story at the book level is well taken. While Bible Storying emphasizes the importance of selecting specific stories to communicate specific biblical truths,⁸ it is extremely important that the storyer understand the entire storyline if the story to be shared is going to be properly interpreted. What the author recommends about the Gospels needs to be applied to the other books of the Bible from which the stories are taken.

Third, the discussion in this book on characterization can be very helpful to Bible Storying. While Bible Storying has stressed the importance of knowing the characters in the story, characterization provides the additional dimensions of knowing the relationship of the character to the narrator, to other characters, to the reader,

Lovejoy (Richmond, VA: International Orality Network, 2014), 103.

⁶David S. Dockery and George H. Guthrie, *The Holman Guide to Interpreting the Bible* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005).

⁷J.O. Terry, *Basic Bible Storying* (Fort Worth, TX: Church Starting Network, 2008), 2. Terry defines Bible Storying as "the intentional and uninterrupted sharing of God's Word primarily as stories."

⁸Terry, *Basic Bible Storying*, 45–49.

and to the narrative features like the plot, setting and theme. Oral communicators have the tendency to identify with the characters in the story. Being informed about characterization can enable the storyer to select the stories and to present them in such a way that they relate to the spiritual needs of the oral communicators.

Fourth, a strength of Bible Storying is that it strongly emphasizes the importance of studying the worldview of the hearers of the story not only to learn about their central assumptions, concepts and premises but also to identify the bridges and barriers that must be addressed in communicating the Gospel story.⁹ An area in which this book can be of great help is in focusing on understanding the cultural context of the first hearers (readers) of the Gospels.¹⁰ As Brown points out, “Reading the characters of the Gospels today, we will be better interpreters if we fill in narrative gaps as much as possible with relevant historical information” (p. 78).

Fifth, for a number of years Bible Storying has entertained the idea that oral communicators can learn sufficient stories as to have an “oral Bible” in their hearts and minds.¹¹ This is based on the observation that some oral communicators have an extraordinary capacity to retain Bible stories and that many people groups have neither a written Bible nor the capacity to read one if it existed. A dimension that *The Gospel as Stories* can add to this concept is that oral communicators can theologize as they listen to the stories and reflect on their implications for their lives. While I (Daniel) was ministering to a Kekchi tribal group in Guatemala that had been trained through Bible Storying, I was amazed that every time I asked a theological question they would answer with a Bible story. This book can help Bible storyers know how to enable narrative theological reflection among oral communicators. This book can enhance the Bible Storying effort to evangelize oral communicators in other ways. Due to space limitations, we will confine ourselves to these observations with the disposition to continue to dialogue about this vital topic.¹²

⁹Daniel R. Sanchez, J.O. Terry, and Lanette W. Thompson, *Bible Storying for Church Planting* (Fort Worth, TX: Church Starting Network, 2008), 56–62.

¹⁰Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutical and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

¹¹Terry, *Basic Bible Storying*, 147–50.

¹²It has been my (Daniel’s) privilege to teach Bible Storying courses with J.O. Terry at Southwestern

Overall, we recommend *The Gospels as Stories* as an excellent book providing perspectives and strategies that enable its readers to understand and apply narrative analysis in teaching, preaching, and story-telling settings in such a way that the story of Jesus will transform the lives of its hearers.

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***Pastors and Their Critics: A Guide to Coping with Criticism in Ministry.* By Joel R. Beeke and Nicholas J. Thompson. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2020, 177pp., \$15.99.**

This is a subject that no pastor wants to talk about, but every pastor wants to hear. *Pastors and Their Critics* is a book worth reading.

The authors represent a unique perspective in their writing. The book combines the extensive experience of Beeke, president of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and his forty years of pastoral experience, with the freshness of Thompson, a recent graduate of Reformed Theological Seminary who was pursuing ordination at the time of this writing.

This is a work for criticized pastors and critical church members. It primarily targets those in ministry as well as those preparing for it. However, its application to all believers is apparent.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part lays out the biblical foundation for dealing with criticism. Part two gives practical principles for coping with criticism. Part three outlines principles for the church in practicing criticism. Part four focuses on Paul's example in casting a vision for the church in dealing with criticism.

The strength of the work is its ease to read style, practical advice, and excellent use of illustrations. The transparency of the authors is evident throughout. Using biblical examples as well as their own experiences, the authors show the frequency of criticism in ministry

Baptist Theological Seminary for the past ten years. He would agree with me when I say that we are continuing to learn about the use of narrative approaches to reach oral communicators.

and describe its real and potential dangers. It is also evident that they have sought to live out the principles they advocate in the work.

Beginning with a focus on examples in Scripture, the writers trace criticism to the garden but spend most of the section on the OT revealing those leveled at Moses, David, and Nehemiah. Focusing mainly on the attack against Moses and Aaron by Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On, the authors show how God's servants endured accusations of crime, false pretenses, personal aspiration, and failure in leadership (pp. 24–25). Next, Beeke and Thompson point out the unjust verbal assault of David by Shimei (pp. 27–28). While the criticisms of Moses and David were from within the covenant community, those leveled against Nehemiah came from outside the community of faith. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Gesham attempted to discourage Nehemiah, mock him, threaten him, and distract him (pp. 31–34).

What is evident from the examples of Moses, David, and Nehemiah is the faithfulness of their responses. Moses and Aaron turned to the Lord and interceded for the people (pp. 26–27) demonstrating their personal trust in God and their love for God's people. David submitted to the sovereignty of God and responded with humility (pp. 28–29). Nehemiah sought the Lord, took wise measures, and challenged the people (as well as modeled for them the need) to get back to work (pp. 34–35).

In the section on the Christological foundations for coping with criticism, the authors demonstrate how Christ obediently responded to criticism. His silence, meekness, inner strength, obedience, and faith serve as a perfect model for all Christians in the face of unjust attacks.

Part two deals with practical principles for dealing with criticism. In this section, the authors point out biblical principles for dealing with criticism realistically, with humility, with sober judgment, and with grace. One of the key takeaways of this section is understanding when criticism calls for silence and when it demands a response (pp. 94–98). Ultimately, Beeke and Thompson remind us that critical attacks highlight our desperate need for the Lord.

Part three alone is worth the price of the book. Its worth is substantial. Few works have been written on how to criticize others in ministry. While more specific instructions on how Christians may

appropriately criticize others would have been helpful, the emphasis on creating a culture where constructive criticism is fostered is well-taken (pp. 144–46).

Part four returns to the subject of dealing with criticism and argues that Paul casts a vision for the church in facing criticism in a way that glorifies God, maintains an ultimate focus, and highlights an eschatological hope. The authors exhort pastors and church leaders to exemplify this vision in their ministries and cast it before the people they serve.

It is ironic to criticize a book dealing with criticism. Nevertheless, while the value of this book is significant, some practical and organizational adjustments might have added to its impact. The principles on dealing with criticism in part two are relevant, biblical, and sound. However, given that part one highlights examples of criticisms against leaders and tracks the obedient responses of those leaders, the principles listed in part two would have been clearer had they been directly taken from the examples recorded in part one. Nearly all of the content covered in part two overlaps the lessons learned from parts one and four and would seem to have carried more authority if presented as lessons learned from those biblical examples. Other biblical passages that are recorded in part two could then have been elucidated to compliment the lessons learned from Moses, David, Nehemiah, Jesus, and Paul. Thus, the principles recorded in part two seem redundant to the lessons learned from the responses of those five examples in parts one and four.

Organizationally, the flow of the book seems a little cumbersome. While the intent of part four is to cast a vision for the church, its content seems to more naturally follow part one than part three. Instead, parts two and four sandwich part three and overshadow some of its impact. Parts one, two, and four could have been combined to make the flow of the work more clear. Since part one covers both OT and NT examples, the section in part four on Paul appears awkwardly isolated from the section on biblical foundations. Separate chapters on the OT, Christ, and Paul under one section might have improved the flow. Those chapters could have then been followed by a chapter on practical principles drawn from those biblical examples. Thus, a two-part structure giving practical examples from Scripture

in part one on coping with criticism and principles in part two for practicing criticism would seem more efficient.

Overall, *Pastors and Their Critics* addresses a vital subject in ministry and exposes a conversation that every church needs to have. The Bible resounds with examples and instructions for giving and receiving criticism that all believers need to hear and follow. This book is an encouragement to pastors and a valuable contribution to an often-overlooked issue in the church.

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***The Innovative Church: How Leaders and Their Congregations Can Adapt in an Ever-Changing World.* By Scott Cormode. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020, 304pp., \$26.99.**

Scott Cormode's *The Innovative Church* proves to be a timely volume, in which he addresses planned ministry adaptation for the purpose of congregational change. Cormode is the Hugh De Pree Professor of Leadership Development at Fuller Theological Seminary, and he notes that while he was finalizing manuscript edits, the world was experiencing "the unfolding effects of this global pandemic" (p. xiii). It is with this unique COVID-19 background in mind, that he offers his central argument, "A changed world demands innovation, and a changed religious world requires innovative congregations" (p. 3).

The impetus for the specific research came as Cormode observed a convergence of two "unrelated conversations" in discrete fields. In the "Christian world" he heard consistent pleas for churches to change, while in the "tech world" he noticed continual calls for innovation (pp. xi–xii). He then began to "read the innovation literature with an eye toward how it might help us recalibrate the church for life in an ever-changing world" (p. xii). However, Cormode observed that the literature commonly positioned inventions that "tear down the

structures of the past and replace them with something better” as the optimal innovations to be prized and emulated (p. 3).

As a proposed alternative, Cormode suggests that “congregational innovation” is a distinctive means to “account for both the ever-changing culture and the never-changing gospel” (p. 4). In Chapter one, he argues that this approach necessitates a “recalibration of leadership,” through a commitment to what he terms the “dual standard of people and practices” (p. 4). This method for innovation through “stewarding” leadership is then performed “according to the longings and losses of the ever-changing people entrusted to our care and according to the practices that constitute the never-changing gospel” (p. 4). He notes that the writing process took four years, between initial draft completion and final form. This multi-year window allowed time for the “road-testing and refining” work of applying these ideas in specific congregational contexts to unfold (p. xii). Chapters two to six provide the reader with a detailed treatment of the background ideas and standard process through which Cormode guided these “congregational teams” (p. xii).

The core of his consultative approach with congregational leaders is rooted in a modified set of “The Drucker Questions,” coined and developed for organizational leadership, primarily in business contexts, by celebrated management thinker Peter Drucker. These five questions have become common diagnostic helps in organizational assessment and development. Cormode observes that the full question set is often shortened to “Who is your customer, and what does this customer value?” (p. 7). Remarking that churches do not serve “customers,” as “profit is not our goal,” he devised analogous questions that “can guide Christians and Christian organizations in their pursuit of God’s purposes” (p. 7). The author’s five questions to initiate congregational innovation are: (1) “Who are the people entrusted to your care?”; (2) “How do those people experience the longings and losses that make up the human condition?”; (3) “What Big Lies do your people believe that prevent them from hearing the gospel?”; (4) “How do you make spiritual sense of those longings and losses?”; and (5) “How do you express that spiritual meaning as a shared story of hope?” (pp. 8–15). These questions are utilized to arrive at a “shared story of hope,” which the author argues will establish the “vision” for the church or ministry (p. 14).

Through the formal use of these queries, applied in consultation with congregational teams, “Christian innovation happens when we make spiritual sense of the longings and losses of the people entrusted to our care,” which occurs as leaders understand and engage “mental models” rooted in the “Christian tradition,” and focused on “innovation of meaning” (pp. 21–30). Meaning innovation is intended to provide “new categories” for how to make sense of life and experience, based on theological understanding (p. 32). The author argues that this entire process is supported and sustained by leaders who practice “transformative listening,” which allows the leader to be changed through the process of listening to the people they serve and steward (pp. 41–42). Chapters seven to ten then outline defined practices needed for leaders and congregations to establish organizational culture and continued enhancement of their “capacity for agility” (p. 203). It is in this section that Cormode more fully addresses ideas related to: conventions of organizational culture, form and dynamics (pp. 152–72); variables and contours of “adaptive change” management proper (pp. 178–200); and best practices of “agile” change planning and execution (pp. 211–28).

While the work offers a stimulating treatment of innovation and its application to local ecclesial settings, there are several areas of needed caution for the reader. First, according to Cormode, the “ultimate goal of Christian innovation is to invite our people into a new story” which is intended to be a “communal” and “hopeful” story (p. 13). He employs Jesus’s use of parables as the principal model for this approach (p. 13). A telltale sign that he rests his case on an unsettled foundation is that the single expert voice cited is postliberal theologian George Lindbeck, whose cultural-linguistic “rule theory” suggests that biblical and theological interpretations are to be determined by the individual culture or societal group (p. 222). Similarly, from this viewpoint, he sees that “Christian leadership is fundamentally an act of theological interpretation” (p. 68). He then extends this line of reasoning to assert that “Christian innovation is fundamentally an act of creating new theological interpretation” (p. 68). This contention is rooted in his more foundational conviction that Christian leaders are tasked primarily to “make spiritual meaning” (p. 68). This meaning-making occurs, primarily, by “planting language,” “changing mental models,” and “reinventing practices”

(pp. 70–83). His examples of such Christian “practices” include hospitality, vocation, prayer and community (p. 98). However, instead of a plea to overhaul how churches think, speak and engage these domains, Cormode directs the reader to contextually apply categories and employ disciplines. Rather than true “innovation” or “reinvention,” he appears to simply advocate for church culture analysis and feature identification, which are standard fare on the menu of organizational and leadership assessments. This approach, paired with the aforementioned postliberal hermeneutic, appears to provide change leaders with inadequate biblically and theologically–moored guidance.

Additionally, Cormode mentions that what began as a “much more scholarly book” was amended to instead be more accessible to church leaders. As such, he either moved the academic background to endnotes, or the material was “jettisoned altogether” (p. xii). While this revision likely achieves increased reader accessibility, it may prove to be less satisfying for those who desire to see how the research process and product were framed and structured (p. xii). Because this is the case, there are times when the absence of fuller rationale, and germane details, hinder his suggested applications to change leadership. With these identified cautions and limitations in mind, *The Innovative Church*, nevertheless, provides a thought-provoking and necessarily challenging prod to the consideration, planning and actions of church leaders, particularly as we move forward through and toward post-pandemic ministry.

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***Pages from a Preacher’s Notebook: Wisdom and Prayers from the Pen of John Stott.* By John Stott. Lexham Press, 2020, 280pp., \$24.99.**

John Stott was one of those rare individuals who is valued within all segments of the evangelical world. He was known for his keen

intellect, his strong text rendering in his sermons, and for his wealth of insights into common everyday issues the world was facing. His “double-listening” idea was sometimes mistaken for equating worldly ideas with the Scripture, but that is a complete misnomer. His ministry as rector of *All Souls Langham Place*, was one of effectiveness and accompanying integrity.

This book, *Preacher’s Notebook*, is an anthology of years of disciplined research and accompanying note taking that is voluminous in its depth. This is a compilation of those notes most impacting in his own ministry and which he saw as rich insights from that “double listening” concept he held. Those notes closely tied to his ministry at *All Souls* were removed from this compilation so that the book would be applicable to anyone, regardless of their situation in ministry.

The book is summarized into four categories: God and Gospel, Church and Christian, World and Worldviews, and a last section on Prayers. Inside each of these categories are numerous sub-categories that make looking up an idea or illustration for a message extremely helpful. This is a work more for reference than light reading. It would not be a preaching textbook per se, but as an appendix, it is very helpful.

There are unique aspects to it. It covers men such as Calvin, the great leader in the Reformation, to Jim Baker, the tawdry hypocrite who spent prison time for cheating Christians, to Harry Ironside, who pastored Moody Church in Chicago from 1929–1948. Any man who touched the church in any way, good or bad, could be an illustration for the cause of Christ. It evidences Stott’s dry wit. He quotes a lay member of the London Diocesan Synod in 1972 regarding their dismay over the theological arguments hindering Anglican and Methodist unity: “if all the theologians in the world were laid end to end, they would not reach a conclusion” (p. 18).

There are a number of historical synopses that are quite good. He lists five things that made the world ready for Christ’s coming: Pax Romana, Roman unity, Roman roads, Greek culture conquering the Roman nation that conquered Greece, and then he lists a number of men and their clamoring for spiritual realities (p. 68).

He approached Scripture with integrity, while at the same time treating science as something not to be demeaned. He illustrates this with Michael Faraday. He lauds a lecture where Faraday received

thunderous applause, and yet when all looked in Faraday's direction he was gone. He had left so as to be on time for a prayer meeting at a small church he attended. It was "under the cover of cheering, he slipped out" (p.58).

Some of his notes are most poignant. He quotes the great Charles Simeon as he is dying. "If I am admitted, as I hope to be, to heaven, then if there be one that will sing louder than the rest, I think I shall be that one. But while I am here I am a sinner—a redeemed sinner; that is my style; and as such I would lie here to the last, at the foot of the cross, looking unto Jesus, and go as such into the presence of my God."¹³

One last illustration, that for me was interesting, was C.S Lewis's advice on writing to a young girl's question. Not all will be quoted here, but it was fascinating to hear him tell her to stay away from magazines and only read books. Turn off the radio and if you quit on some work, not to throw it away but to file it away. He asserted that some of his best work was a result of the filing and not the discarding.¹⁴

It must be remembered that these illustrations, quotes, poems, etc., are all things with which Stott saw value. He was an avid bird watcher and there are a large number of odd facts about birds that I doubt anyone but he, or another bird watcher, would find to be beneficial. For example, he mentions the raptor migration in Israel, but with no apparent purpose or allusion to anything spiritual (p. 19). This is why the categories and sub-categories are so beneficial, as they allow readers to skip over those things with which they have no interest.

This is a great reference book for those seeking unique anecdotes from various areas of life, as catalogued by a man whom so many respect in so many ways.

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¹³Hugh Evan Hopkins, *Charles Simeon of Cambridge* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), 211–12.

¹⁴C. S. Lewis, *The Letters of C. S. Lewis*, ed. W. H. Lewis (Geoffrey Bles, 1966), 291–92.

***The Educational Ministry of a Church: A Comprehensive Model for Students and Ministers.* Edited by Jonathan J. Kim and Charles A. Tidwell. Second Edition. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020, 316pp., \$34.99.**

In the preface to the second edition of *The Educational Ministry of a Church: A Comprehensive Model for Students and Ministers*, co-editor Jonathan Kim admits that in recent years the ministry of education in the local church has become “diversified” but the “basic facts associated with the nomenclature remain the same” (p. xvi). Kim, associate dean of the School of Christian Faith at Dallas Baptist University, explains “the project was not meant to be a simple update in bibliography... but a revision of the [1996 book] and introduce the next generation of church leaders to alternative ways of educational administration” (p. xvi). Included in the front matter is the preface from the 1996 revision, authored by Charles A. Tidwell, retired professor of administration at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, who indicated that the ministry of education was experiencing change even twenty years ago. Tidwell identified an “every increasing pace of change. And there seems to be no end to it. There must not be an end to it as long as most of the changes represent genuine progress” (p. xv).

The second edition is a collection of essays concerning the administration and organization of educational ministries in the local church, with a particular emphasis on Southern Baptist churches. Unlike the first edition, written exclusively by Tidwell, the essays in the new version were written by Southern Baptist Christian educators in the academy and ministry practitioners in the local church. One of the immediate strengths of the second edition is the diversity of experiences and perspectives offered by the authors, most of whom have decades of ministry experience in the local church and some who are now training men and women in seminaries and Christian colleges for a lifetime of service in educational ministry. The target audience for this book looks much like its authors: both the local church practitioner who needs guidance and wisdom in the day-to-day process of organizing and leading educational ministry as well as the minister-in-training who is studying for a future of fruitful ministry leadership.

Organized in four parts with seventeen chapters, *The Educational Ministry of a Church* provides a foundational and comprehensive approach to educational administration. Part One, “Necessity,” offers the epistemological framework for Christian education in the church including a biblical, theological, and historical rationale, the understanding of human development, the ecclesiological mandate, and awareness of cultural trends. Kim reminds the reader of the importance of “increased understanding of the necessity of the educational ministry of the church” (p. 3) by building a reliable foundation for such an endeavor.

Part Two, “Basic Components,” describes the building blocks of ministry laid on the necessary foundation. The five essays in this section delineate the essential ministry activities comprising educational ministry: Bible teaching, discipleship, missions education, music ministry, and ministries for enrichment and support for families, age groups, stewardship, evangelism, recreation, and media. The wide swath of responsibilities in the educational ministry of a church indicates that “education touches all that a church attempts to do as it moves toward fulfilling its mission” (p. 97). In one of the standout chapters from this section—“Ministry of Bible Teaching and Learning”—Josh Rose, director of the Doctor of Education program at Southwestern Seminary, offers his expertise in training leaders for off-campus small groups as well as for an on-campus Sunday School ministry. This focus on contemporary, as well as traditional practices reveals the need for educational leaders to be adaptable in an era of shifting paradigms in ministry.

Part Three, “Leadership Personnel,” emphasizes the role of staff and lay leaders in the ongoing effectiveness of educational ministry; these serve as the “builders” of the ministry structure. Three chapters in this section build on one another in creating leadership philosophy and practice for ministry. The pastor and church staff provide ministry vision, guidance, and training (Chapter 11, “Pastoral Role in Education”). Members of the body “provide a workforce absolutely necessary for the church to carry out the Great Commission” (Chapter 12, “Volunteer Leaders in Education”). Ministry leadership teams—composed of staff and members who are gifted and trained for service—provide an array of “gifts, passions, and specific skill sets to develop a comprehensive educational ministry in the local church”

(Chapter 13, “Organizational Leadership Teams in Education”).

The final section, “How Leaders Lead,” resembles a module for ministry leadership training. Topics include basic leadership skills such as the role of the leader in planning and organizing, developing a leadership pipeline, resourcing workers, and evaluating ministry effectiveness. These are “make-or-break” competencies for an educational leader’s success on the field. Cheri Wyman’s essay, “Discovering, Recruiting, and Training Workers” represents the quality of authors in part four, as she takes a deep look at one of the most important tasks of an educational leader: finding, equipping, and maintaining gifted and skilled leaders for ministry needs. Wyman pulls from a deep bench of sources and offers specific and detailed suggestions for tending to human ministry resources.

Even though *The Educational Ministry of a Church* is a revision of a book originally published in 1982, the authors have accomplished their goal: to pass along a heritage of wisdom about Christian education administration and honor the unchangeable mission of this important disciple-making ministry. The chapter titles and topics mirror the first edition, but the content has been updated for a new generation. Considering any content gaps that may need to be filled in future editions, two come to mind. First is the role of technology in educational leadership including website development and social media. Virtual or remote teaching will also play a significant role in the future of Christian education. The second gap is the changing leadership structures in evangelical churches. Most Christian educators recognize the diminishing role of the traditional minister of education as well as the disappearance of Christian education as a ministry priority in the church. In the future, those who oversee the education or disciple-making ministry of the church will need to not only understand the mechanics of their ministry, but will also be called on to motivate and inspire congregations to grow deeply in their walk with Christ.

Tidwell can rest assured that his legacy book has a new life in the twenty-first century. Church educators and students alike will profit from the wisdom of the expert contributors. The redeployment of this text in this era will likely raise the awareness of educational ministry in our churches and on our campuses; and perhaps, a new generation

of trained leaders will contribute to a resurgence of education and growth in the church.

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***Resuscitating Evangelism.* By Jordan Easley and Ernest Easley. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2020, 183pp., \$12.74.**

Jordan Easley and his father, Ernest serve together as a father-son duo as senior and teaching pastors of the First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tennessee. Both men studied at Dallas Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. They have published several articles and books. The present work, *Resuscitating Evangelism*, is meant to biblically encourage pastors, laypersons, and churches to obey Jesus Christ in fulfilling the Great Commission through evangelism. The aim of this book is to fan the readers' flame of evangelism and see God bring salvation and a new passion for more lost people to receive the good news.

The book is essentially divided into two main parts with a charge to pastors in between the two sections. The first four chapters provide an explanation for the decline of evangelism within local churches. Each chapter addresses the concerted need to make personal evangelism a priority for both individuals as well as for each local church because evangelism was Jesus's priority.

The authors begin with an examination of evangelism and its existing problems. An internal look and identification of the warning signs and symptoms provide indications of the priorities that a church or individuals have for evangelism. After these warning signs and symptoms are tackled, the book moves on to consider the Holy Spirit's empowerment of evangelism through examination of Acts 1–2.

The book accomplishes its purpose. The reader is stimulated to study the Scriptures, to rely on the witness's source of strength and power, and to boldly proclaim the good news of Jesus as

seed-scatterers. A lack of evangelism is essentially an issue with one's discipleship. The two are not in contrast to one another, but rather work in cooperation with each other. The reality that most drift away from rather than towards evangelism is acknowledged. Making disciples of Jesus Christ begins with the work of evangelism. To be anti-evangelistic is to be anti-Great Commission.

A charge is given to pastors to reprioritize and model weekly personal soul-winning for their congregations. This charge section discusses the role of pastors to lead their churches to be evangelistic and provides a plethora of illustrations of how mainstream Southern Baptists pastors passions have shaped their churches. The evangelistic heart of a church is only present where pastors too, highlights this heart.

The second half of the book is a practical guide to sharpen a church's evangelistic strategy. An analysis of 1 Peter 4 is well-handled in that the outcome for the witnessing encounter is up to God, not the soul-winner. Every pastor and layperson can benefit from this book because it provides helps to strengthen the lost soul consciousness of soul-winners. With regard to corporate evangelism, the work recommends a return to giving a public invitation; a time of response at the conclusion of decisional preaching.

Even so, weaknesses do exist in this work. First, an argument is made to reprioritize personal and corporate evangelism throughout churches; however, a standard method of sharing the gospel message should be included. This work is more useful as ancillary reading for local church leaders desiring to refine their cognizance for evangelism. Second, many cited resources are excellent, but are twenty-years old.

Resuscitating Evangelism is recommended due to the aforementioned strengths. The book emphasis on evangelism and discipleship will lead to steady local church growth. Pastors and students will benefit from the encouragement found in these pages that they are not alone in the struggle to keep evangelism at the helm of church-wide consciousness.

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BOOK NOTES

What a privilege it is to note some of the fine publications of recent months for the readers of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*! The survey for this issue is rather wide-ranging as we take a look at books from several fields of study, beginning with works related to worldview, culture, and education.

WORLDVIEW, CULTURE, AND EDUCATION

In this particular issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, focused on theme of Christian anthropology, it seems quite appropriate to begin our survey by noting the significance of *The Rise and Fall of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), by Carl R. Trueman, which is certainly one of the most important Christian books published in the past year, if not the past decade. Written in an accessible style, Trueman, an exemplary intellectual historian, offers incisive analysis of the developments in Western culture over the past two hundred years that have brought us to our current cultural moment. Directed by Trueman's brilliant interpretation as well as critique of influential and shaping philosophers, poets, scientists, psychologists, and ethicists, readers are able to see the connections that have led to the dominance of the therapeutic, the triumph of the sexual revolution, and the championing of expressive individualism. Providing faithful guidance to help reimagine how to direct our steps in days to come, this book is essential reading for pastors and Christian leaders. Addressing similar issues from a legal perspective, O. Carter Snead, professor of law at the University of Notre Dame, has brilliantly described how American culture and law have wrongly enshrined individual autonomy as the highest moral good. Snead contends that this faulty understanding of anthropology has led to faulty law, especially in the areas of bioethics. Like Trueman's volume, Snead *What It Means to Be Human: The Case for the Body in*

Public Bioethics (Harvard University Press, 2020) should be a high priority on the reading list of Christian leaders. Another important work on Christian anthropology has been written by Matt LaPine, *The Logic of the Body* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020).

Abraham Kuyper was truly one of the most influential thinkers in the history of the church in the areas of worldview, education, and culture. Lexham Press is in the process of providing a splendid service to the Christian community by bringing together some of the most important works from the former prime minister of the Netherlands with the *Collected Works in Public Theology* series. One of my favorite volumes in the series to this point is *On Education* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019), edited by Jordan Bailor and Melvin Flikkema. This book offers readers an open door into Kuyper's brilliant work on the philosophy and theology of Christian education. Applause and congratulations are in order for the fine work of the editorial and translation teams for their efforts to make this superb volume available to a new generation of educators and Christian leaders. *On Education* will serve as a magnificent resource for anyone interested in the work of Christian education. *Common Grace: God's Gift for a Fallen World* (Lexham, 2020) is another fine contribution to this important series. Related themes are found in the excellent work on *The Doctrine of Creation: A Constructive Kuyperian Approach* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2020), by Bruce Riley Ashford and Craig G. Bartholomew.

David Naugle, who taught philosophy at Dallas Baptist University and whose own work reflected aspects of the Kuyperian tradition, has been honored by his colleagues and students with a meaningful book of essays. *The Good, the True, and the Beautiful* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020) is a fitting and worthy multidisciplinary tribute, edited by Mark J. Boone, Rose M. Cothren, Kevin C. Neece, and Jacklyn Parrish (who currently serves in the Office of Communications at Southwestern Seminary). The editors express their profound gratitude for Naugle's influence and his investment in the lives of so many. Known for his effective and transformational teaching, as well as significant and scholarly publications, this book beautifully reflects and echoes Naugle's thoughtful articulation of the importance of Christian worldview thinking, living, and engagement. The astute and insightful chapters range from the thought of C. S.

Lewis, William Wilberforce, Philip Melanchthon, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas to literature, art, movies, philosophy, apologetics, and more. *The Myth Made Fact: Reading Greek and Roman Mythology through Christian Eyes*, by Louis Markos (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2020), demonstrates the power of story for shaping and forming the mind, the heart, and the imagination. Believing that all knowledge and all that is wise and good finds its source in God, Markos, reflecting the insights of C. S. Lewis, engages fifty well-known Greek and Roman myths. The Houston Baptist University professor observes that our secular world has lost sight of the essential role of narrative. Following the footsteps of Christian thinkers through the ages, Markos helps us see these classical myths afresh as Christian *paideia* for our day. He provides a hermeneutical window for each account with his reflections, applications, and notes, brilliantly enabling readers to see how these ancient stories not only teach us virtue but warn against folly, anticipating the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Just War and the Christian Tradition: A Genealogy, edited by J. Daryl Charles and Eric D. Patterson (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2021) is a praiseworthy, multi-authored effort that offers a superb overview of just war thinking. Contributors to this comprehensive work include philosophers, military strategists, political scientists, and historians who seek to engage various and distinctive denominational approaches to the issues of church and state, war, peace, diplomacy, statecraft, and security over two thousand years of Christian history. So much more than merely a reminder of the development of just war thinking throughout the years, this splendid book offers wise, insightful, and truly useful guidance for readers as they seek to navigate the challenges of our complex twenty-first century context.

Roger Erdvig, the respected leader of the Wilmington Christian School (DE), has written *Beyond Integration: Immersing You and Your Students in a Biblical Worldview* (Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Ministries, 2020). *The Breakdown of Higher Education: How It Happened, The Damage It Does, and What Can Be Done* (New York: Encounter, 2020), by John M. Ellis is an insightful jeremiad on the state of higher education in North America. Two works that look at the rise of the “nonēs,” exploring the implications for this growing

sector of the religiously unaffiliated for the Western world, are *Back-Pocket God: Religion and Spirituality in the Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), by Melinda Lundquist Denton and Richard Flory, and *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World* (New York: Public Affairs, 2020), by Tara Isabella Burton.

Baylor University professor Alan Jacobs has given us a brilliant and reflective work, which calls for us to look to the past to find guidance for today, as well as for the future, in his new book, *Breaking Bread with the Dead: A Reader's Guide to a More Tranquil Mind* (New York: Penquin, 2020). Lexham Press continues their project to draw from the best of *Christianity Today* through the years in order to provide beneficial resources for a new generation. The most recent addition to this project is a fine collection of articles, edited by Timothy D. Padgett with the title *Dual Citizens: Politics and American Evangelicalism* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020). This timely volume includes about 90 editorials and brief articles by key evangelical thinkers and leaders, which have appeared in the pages of *CT* over the past six decades. Addressing virtually every political question (whether dealing with domestic or international issues) that has captured public attention, this book, will be a blessing to many. How then should we respond to this cultural moment? Helping us think through at least one avenue for responding to this challenging cultural moment, Yuval Levin has written *A Time to Build: From Family to Community to Congress and the Campus, How Recommitting to Our Institutions Can Revive the American Dream* (New York: Basic, 2020).

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL STUDIES

Dana Harris has provided a pedagogically sound resource, which will benefit beginning Greek students for years to come. *An Introduction to Biblical Greek Grammar: Elementary Syntax and Linguistics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020) reflects the thoughtful instructional approach of one who has invested years in the classroom. The accompanying workbook will be welcomed by teachers and students alike. Joshua Jipp, one of the brightest young NT scholars of our day, has written *The Messianic Theology of the New Testament*

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020). *Paul and the Hope of Glory: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020) is an extraordinarily helpful volume, showing how the theme of eschatology affects virtually all aspects of the apostle Paul's writings, mission, and theology. Another important volume on Pauline themes is the work by Te-Li Lau, *Defending Shame: Its Formative Power in Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020). This thoughtful work not only carefully explores Paul's use and understanding of shame in his letters, but powerfully provides application for various twenty-first century contexts as well. Bringing together exegetical skill, contextual insights, and a pastoral heart, the author serves as a wise guide for his readers.

The *Expository Commentary Vol X. Romans – Galatians* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020) is the next volume in this new Crossway series. Readers will find each of the works on these four key Pauline epistles to be a treasure of outstanding biblical exposition from a Reformed perspective. This volume includes "Romans," by Robert Yarbrough, "1 Corinthians," by Andrew David Naselli, "2 Corinthians," by Dane Ortlund, and "Galatians," by Frank Thielman. The first new volumes in the new Christian Standard Commentary (CSC) series are now available. The CSC has obvious connections with the New American Commentary (NAC), which also is published by B&H. Whereas the NAC was written and edited by Baptists with a focus on a Baptist readership, the CSC, with its similar emphasis on theological interpretation, is designed with a broader evangelical audience in mind. The revised and updated works on *1&2 Peter and Jude*, by Thomas R. Schreiner (Nashville: B&H, 2020), and *Galatians*, by Timothy George (B&H, 2020), have provided a great start for this new series. Readers will want to note *The Letter to the Ephesians* in the New International Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), by Lynn Cohick, as well as the volume in the Reformed Expository Commentary on *2 Timothy and Titus* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2020), by Daniel M. Doriani and Richard D. Phillips.

Historical Theology for the Church, edited by Jason G. Duesing and Nathan A. Finn (Nashville: B&H, 2021) will serve as a wonderful gift to pastors, church leaders, students, and theologians alike. Jason Duesing and Nathan Finn have assembled a talented cohort of Baptist thinkers to serve as engaging guides to help us better understand the

development of key theological concepts as they have been articulated and debated through the centuries. Bringing their Baptist commitments to bear on this well-designed work, the contributors enable us to gain a greater appreciation for a knowledge of the past, the value of tradition, and the importance of catholicity. In all of these things, the authors desire to spur us on toward retrieval for the sake of renewal in our personal discipleship as well as in our worship, teaching, preaching, and service in and for the church. Three of the finest chapters in this volume were authored by Southwestern professors Malcolm Yarnell, Madison Grace, and Coleman Ford.

Graham Cole has written *Faithful Theology: An Introduction* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020). This apt little book is a big gift to those being introduced to the study of theology. Cole is a truly an astute theologian and a faithful and wise guide for his readers. Readers will want to carefully and discerningly work through another useful overview for the work of theology, which has been provided by Mark Ellingsen, *Theological Formation: Making Theology Your Own* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2020). Bradley G. Green has given us a first-rate introduction to one of the greatest thinkers in the history of the Christian faith with his recent volume on *Augustine of Hippo: His Life & Impact* (Christian Focus, 2020).

Peter L. H. Tie (who holds a PhD from Southwestern Seminary) and Justin Tan are to be congratulated on bringing together nine talented writers to provide a thoughtful and symphonic approach to the person and work of the Holy Spirit in *Spirit Wind: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Global Theology – a Chinese Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2020). Throughout the pages of this work, readers are given a multi-perspective look at this key doctrine from the vantage points of biblical theology, historical theology, and cultural/pastoral theology. Shaped by an unapologetic commitment to scriptural authority as well as a particular focus on Chinese theology, this engaging volume will be a blessing for theologians and missiologists, as well as for pastors and students. Another serious work from a Southwestern PhD graduate has been written by Hongyi Yang, *A Development, Not a Departure: The Lacunae in the Debate of the Doctrine of the Trinity and Gender Roles* (P&R, 2018).

Less than one year after the death of J. I. Packer, one of the most influential evangelical thinkers of the past sixty years, Alister

McGrath has produced *J. I Packer: His Life and Thought* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2020). Henrietta Mears had a huge influence on the lives of Bill Bright, Harold Ockenga, and several other key evangelical leaders. Her story is winsomely told in *Mother of Modern Evangelicalism: The Life and Legacy of Henrietta Mears* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), by Arlin C. Migliazzo. Another intriguing biographical study on the transforming friendship between Dorothy L. Sayers and C. S. Lewis is available in *Dorothy and Jack* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020), by Gina Dalfonzo.

MINISTRY AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

Jason Allen has put together a wonderful little companion to his volume on *Discerning Your Call to Ministry*. The new book is called *Succeeding in Seminary: 12 Keys to Getting the Most out of your Theological Education* (Chicago: Moody, 2021). Compelling, clear, and concise, Allen's new project is a remarkably helpful resource for those seeking to prepare for a lifetime of faithful Christian service. The book recognizes that a call to ministry includes a call to preparation as well as a focus on providing careful and thoughtful guidance regarding the importance of study, theological conviction, personal and family commitments, the place of church and friendship, along with mission and ministry. *Succeeding in Seminary* will make a great gift book.

Informed by the trajectory of history and shaped by solid biblical commitments, *Virtual Reality Church* (Chicago: Moody, 2021), by Jonathan Armstrong and Darrell Bock, raises the important questions about the application of virtual and augmented reality for ministry, Christian living, worship, and the formation of Christian community. Exploring the theological meaning of church, including the practice of baptism and Lord's Supper, Armstrong and Bock reach across the denominational spectrum to offer thoughtful and pastoral guidance on these pressing issues, always with the goal of advancing the gospel message in our rapidly changing world. While readers will likely yearn for more answers and additional guidance to these perplexing challenges, *Virtual Reality Church* offers the best introduction available on the subject. Moreover, this volume will become important reading for anyone wishing to engage these

issues in the days to come.

The Leader's Palette: Seven Primary Colors (Bloomington, IN: Westbow/Inspirita, 2021), by Ralph Enlow, is now being translated into Mandarin. Enlow is not only a knowledgeable student and exemplary practitioner of leadership, he is a wise and reliable guide as teacher and mentor of both leadership theory and practice. Informed by the scriptural themes of steward, servant, and shepherd, and emphasizing an understanding of leadership in terms of influence, Enlow walks his readers through a sevenfold presentation of the meaning, motivation, roles, and relationships involved in God-honoring, faithful, and effective leadership. *Leveling the Church: Multiplying Your Ministry by Giving it Away*, by Micah Fries and Jeremy Maxfield (Chicago: Moody, 2020) is a thoughtful book, which carefully guides readers toward a biblical view of ministry, encouraging both a rethinking and reframing of faithful church leadership for the twenty-first century.

Free Grace Press has published *Let the Little Children Come: Family Worship on Sunday (and the Other Six Days, Too)*, by Scott Aniol, associate professor of church music and worship at Southwestern Seminary. Shaped by scriptural reflection and informed by serious theological commitments along with a broad understanding of church history, Aniol offers wise guidance for parents, pastors, church leaders, and grandparents as well. This thoughtful little volume, filled with hymns, catechisms, Bible readings, and practical instruction, provides helpful insights for congregational worship on Sunday as well as family time throughout the week. Even those readers who may struggle with Aniol's convictions regarding age-graded Christian education and church programming will find this well-designed and carefully organized volume to be a rich resource for those seeking to tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord.

In conclusion, I want to note a few other significant books worth adding to your 2021 reading list: *Rethink Yourself: The Power of Looking Up before Looking In*, by Trevin Wax (B&H, 2020); *Companions in Suffering: Comfort for Times of Loss and Loneliness*, by Wendy Alsup (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2020); *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus*, by J. T. English (Nashville: B&H, 2020); *Another Gospel: A Lifelong Christian Seeks Truth in Response to Progressive Christianity*, by Alisa Childers

(Wheaton: Tyndale, 2020); *The Courage to Stand: Facing Your Fear without Losing Your Soul*, by Russell Moore (Nashville: B&H, 2020); and *When Church Conflict Happens: A Proven Process for Resolving Unhealthy Disagreements and Embracing Healthy Ones*, by Michael Hare (Chicago: Moody, 2020).

The year 2020 in so many ways was characterized by disappointment, challenge, sickness, and sadness. But the number of helpful, serious, engaging, and quality publications for followers of Jesus Christ is certainly a source of joy and hope. We will look forward to extending our survey in the next issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*.

David S. Dockery
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SOUTHWESTERN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY 2020 BOOK AWARDS

BIBLE REFERENCE/BIBLICAL BACKGROUNDS

The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary, edited by J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays (Baker)

HONORABLE MENTION

The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine, edited by Catherine Hezser (Oxford University Press)

A Christian Guide to Evidence for the Bible: 101 Proofs from History and Archaeology, by J. Daniel Hays (Baker)

BIBLICAL STUDIES

The Problem of the Old Testament: Hermeneutical, Schematic, and Theological Approaches, by Duane A. Garrett (IVP)

HONORABLE MENTION

1&2 Peter and Jude, in *The Christian Standard Commentary*, by Thomas R. Schreiner (B&H)

Revelation, in the *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, by Buist Fanning (Zondervan)

THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

The Trinity: An Introduction, by Scott Swain (Crossway)

HONORABLE MENTION

The Holy Spirit, in the Theology for the People of God series, by Gregg Allison and Andreas J. Köstenberger (B&H)

Christian Theology: The Biblical Story and Our Faith, by Christopher W. Morgan with Robert A. Peterson (B&H)

CHURCH HISTORY/BIOGRAPHY

An Introduction to John Owen: A Christian Vision for Every Stage of Life, by Crawford Gribben (Crossway)

HONORABLE MENTION

Tethered to the Cross: The Life and Preaching of Charles H. Spurgeon, by Thomas Breimaier (IVP)

Mother of Modern Evangelicalism: The Life and Legacy of Henrietta Mears, by Arlin C. Migliazzo (Eerdmans)

BAPTIST STUDIES

Baptists and the Christian Tradition: Toward an Evangelical Baptist Catholicity, edited by Matthew Y. Emerson, Christopher W. Morgan, and R. Lucas Stamps (B&H)

HONORABLE MENTION

Oliver Hart and the Rise of Baptist America, by Eric C. Smith (Oxford University Press)

The Lost Sermons of C. H. Spurgeon: His Earliest Outlines and Sermons Between 1851 and 1854, vol. 4, edited by Jason G. Duesing (B&H)

WORLDVIEW APOLOGETICS

The Gathering Storm: Secularism, Culture, and the Church, by R. Albert Mohler Jr. (Thomas Nelson)

HONORABLE MENTION

The History of Apologetics: A Biographical and Methodological Introduction, edited by Benjamin K. Forrest, Joshua D. Chatraw, and Alister E. McGrath (Zondervan)

Cultural Intelligence: Living for God in a Diverse, Pluralistic World, by Darrell L. Bock (B&H)

DISCIPLESHIP/SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Breaking Bread with the Dead: A Reader's Guide to a More Tranquil Mind, by Alan Jacobs (Penguin)

HONORABLE MENTION

Jesus the Great Philosopher: Rediscovering the Wisdom Needed for the Good Life, by Jonathan T. Pennington (Brazos)

"Here are Your Gods": Faithful Discipleship in Idolatrous Times, by Christopher J. H. Wright (IVP)

CHURCH MUSIC/WORSHIP

Brahms's A German Requiem: Reconsidering Its Biblical, Historical, and Musical Contexts, by R. Allen Lott (University of Rochester Press)

HONORABLE MENTION

Worship and the World to Come: Exploring Christian Hope in Contemporary Worship, by Glenn Packiam (IVP)

Recapturing the Enchanted World: Ritual and Sacrament in the Free Church Tradition, by John D. Rempel (IVP)

APPLIED THEOLOGY/ETHICS

Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers, by Dane C. Ortlund (Crossway)

HONORABLE MENTION

The End of the Christian Life: How Embracing Our Mortality Frees Us to Truly Live, by J. Todd Billings (Brazos)

Invitation to Christian Ethics: Moral Reasoning and Contemporary Issues, by Ken Magnuson (Kregel)

PREACHING/MINISTRY/LEADERSHIP

A Little Book for New Preachers: Why and How to Study Homiletics, by Matthew D. Kim (IVP)

HONORABLE MENTION

Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church, by Paul David Tripp (Crossway)

Pastors and Their Critics: A Guide to Coping with Criticism in Ministry, by Joel R. Beeke and Nicholas J. Thompson (P&R)

EVANGELISM/MISSIONS/GLOBAL CHURCH

A Survey of World Missions, by Robin Hadaway (B&H)

HONORABLE MENTION

40 Questions about Islam, by Matthew Bennett (Kregel)

We Evangelicals and Our Mission: How We Got to Where We Are and How to Get to Where We Should Be Going, by David J. Hesselgrave with Lianna Davis (Cascade)

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION/COUNSELING/ YOUTH AND CHILDREN

Created to Draw Near: Our Life as God's Royal Priests, by Edward T. Welch (Crossway)

HONORABLE MENTION

Is It Abuse? A Biblical Guide to Identifying Domestic Abuse and Helping Victims, by Darby A. Strickland (P&R)

Excellence in Online Education: Creating a Christian Community on Mission, by Kristen A. Ferguson (B&H)

BOOK OF THE YEAR

The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution, by Carl R. Trueman (Crossway)